



Friends of Matakohē-Limestone Island
2015 Annual Report
(Written and presented by Pam Stevens, Chairperson at the
Society's Annual General Meeting on 20 April 2016)

The last month has seen a major change with Bernie moving off the island and handing over to Emma and Jono, Charlie and Quincey. Bernie's three years have flown by. He was encouraged to apply by the previous rangers, Ben and Jo. Ben had seen Bernie in action as he studied for his environmental degree at NorthTech. He has certainly used his new found knowledge and over the last three years has added to the many skills he already had. He has taken every opportunity to learn and is now well equipped to tackle any conservation project anywhere. We wish him well in his next adventures and sincerely thank him for all his hard work.

The island continues to see an increasing number of visitors and has a growing reputation as a destination for a variety of events like work team building and significant birthdays. Beth Winton had her 90th at the Shelter which was a wonderful occasion. She made a presentation to the island of a kiwi egg that had been in her family for nearly 100 years. Beth drew attention to how attitudes have changed from those times when children would have collected eggs for fun but, now that our children have more knowledge, they have become guardians of the environment. A large number of organized groups have come over to the island during the past year and are a good illustration of the wide range of the community that we host. They include BOI Science and Technology, North Kidz, District Health Board with Te Ihi Tito, Kiwi North, 60 Plus, Whangarei Intermediate, Waipu Primary, Raurimu and Horahora Primary Schools, Otamatea High, Whangarei Girls' High School, Shackleton Sea Scouts, Pompallier College, Fonterra, Forest and Bird, Whangaruru Tramping Club, Otaika Valley Gardening Club, My Movement children, Mountains to the Sea Trust, Bush Buddies, Mangakahia Area School, WDC Infrastructure Projects Support Team, NorthAble, Women International Newcomers, Lions Club (checking out the lizards they helped fund), CBS workshop with 20 teachers, Emerge Aotearoa, Dai and the NorthTech students, Otangarei Trust, Kerikeri Shadehouse, Jo Goodhew, Minister of Community and Volunteer Sector, USA Conservation Student as well as German and French volunteers, Homeschoolers and George Edge and relations (whose family built the first European house on the island and whose baby was born on the island). Ranger talks off the island have been at Merivale Retirement Village, Maunu Garden Club, Vintage Car Club and U3A. Recently there was an exercise on the island involving the NZ Fire Service, NZ Red Cross, St John, Surf Life Saving NZ, Search and Rescue, Police and 18 young people. Over 50 people involved in a very successful day. We quarantined all the gear the night before and checked it as the helicopters dropped it off.

The regular Wednesday Volunteers make a considerable contribution to the island. The farewell/welcome event last week was a reminder of the wide range of skills they possess David with his mowing, Alison, Charlie, Diane, Karen, Alan, Heather, Greg and many more. Also at the event were our "Island sitters", Colette and Nic and supporters Ngaire, Todd and Rolf. It was great to see Ida May there. Ida represents a past group of conservationists who led the way when being a greenie was less mainstream. She made an extremely valuable contribution to the Matakohē-Limestone Island project in its beginnings.

In July we had a strategic planning workshop run by Bindy. At these workshops the committee reviews what has happened and looks to the future. It is an opportunity to discuss issues that monthly meetings do not allow time for. One of the issues discussed on this occasion was the planting programme. Last year we had 5000 plus plants and very successful planting days. However, we decided we need to be site specific with specialized plantings and will possibly only have one or two open public planting days next time during which we will undertake a combination of planting and tree release. The number of Adopt-a-Spotters has increased and there are now 13 groups or individuals.

How to deal with the North Face and the Ruins has always been on the agenda and now we have entrapped Jono on the island for three years we are looking forward to revisiting the issue and making some choices that enhance the area but also take heed of our legal obligations.

We would like to improve the experience of visitors to the island and to this end continue to develop links with groups such Kiwi North, Bream Head Trust, Landcare Groups and our local and business communities. Fifty people attended the Great Kiwi Morning Tea and we raised a few hundred dollars. Kiwi continue to come and go from the island and the kiwi numbers at Whangarei Heads have benefited with well over 100 having come off the island. There have also been kiwi releases open to the public at the Brynderwyns and out on the Tutukaka Coast. Several hundred people turn up at the releases and we show the kiwi to as many as possible at the boat ramp. It is a good opportunity for Todd Hamilton and the Rangers to inform folk about the kiwi as well as mentioning our sponsors.

