



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report August 2015

Another month has flashed by and I am left looking back wondering where on earth it went!

The biggest news is the 2015 mammoth planting season is over and I have to heave a sigh of relief. Not only were there a record number of trees to go in the ground, but also the weather decided not to play ball. My hat goes off to all the planters who got involved this year - a big thank you to all. Six Sunday groups and a couple of weekday groups got stuck in, even in the rain.

Flora and fauna

- After the latest cold snap I am not sure if spring is in the air, but there are some trees and animals getting very colourful and territorial! There have been up to five tui in the Molly Stevens' Kowhai Grove, playing games of catch and kiss - or fight, I'm not sure.



Check out the gorgeous kowhai and puriri currently on the island, more flowers than anything else.

- All the birds around the shoreline are pairing up as well and it's like Noah's ark out there, two by two. If all this multiplying is a gift or a curse I don't know, as the pests (mice) are also getting involved. After last month's isolated outbreak here I decided to step up the control on the heavily infested islands offshore from Matakohē-Limestone. The good news is the bait take is dropping there and we are hopefully getting on top of the problem, x*#&^% mice!

Kiwi and Petrel

- As it is already August and the grey faced petrel translocation is getting closer, starting with an October 'recce' trip, a planning meeting was held. An outcome of this meeting was the requirement for another ten burrows. This will mean we can bring back more birds from Taranga if this season turns out better than the last one when we only got 28 out of the 50 for which we had a permit. I love these trips to the offshore islands as they are absolutely fabulous places.
- Finally finished the Kiwis for Kiwi final report that was due this month and sent it off. We also received the great news that they have agreed to provide finance for part of our mustelid trapping again this year. The girls and guys at K4K deserve a pat on the back, distributing money all around the country to help save our national icon, thanks guys

- There has been evidence of activity around the petrel burrows with two birds showing up during the twice weekly checks. These have been the "new" 2008 birds and one that has been returning regularly for the last couple of years. We have been busy planting the area as well as deciding on new locations for the ten new burrows. I have also noticed scraping in front of other burrows and feathers as well. Unfortunately it is probably too late for the laying of an egg this year, fingers crossed for next year. I have also given the petrel caller a new home (a shelf) so we can run it while the chicks are here this year.
- The amount of kiwi poo around the place is incredible and a great sign, means there are quite a few out there and they are eating well. I have regularly been seeing a few at night but really don't want to chase them down as this makes them more skittery. My old transmitters only have short battery lives and we would need to take them to the mainland immediately. We will be doing more releases in November and will be on the lookout for these "teenagers" then.



Classical kiwi "poo" they produce a lot of these

- I have been busy purchasing materials and have started construction of the new petrel boxes. I am constantly amazed at the generosity of local businesses. Thanks to Scooters Plywood and Carters for all the good deals and to dad for carting all the stuff around in his truck, what I would do without them, I do not know.

Volunteers and Visitors

- As I said earlier, planting is over for this year with heaps of spots looking particular bushy. The steady rain we have been having is ideal, helping the newbies acclimatise to a hard life on the island. We ended up planting in a variety of areas, the bluffs above the barge and the quarry at the Onerahi end of the island got some hardy species. The bottom of the school and access tracks were filled in, the south side of the ridge line was filled in and other cover-loving plants were spot planted all over the island. I spent a couple of days planting myself as the pile was still pretty big, but with the help of other volunteers we have managed to get them in the ground.
- We had a visit from a couple of VIPs, the National Manufacturing Manager, Paul Thorn and long-time supporter, Danny Bourke from our sponsors, Golden Bay Cement. Paul wanted to get a close up look at Matakohē–Limestone Island. I timed this visit so he would be able to see a kiwi with Kahui Whetu requiring a transmitter change. Unfortunately when I found her she was a bit fat and suspected to be gravid (with egg). She was quickly returned to her hole and will have to have her transmitter changed at a later date. Since then, her mate, Sir Ed has gone on to incubation mode and we should see some new chicks in a few months.
- An awesome group of girls from Whangarei Girls High have been over installing gecko 'houses'. Luke their teacher, as part of a unit needed the students to "Construct a piece of clothing or equipment for use in the outdoors". As you can see some of these fabulous boxes are works of art and we spent a gorgeous afternoon erecting them on the island. Luke is also pretty keen to adopt a spot for the school which was great news.



