



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report April 2016

Welcome to the first Ranger Report prepared by your new Matakohē-Limestone Island Rangers, Emma Craig and Jono Carpenter, supported by Junior Rangers Charlie and Quincy.

Greetings from the New Rangers

Hi there! We are Jono Carpenter and Emma Craig, the new Matakohē-Limestone Island Rangers along with our Junior Rangers, Charlie and Quincy.

Emma and Jono are both Whangarei locals, having lived at Onerahi and the Tutukaka Coast for the last 12 years. Emma is a conservation biologist and has fifteen years' experience working for the Department of Conservation. Emma will be known to many of you from her kiwi work in Northland. Jono is an archaeologist and has also worked for DOC in Northland, but since 2008 has worked as a consultant archaeologist at Geometria Ltd (www.geometria.co.nz). Emma and Jono will be sharing the ranger position and bring different but complementary skills to the role.

Charlie (seven and a half) is mad about boats, conservation and the outdoors and Quincy (almost four) loves cars, dancing and having stories. The boys are both adapting magnificently to island life, doing school and pre-school by correspondence, sharing a room with each other, and sharing their parents with the work of the island. Both the boys are learning to contribute in all sorts of ways, including by adding something about their lives on the island at the end of each monthly report.

Moving Over and Settling In

Moving house is seldom a pleasant, enjoyable or stress free experience; even more so when a sea crossing, even a 600m one, is involved. Ten days before we were due to move out to the island from Ngunguru it became obvious that a big front was moving down towards us and due to hit right when we were due to move, on 24 March. We obsessively tracked its progress on handy weather prediction site Metvuw (www.metvuw.com) and kept an eye on the sea conditions at Bouyweather (www.buoyweather.com). Multiple contingency plans were established, none of which thankfully involved moving in with our parents!

The day before the move the wind was howling and the rain was near horizontal and continued in that fashion right up until the appointed time the moving truck was due to arrive at 0700, to meet the high tide at 0930am.



Loading up

Almost all our belongings were transported over to the island in relatively short order (only three barge loads) with much appreciated help from outgoing Ranger Bernie at the wheel, Sandy, Derek and John from FOMLI committee, regular volunteer Richard, Trent from Santreno Shoes on Cameron St, Scottie Gunderson from Supbro Paddle-boarding of Ngunguru, our friend and fellow island kaitiaki Kara Edwards from Motuarohia-Roberton Island in the Bay of Islands, Craig McKay of Whangaumu-Wellingtons Bay, and the boys from Toll House Removals. Nothing got wet, no one pulled any muscles or crushed any fingers, and we were all squared away (finally!).

As we get up to speed with all the island entails we would like to say a big thank you to Bernie for all his help with the ins and outs of the Island life and job in general, and more specifically getting Emma familiarised with Petrel Tua Toru, and moving all our stuff over. Also answering all our questions, letting our boys follow him around and just generally being available and helpful! Likewise our thanks to the FOMLI committee who have been helpful and understanding as we have transitioned to the island.

Along with Ranger Bernie, this month saw the island say goodbye to another friend of long-standing, Gerry Brackenbury. Bernie and Gerry were formally farewelled at a well-attended afternoon tea held at Pam and Grant Steven's house, after the weather inclement weather put paid to hosting it at the Visitors' Shelter on the island. Many kind words were spoken, laughs were had, and a final, fine Bernie cheesecake digested, in very good company.

Visitors and Volunteers

- On 2 April the island hosted an emergency response exercise organised by YES, the Youth Emergency Services training programme. Sixteen local teenagers got to experience how a range of emergency services agencies (NEST rescue and Skyworks helicopters, Fire and Rural Fire, Police, St Johns Ambulance, Red Cross, Forest Protection Services, Surf Life Saving and Civil Defence/NRC) work together to respond to emergencies. The scenario involved a light aircraft and helicopter collision over the island, with casualties at the ruins and wandering in the bush and (simulated!) bodies to recover from the sea.

For four hours the NEST and Skyworks helicopters, Petrel Tua Toru and Surf Life Saving IRBs ferried people and supplies to the island and evacuated casualties while the emergency crews set up firefighting gear and searched for victims sporting realistic movie-make-up injuries while keeping the emergency responders safe from harm.



