



## Matakohē-Limestone Island Rangers' Report April 2017

**We haven't seen much of the sun over the last month but the vegetation is still growing, the drains are running, and the water is still warm (ish!). This month we have had volunteers from Arizona, celebrated the inaugural National Archaeology Week and progressed the induction of Petrel Tua Toru into the MOSS system. We also celebrated our one year anniversary on the island – how time flies.**

### **Visitors and Volunteers, and Other Comings and Goings**

We were delighted to host American volunteers Tom and Deb Clark from Arizona for a week on the island. Tom and Deb had cycled from Auckland to Stewart Island thirty years ago, and having both recently retired from the National Parks Service, were looking for opportunities to return to New Zealand and volunteer for conservation. Having lived and worked in the American South West, some time by the water was just the ticket so, after a spell on Mokoia Island in Lake Rotorua and a visit to the Bay of Islands they came out to Matakohē-Limestone Island and assisted with re-cutting bait lines, an argentine ant survey and a little boat maintenance (with free advice and materials provided by Luke and Jonny at Black Dog Cats). It wasn't all work and Tom and Deb spent the evenings out looking at kiwi and enjoying the island environment during the day. We all appreciated their hard work and pleasant company. It was sad to say goodbye but we hope to see them again for a longer stay on the island sometime in the future.

Tom and Deb got the last of the good weather and since their sojourn we have had to cancel a couple of trips from understanding early childcare programmes. We love having small children running over the island but we want the memories to be mostly fun and just a little bit wet and muddy, not mostly wet and muddy (and cold, not at all fun). Still, we managed to get Kia and her Bush Buddies during a break in the grey skies, and they had a great old time exploring around the Manager's House and meeting Lamby at the Cement Works ruins. Best of all seemed to be the big play at Shipwreck Bay, with a bunch of pre-schoolers all in, in their clothes, for a mid-Autumn swim.



The first week of April was the inaugural National Archaeology Week, a week of archaeology-focussed events around New Zealand organised by the NZ Archaeology Association. At the start of the week Jono was on National Radio with two other archaeologists talking about archaeology in New Zealand, with Lynn Freeman. Over the course of the week in Northland there were events in Whangarei and the Bay of Islands with Jono presenting an afternoon talk at the Whangarei Central library about archaeology in New Zealand and sites around Whangarei including the island (thanks to Carla from FOMLI for arranging the venue!). We had a public tour of the island and its archaeology supported by Kaumatua Freddy Tito and Pam, Sandy and Pagey from FOMLI at the end of the week. Jono also attended a walk along the Hatea River led by Heritage New Zealand staff Bill Edwards and James Robinson, talking about the remnant Maori gardening features, 19<sup>th</sup> century coal chute and landing, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century European boatsheds, located in a small triangle of waste land between Hatea Drive and the river. It was beneficial to be able to see these gardening features and compare them to the different systems that would have been used on the island at the same time. The events were great fun despite the poor weather and we look forward to participating next year.

We had a small crew out for volunteer Wednesday, again at least in part due to the poor weather. The focus was doing a tidy up around the Cement Works ruins in advance of the archaeology tour on the island, and this included a weed bust, sweeping out the Singlemen's Quarters and clearing out drains at the bottom of the hill track; at one point there was so much water roaring down that it sounded like a low-flying jet aircraft. Thanks to Dave, Steve, Diana, Donna, Pam and Sandy who braved the rain. Dave had already been out to tractor mow the day before as the grass has really come away again, and then he came out again, so thanks Dave. Murray and Andrew from Northland Parkcare also came out at the start of Archaeology Week and did their usual fantastic job of tidying up the public tracks around the island and while the weather threatened, it stayed dry on the island for them.

We also had a visit from a large group from Hurupaki School via the Waipapa during the day, and then a Girls' Brigade Group during the evening. The Girls' Brigade group had a short introduction to the island, a talk on waste in the harbour and inspection of various bits and pieces we had collected from the coastline over the preceding week or so, and a short walk up and over the northern end of the island.



Dwane visited the island with Nigina from the Whangarei Youth Space to look at the possibility of taking up an adopt-a-spot on the island. The triangle of bush between the top of the hill track and the ridge track seems to be just the ticket for them and we look forward to seeing them over in the near future. John Ward and a solar installer also came over to discuss replacing the old solar panels with new, more efficient panels.

We are encountering fewer self-propelled visitors around the island but the Waipapa continues to visit on Sundays and we encountered a few dozen visitors around the island over the Easter break.

The day after the rains of Cyclone Cook had passed we discovered that we were without phone and internet thanks to some sort of fault which could not be resolved over the phone or by fiddling with plugs and settings. Uber Group sent out their technician Alex to sort the problem and we were grateful for the speedy resolution. After replacing the router and wireless boxes inside, and the dish outside, in the dark under torch light on Saturday night, Alex discovered insect-chewed and exposed coax cable which needed replacing between the antenna and the house, which he did on Sunday afternoon.