The girls' fabulous gecko boxes, complete with gecko furniture

- The Adopt-a-Spot Programme seems to be taking off in leaps and bounds with a whole bunch of people keen to take on the challenge. Dwane, Steve, Carol, Mike and others have been over working hard on their spots. If you are keen to check this programme out go on to the website and you can see people's spots on a map, together with other island information.
- Our regular Volunteer Day rolled around with the day before proving to be a really rough and windy one. Up until the morning it was touch and go if we would be going ahead with it. However, the day proved to be a lovely one with not a speck of rain falling and a few hardy volunteers turning up.
- This volunteer day came with a bonus, an extra bunch of fit young folk from the NorthTec biodiversity management course and Dai, their tutor. The regulars got stuck into some planting on the south face and the petrel station whilst the students dug the holes for the new burrows. The regulars then helped me de-construct the plant barriers from the manager's house lawn. Dai and his class went for a walk around the island as they may be doing a translocation paper on the island.
- I had a great day with friends Colette and Nick who have just got back from a few months in the UK. It was great to see them again and they have agreed to island sit whilst we are over getting the petrel chicks again. This is fabulous news and a weight off my mind having competent people on the island and running the barge at this time.

Predator trapping and baiting

- The bait stations on the North face got the long-term weed treatment on a fine windless morning. This, along with the last month's maintenance of the south side, means all the bait stations are now spic and span.
- Bevan and I have been busy carrying out the refurbishment of the stoat traps on the buffer zone. These traps need to be in top condition to nail any predators that check them out. We were rewarded during the next check with two big stoats, I knew they would go for our nice clean traps.
- The neighbouring islands, Rat, Rabbit and Knight have been on my radar this month. As mentioned earlier, the recent mouse incursion has necessitated an increase in the number of bait stations and bait change frequency on these islands. I also took the opportunity to pump a bit of spray onto the islands. I spent almost a whole day on the moth-plant 'trees' on Rabbit Island! Cape gooseberry, tobacco weed and ivy are some of the other nasties infesting this island.
- The general predator trapping has been pretty quiet on the buffer with a few rats and mice, until last week when Bevan scored two stoats. Michelle and Ross have been busy over at the Onerahi mainland nailing rats, hedgehogs and mice. This vigilance on the buffer is essential for keeping Matakohē–Limestone Island pest free.



**Michelle (Onerahi rat trapper) is also a fantastic photographer
Check out that Caspian Tern!**

- Even though we have not had any of the massive winter storms that can occur at this time of the year it is still wet. We have had some heavy bursts this month testing my drainage around the island. All tested out sweet with only a bit of shell washed away, still too wet to drive the tractor around the island though.

General

- I spent a very interesting and enjoyable day with some other passionate educators at a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Workshop. This was held in the conference centre at the Dargaville Museum. Shirley Peterson from Kiwi North was a legend organising this event. Matakohe–Limestone is moving more and more towards an educational/science focus and this teacher networking is essential to expanding it.
- I was happy to again carry out some work around the GBC Portland wharf for a local surveying company. The island barge is perfect for any of this work as it is low, stable and has an exceptional skipper!. Casey and I spent a rough windy morning carrying out this work on and around the old concrete wharf.
- The FOMLI Committee held a Strategic Planning Meeting reviewing past achievements and forward planning for the next few years. Focus will be on keeping the deterioration of the buildings to a minimum and the north face and education also featuring on the plan. Promotion of the island through open days instead of some planting days was also contemplated. The meeting was very productive and a great opportunity for ideas to be discussed.
- The tractor the barge and dinghy motors were serviced this month with the 60 hp barge motor reaching a special occasion - 1000 hours was up and she was due for a big birthday. Her leg was dropped off and new remotes were necessary as the old ones had corroded and broke upon removal. She is like velvet now and should last a good few years yet.

Upcoming

- A week's holiday planned for the last week of August with Dwane graciously island sitting for me. I also have a French student staying here at the moment helping out. Snowboarding down South or fishing up North, not sure yet.
- **Volunteer Wednesday** – 2nd September. Pick-up at 9 am at the jetty, returning after lunch approximately 2 pm. Not sure what we will do, call it a surprise!

Hei konei ra
Bernie



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