



Friends of Matakohē-Limestone Island 2016 Annual Report

**(Written and presented by Pam Stevens, Chairperson at the
Society's Annual General Meeting on 17 May 2017)**

Emma, Jono, Charlie and Quincy have been living on the island now for over a year. Recently I was reminded how lucky we have been with our Rangers and this time is no exception. We managed to arrange a wet cold day for a visit from one of our longtime sponsors and his family from Rentokil Initial and also Frank Visser from Key Industries. Emma timed the visit to coincide with a transmitter change for Glen. Her knowledge and skill in first capturing the kiwi in a very tricky spot and then carefully replacing the transmitter, while passing on a wealth of information, was very much appreciated. Just a week or so before, as part of Archaeology Week, Jono and our kaumātua, Freddie guided a group around the island. Everyone appreciated their expertise and thoroughly enjoyed learning a lot more about the island's features. Charlie and Quincy, our junior rangers, are always welcoming, especially to any children who are willing to join in and share their island life.

The Charities Commission requirements have increased and now not only do we need to file the financial report, but also a performance report which can then be viewed by anyone on their website. I have written this report with that in mind hoping it will help Carla, Jerry and our accountant Mike so some of it will fit into the Commission's format. It may lessen a little the volunteer time spent on paperwork.

Outcomes

Our purpose is to re-vegetate the island, release native species and develop infrastructure for visitors, provide learning opportunities, support our Rangers to liaise with visitors, maintain tracks, deal to pests and weeds and minimize fire risk.

Structure

A community committee that is elected annually at the Annual General Meeting manages the 36-hectare scenic reserve on behalf of the Whangarei District Council and the residents of Whangarei. Any species re-introductions are carried out in conjunction with the Department of Conservation. A ranger is employed by the Society. This position is currently shared by Emma Craig and Jono Carpenter. As it is a fulltime position they are required to live on the island in a two-bedroom cottage off the grid. They have a barge for transporting visitors and Emma is a fully qualified Boat Master. There is a small boat for their own use. A trapper, Bevan, is employed for two to three hours a week.

Resources (Funding)

We are dependent on the regular long-term funding from our major sponsors GBC Winstone (formerly Golden Bay Cement) and the Whangarei District Council. In addition, we receive funding from Carter Holt Harvey Wood Products New Zealand Group, Kiwi for Kiwis and invaluable support from UBER, Rentokil Initial and many other businesses in town that give us discounts such as Whangarei Horticulture. We also obtain additional one off-funding for specific projects and donations from individuals.

Volunteers

We have a regular volunteer day on the first Wednesday of every month. Numbers vary but can be from 10 to 30 plus. They undertake invaluable tasks such as the ever-popular weeding of moth plant, periwinkle, Taiwan cherry as well as spraying, fence repairs, rubbish collection, petrel site maintenance, track clearing and building tasks. Dave Webster does an excellent job of mowing, Ken and Tim do an annual shearing of the sheep, Ian Page provides a daily report to the Rangers on the fire index when dry. Other groups do voluntary work on the island for one-day events such as BNZ employees on "Closed for Good" days. Occasionally people from overseas, spot us on the web, come and stay in the caravan and lend a hand for a few days. Most recently we hosted Tom and Deb, ex Park Rangers from the US. The Rangers have recorded volunteer hours worked on the island this year as over 2,845.

Our Outputs (What we do)

Host Visitors

We hosted upward of 2,000 visitors and this included pupils from the following schools Hurapaki, Onerahi, Glenbervie, Horahora, Tikipunga High School, Blomfield, Whangarei Girls High and also Tutukaka Playcentre, Girls Brigade, Environmental Studies NorthTec: also, groups such as Hash House Harriers, Society for Research on Amphibians and Reptiles NZ Archaeologists James Robinson and Pam Bain: school holiday programme children from Kohatu, Hopscotch and Drains to Harbour. Such a long hot summer saw a large number of people from boats and kayaks on all parts of the island. The MV Waipapa visits every weekend and has had an increase in the number of punters.

Hold Community events

Our annual Kiwi Morning Tea in October raised over \$600.00. Glenbervie School pupils also contributed by holding their own fundraiser. We had a special Matariki Family Planting Day with over 30 in family groups attending.

A very significant historical event happened in October with the planting of the huti huti and tapu tini kumara (heritage kumara) organized by Te Parawhau and Wai riki Onerahi rahi Food Forest and NorthTech. This is the first time kumara have been grown on the island for probably over 100 years. The event made the RNZ Morning Report programme, Haukainga News on TV as well as the New Zealand Herald and the Northern Advocate.

Facilitate Communication

A monthly publication penned by the Rangers goes to 224 people nationally and internationally. Dwane Kokich has recently updated the website and Facebook page which attracts attention from all over New Zealand and reaches people from overseas. Emma starred in a movie called "Matakohe-Limestone A Conservation Treasure" and Freddie Tito appeared on Maori TV on a couple of occasions.

When kiwi leave the island they are met for a farewell blessing at the Onerahi Yacht Club ramp where we have had up to 60 people. We also get a mention when the birds are released at Whangarei Heads where most of the kiwi are released back into the wild at an event attended by as many as 400 people.