The Shelter has proved to be a great asset and has been further enhanced this year with an excellent Lizard sign thanks to Gerry, Dwane and Ben Barr. Dwane, helped by Wednesday volunteers, is well underway with the fence for the pou. Our thanks to James Bellamy who donated the poles from his Pataua property.

Golden Bay Cement (GBC Winstone) continues its long time commitment to the support of our project and we endeavour to take every opportunity to get positive media coverage and let the community know of their involvement. Paul Thorne and Danny Bourke from GBC Winstone management had a kiwi encounter and we would like to encourage more visits from GBC Winstone teams. WDC assists us with funding and we have support from Rentokil Initial, Kiwi for Kiwis and a number of local businesses such as UBER with services and big discounts. With Foundation North's support we were able to replace the Four-wheel drive vehicle.

Theda Hall has recently had further discussions with Carter Holt Harvey Wood Products who last year agreed to become a sponsor. We are delighted and look forward to seeing that relationship strengthen and also to seeing other members of their company on the island to see the project for themselves.

Year seven of the oi translocation was again an enormous undertaking involving a large number of volunteers, especially in the daily teams who helped with feeding over the Christmas New Year period. Again very well managed by Cathy Mitchell and Tanya Munro. The site had been considerably upgraded by Bernie with improved drainage and access which assisted in making a very successful year and probably the last grey faced petrel translocation for our island with total of 226 now away safely. Cathy's reports are of a very high standard and very detailed. Let us know if you would to have a copy emailed to you. Recently the leftover sardines from the ones the Onerahi School children gave us came to the rescue and helped feed 106 Cook's Petrels and 45 mottled petrels that have recently been translocated down near Napier. This year we will leave the site largely to the birds with minimal interference. However, Emma will monitor the prospecting and returning birds which begins shortly. (Emma said the first bird that came back last night was from the 2006 translocation).

As his parting swansong Gerry Brackenbury handed over a large file of paper to Emma about the flax snails. He has worked hard to get the translocation proposal underway and has gained approval to move some from the Heads to the island, but there is still quite a bit of paperwork to complete before that actually takes place. Gerry left Northland yesterday and we will miss his input and ideas. It was his idea over 25 years ago to secure the island as a reserve and restore it. Our project was very early out of the blocks and now there are a great number of similar restoration projects around New Zealand.

Last year I worked with a Business Management NorthTech student, Sylvia Vickers who did her major project on the process involved in the possible reintroduction of the wetapunga to the island. It is a realistic possibility as breeding programmes at the zoo have been very successful. However, we might just have to wait till our eight species of precious lizards and geckos are well established as these giant weta are as large as a mouse.

Freddie Tito continues to be part of the team and has a crucial role to play in the movement of kiwi as well as being an essential part of any occasion. He is our link to Te Parawhau who have mana whenua over the island

Ross and Michelle continue to hammer the rats and other pests on the mainland and Bevan is regular and very reliable with the trapping on the island and the buffer. We have had few mice no stoats and recently a rare rat inclusion. We rapidly intensified our pest control and think we have them but will continue to monitor. On the buffer Bevan has intercepted 16 stoats, 12 rats, 10 mice and 9 weasels. The numbers from Ross and Michelle from the Onerahi foreshore include no stoats or weasels but a large number of rats.

All the individuals on our excellent committee contribute in whatever way they can during the year. At the moment John Ward is sorting out the solar again, Ken the new trailers, Carla safety for volunteers, Theda our new sponsor, Jan holds things together in the background, Michelle our photographer extraordinaire and trapper, Jane our car storage, advisors Rosemary, Derek, Paul and Jerry together with Sandy our irreplaceable Treasurer. John Barber tried to resign but we wouldn't let him. He and his wife Cath have been great supporters for a very long time but are moving to Ruakaka. He has kept the Ruins and building issues on the agenda for a long time and we are really hoping to keep him linked in now that we are focusing on this.

To our new Rangers, welcome. You are in for some more unexpected adventures but we look forward to working with you and supporting you so we can make the most of your many skills and think you will make some wonderful memories for your family.

Pam Stevens
Chair
Friends of Matakohe-Limestone Island Society Inc.