The teenagers, having had a month of workshops and training with the different responders individually, finally got to see everyone in action at one place and everyone working together.



YES trainees, responders and volunteers

- Northland Students from Westmount School came over for the day in early April and partook in Bernie's last official tour of the island, while Emma and I shadowed him furiously taking notes.
- We have also had visits from Dave to do the mowing, Andrew and Murray from Park Care to do track maintenance, and John Ward plus Russell Watson from Northpower visited to provide some advice about the solar power system for the ranger station. We enjoyed meeting some of the regular Wednesday volunteers and Steve also made a trip over to do some weeding.

Fauna and Flora

- On 9 April we said farewell to another kiwi, a plucky bird going home after recuperating from a dog attack. Marino was returning to Marunui (a 423ha property on the southern slopes of the Brynderwyn Hills near Mangawhai and Northland's largest QEII Open Space covenanted property. Please see their website (<http://www.naturespace.org.nz/groups/marunui-conservation>))

Marino was almost killed by someone's beloved but uncontrolled Jack Russel terrier. We can't stress enough that dogs are the greatest threat to adult kiwi in Northland. The life expectancy of a kiwi in Northland is 13 years versus up to 65 years in areas where dog predation isn't an issue. Dogs should be under control and kept away from areas where kiwi live at all times!

Emma went off to find Marino at about 0630 and returned around 0730 with the bird who had been hanging out above the six pack quarry. We recorded her details and took her over to the old boat ramp next to the yacht club where a mix of interested locals and tourists met Marino before Rolf Fuchs from DOC chauffeured her home.



Marino at the Native Bird Recovery Centre after being attacked



Taking Marino's vital statistics before leaving the island

Predator Control

- One low light of the month was the news that Bevan trapped two rats on the island, followed a week later by the appearance of fresh rat tracks on two of the rodent indexing cards that had been laid out by our volunteers several days earlier as part of the regular quarterly monitoring. Being autumn, rat numbers are high after a busy summer breeding and now food is getting scarcer and forcing them further afield.

Our response to date has involved additional, incursion trapping which succeeded in catching a third rat near the ranger's station. A close examination, autopsy and examination of its stomach contents suggested that prior to being trapped, the adult male Norway rat had already ingested bait and was already on its way to meet its maker.

As well as continuing the incursion trapping in hotspots that a rat might find appealing (such as around the ranger station) and additional monitoring we are investigating bringing a trained predator dog and experienced handler to the island to have a sniff around.

Other Activity

- The petrel burrows have been monitored for the last three weeks and while there is no sign of petrels as yet, there is plenty of other activity at the petrel station with kiwi, weta, skink and cockroach sign.
- This year's funding application for Kiwis for Kiwi was submitted and we are hopeful of continued support.
- The vegetation growth this autumn has been a sight to behold with abundant rain and with warm sunny days leading to a verdant cover of grass around the Manager's House and Ruins and on the northern slopes. While requiring some additional attention, some of the grass is now working as mulch around the orchard trees. Bernie also set to spraying the weeds cropping up at the petrel station in defence of all his hard work with the tracks around the burrows.
- We are hopeful that the conditions are also suitable encouragement for Gerry's parting gift, a tecomanthe which we have planted next to the implement shed.
- The new Northland Regional Archaeologist for Heritage New Zealand (formerly the Historic Places Trust) is visiting later in the month, accompanied by the Senior Archaeologist Pam Bain who is visiting from Wellington. Heritage New Zealand have the statutory responsibility for protecting New Zealand's archaeological heritage and are keen to discuss the management of archaeological sites on the island and the vexed issue of the north face with its rare Maori horticultural system.

Charlie Chat

"The island is wonderful. I am having a great time here, even though I am just a new junior ranger I have been almost all over the island. The island is a special place for me and the family as I have been coming to the island since I was a new born baby and we have a special brick here. My great great great great uncle made that brick. He lived in Auckland, his name was J. J. Craig."

Quincy Quote

"I have been playing airports with my brother Cha. I really love our home on the island, especially the Polaris. I like watching mum do hard working in the shed."



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