This year we welcomed Cr Anna Murphy on to our committee as our Whangarei District Council representative and I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Brian McLaughlin for his contribution. He always spoke on behalf of FOMLI in Council Chamber.

We value the relationships we have with our sponsors and supporters and endeavour to keep them updated via the Rangers' Report and invitations to special events or kiwi transfers.

Freddie Tito of Te Parawhau continues to play a key role especially in the kiwi programme, the kumara's return and is a positive force in developing our relationship with the local community and the media.

Target Pests

We are at present reviewing our methods of tracking and trapping. It seems there is more information coming out and it takes time to gather it together and select the best method for the island and buffer. The volunteer trappers who cover Onerahi, Michelle, Katrina, Ross and Mark, have relentlessly been checking the traps for five years, once a week and this takes two to three hours each time. They have 4 stoat traps 51 rat traps and 21 bait stations Their catch tally this year has been 159 rats, 95 mice, 6 hedgehogs - this figure does not include poison numbers.

Bevan is our regular trapper for the island and buffer where he has this year intercepted 17 stoats 17 rats, 3 weasels and mice and hedgehogs. He is employed for an average for 4 hours a week A meeting was held recently to pool the trappers' collective knowledge. We have also had valuable input from Jon Thompson from Rentokil Initial and Frank Visser from Key industries and Craig Gillies who Emma met at the National Kiwi Hui in Palmerston North recently. A mouse bust is soon to be done replacing the 800 baits using our usual programme thanks to a keen bunch of volunteer mice busters. With support from DOC we had Miriam and her two rat dogs Moss and Will checking the island

On the island this year we have caught 1 weasel, 3 stoats, 15 mice 6 rats (poisoned pest numbers unknown).

Enhance Flora and Fauna

139 Kiwi have come off the island and gone to wilder places. 7 this year and there have been 6 island born birds. Kiwi are still mostly going to the Whangarei Heads area but now also go further afield to Tutukaka and West of Hikurangi as more and more Landcare Groups achieve low enough pest levels.

The number of bird species observed on the island now stands at fifty-one and there are nine species of lizard. Lizard monitoring by ex-Rangers Ben and Jo Barr with family, Penny and Tim and with current junior ranger Charlie lending a hand, show that our precious geckos and lizards are breeding and spreading.

We have a public planting day during Matariki and have changed our style of planting so there are fewer plants but these are more targeted and there is some tree releasing thrown in. Last year we planted 1,600 this year is down to 1,300 but we have planted over 170,000 in total.

Dwane's "adopt a spot" programme demonstrates that weed suppression dramatically increases natural regeneration. We have a number of active "adopt a spotters" and a few who are less active and could do with some help.

Petrels - one came back mid-April, earlier than last year, and Emma has found a few fences down and a feather or two. We have had 11 individuals return and 4 this year so far. A pair was found together in a burrow and identified from their bands as male and female from the 2006 translocation.

Infrastructure and gear

The WDC was notified regarding the state of the pontoon which urgently needs maintenance so Stuart Jackson from WDC came to inspect and agreed such maintenance needs to be carried out urgently.

The barge had its bottom cleaned by Black Dog Steelworks resulting in more speed and fuel efficiency.

Jono has helped Emma with tackling the MOSS paperwork required for the barge and together they completed the long and expensive process of getting a boat ticket.

Murray and Andrew from WDC deal to the tracks on a regular basis with weed eaters - a valuable contribution from Parks and Reserves.

With regard to Health and Safety, thanks to Jono we now have all the paperwork necessary for risk management assessment and injury reports available for school groups and others.

The cottage has a new kitchen thank you, John and Dwane.

The solar unit has given some grief because of age and under capacity. Russell Watson and Dave Liddington Electrical have been a great help. We are now faced with probably spending a considerable amount to upgrade and renew. The WDC has agreed to trim some trees for us to allow more sun to the cottage.

Here are just some reasons to visit the island

- Visit the Molly Stevens Kowhai Grove – it is now spectacular when flowering in Spring.
- Check out Dwane's and others adopt-a-spots and get enthused.
- Talk Jono into guiding a tour.
- Watch Emma do a transmitter change and learn things about kiwi you never knew.
- See a kiwi in the dusk - with upward of 60 your chances are pretty good.
- Know that when you walk around lizards and geckos are happily reproducing and trees are growing.
- Join the happy crew on the Wednesday making an invaluable contribution.
- Get fitter, help with the mouse bust.
- Walk the island accompanied by the friendliest fantails in Northland.
- Stand on the pa and check out our beautiful harbour and the pa sites.
- See the huti huti and tapu tini kumara; join the kumara planting next spring.

I would like to finish by acknowledging all the members of the committee, everyone has a part to play Carla and Jan for administration, Jerry and Sandy as treasurers, John, Ken and Dwane for their practical contribution, strong backup from Theda, Michelle, Rosemary, Jane, Derek, Paul and our new member, Tanya. They all bring their specialist knowledge and skills making sure that the island project is in good hands.

Pam Stevens
Chair of FOMLI