## **Flora and Fauna**

### **Plants**

May will soon be upon us, which means picking up our order of native seedlings from the wonderful crew at Tawapou Native Nursery and working frantically to get them all in the ground while it is soft and wet. At this stage we have pencilled in a public planting day on 25 June to coincide with Matariki, so mark the date and we will provide further details as they are settled.

### **Kiwi**

In late March, Emma prepared her interim report for Kiwis for Kiwi (the old Save the Kiwi Trust) and a new funding application to the same organization. This funding supports the work of the kiwi crèche on the island, including some of the trapping. It is very much appreciated and we hope this year's bid proves successful.

Emma also attended the National Kiwi Hui in Inglewood over two days this month. This was an excellent opportunity to network with old colleagues and new contacts alike. It was a valuable experience to be able to talk to the right people about not only kiwi on the island, but also wider threats and opportunities. Many thanks to the wonderful team at Kiwis for Kiwi for organizing the event and providing the food, venue and accommodation. A special thanks to Paul O'Shea for going out of his way to be accommodating when Emma's travel was interrupted by Cyclone Debbie.

### **Petrels et al**

We are now at the very start of the oi (grey-faced petrel) breeding season and we can expect to start seeing the first of the petrels come to the island to find each other and think about breeding. We have just started monitoring the burrows, which we will continue to do every 2-3 days throughout the season. The Spoonbills are back on the mudflats and the white oyster catcher has been back on the island, below the northern quarry.



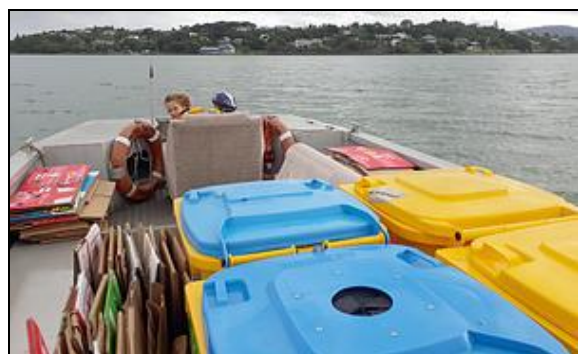
**Oyster catchers at the old wharf**

### **Other Events**

Emma assisted structural engineers from Opus with a condition survey of the Matau a Pohe bascule bridge over the Hatea River. The size and stability of Petrel Tua Toru makes it the perfect vessel for the maritime structure surveys around the upper harbor and is a good way to raise extra funds for the island. She also transported an engineer over to undertake an inspection of the island pontoon which has suffered some recent hard knocks from larger craft and lost a float and the posts/handholds and is now sitting low in the water at one end. Emma also spent a day at a Crowd Management workshop at the Mahurangi Institute of Technology to add an endorsement to her skipper's ticket.

Jono has been assisting her with getting the operation of Petrel Tua Toru into the new Maritime Operator Safety System (MOSS) which replaces the old Maritime NZ Safe Ship Management (SSM) documentation. This involves the preparation of a 50-odd page health and safety manual covering the operation of the barge. Thanks to Tollov at Maritime NZ for his help getting this process going, and to John Ward.

We also had another big rubbish pickup thanks to Northland Waste, who took away not just our four big wheelie bins but also the old couch and armchair from the deck and a huge stack of broken-down banana boxes from a year of shopping and our move to the island. The island coastline has been rotten with rubbish over the last few weeks thanks to all the heavy rain. Along with occasional treasures like floating kumara, containers of fishing tackle and the usual assortment of colourful pegs, we could do without the endless plastic bottles, tin cans, chocolate and icecream wrappers. Interestingly we don't seem to be seeing as many wetwipes, rubber gloves and sushi fish.



## Charlie Chat

I entered a competition for Sea Week, which was about protecting the ocean. I made a two or three-minute long movie about collecting rubbish on Rat Island and all the different kinds of things that wash up. More than 1000 people have watched my movie and I won a trip to go snorkeling at the Poor Knights Islands.

## Quincy Quote

The Easter Bunny came. He did a big a hop which made him get all the way over to the island. He gave us Easter chocolate eggs and he hid some everywhere. My cousins and Charlie and I picked them all up and shared them all out and counted them. There were lots.

## Finally

Don't forget to mark the date of the next **Volunteer Wednesday on 3 May**, pickup from the Onerahi Jetty at 0900 as usual. Also, this year's public planting day on 25 June to coincide with the start of Matariki.



Proudly supported by; Environmental Northland, Forest Floor Nursery, Harbour Marine Ltd, Marine North Ltd, Northpower, Northland Port Corp, Northland Regional Council, North Tugz, Onerahi Lions, Phoenix Boats, Red Bull Powder Co., Tawapou Nursery.

[www.limestoneisland.org.nz](http://www.limestoneisland.org.nz)