



## **Matakohē-Limestone Island Rangers' Report May 2017**

**We have had a great start to the petrel season, plants are awaiting pickup and planting, and reflecting back, it's been a great year for visitors and volunteers.**

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

- The unsettled autumn weather has been hard on group visits to the island, with a number of school and pre-school groups having to cancel due to bad weather this month. Nevertheless, a range of visitors made it out to the island for a number of reasons.
- We had a great visit from Jon Thompson from Rentokil Initial and his family, along with Frank Visser from Key Industries, to talk about predator control products and tactics. We are pleased to have the ongoing support of Rentokil Initial by way of supplying toxin for rodent control on the island and buffer, and look forward to exploring some new options including new technologies and approaches for controlling pests in our area of operation. Craig Gillies from DOC has also been very helpful providing advice on toxins and predator control measures and Jane and Pam from FOMLI have worked very hard over the last few months to re-establish the relationship with Rentokil Initial which had been affected by staff changes over the last few years.
- A big thanks goes out to Nigina and Whangarei Youthspace who have adopted a spot on the island, and had a very productive first day out weeding with FOMLI committee member Dwane Kokich last month. Dwane was very impressed with the group and their efforts weeding between the ridge track and hill track and we look forward to having them out again. We also had a visit from the Whangarei Aquatic Centre Chill Out holiday programme for a tour of the island during the school holidays.
- This month's volunteer Wednesday was focussed on a moth plant bust at the western end of the island. This pest plant is a huge and ongoing problem so it's great to remove a whole bunch of pods before they can burst, and all the seedlings which spring up so regularly. A 240 litre wheelie bin was filled with pods, seedlings and vines in about three hours. Dave also came out at the same time to mow for us, and even gave us the shirt off his back. Thanks Dave! Also thanks to John Ward from the FOMLI committee for grabbing some extra LPG bottles for heating over the winter months, along with LED bulbs to further reduce our power consumption.
- We appreciated having Stuart Jackson from the WDC Parks team out to inspect the public walking tracks on the island, the state of the pontoon and some big trees requiring trimming. The island pontoon has a failed float on one corner and we hope to have some resolution soon as that part of the structure now sits low in the water resulting in friction wear on the piles and the pontoon is no longer sitting level in the water.
- It has been amazing counting up the number of visitors and volunteers we have had on the island over the last year. Emma has carried 1937 visitors to the island on Petrel Tua Toru and of that number just short of 900 were school or other educational groups. Five hundred and sixty-seven volunteers contributed 2845 volunteer hours, or the equivalent of an additional one and half full-time rangers, to the restoration of the island. We have also directly observed another 500-odd visitors arriving under their own steam, not including those who visit via the Waipapa harbour cruises.

## Flora and Fauna

### Plants

Jono has returned last year's plant trays and pots to Tawapou and dropped off a container of Ant Stop G as part of the Argentine ant quarantine procedure and we look forward to picking up the 1600 new plants on Monday, 29 May. Any assistance with loading plants on to the barge at the Onerahi boat ramp and off on to the island would be much appreciated, with loading scheduled to start from about 0930 Monday morning.

As noted above, we are still finding lots of moth plant to pull as we do other work around the island and Emma has also removed a number of pampas by hand over the last month. Surveying the island slowly from the water has turned up a few that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. Grass and weeds are still growing thanks to a succession of sunny days in between the cyclonal rains of the last six weeks.

### Kumara

Freddy Tito came out with friends to harvest the first heritage kumara from the island. We removed 14 tubers and look forward to replanting more at the end of the year! It was our great pleasure to watch these special tubers grow again on the island after so long and we look forward to expanding the harvest in years to come.



### Kiwi

This month Emma changed transmitters on both Glen and Sir Ed. Jon and family, and Frank were on hand to see Glen's transmitter change and it was wonderful to see their reactions to getting up close and personal with this special bird. All kiwi handled this month have been in excellent condition, the invertebrates are obviously in great abundance at the moment. Thanks to KiwiTrack for supplying us with fresh transmitters when we need them.

We were lucky to find and transmitter a healthy (fat) island-born kiwi in one of the petrel burrows and while this was all happening a curious ruru sat in a tree about five metres away from the kiwi action and watched the whole proceedings. The kiwi turned out to be one of Glen's chicks from 2014 so he will be coming off the island in the near future. Watch this space for details about when you can come and say farewell at another Matakohē-Limestone Island kiwi whakawaatea

### Petrels

We have had a great start to the petrel season with four separate birds found in burrows over the last month. Emma and the boys were also super SUPER excited to find the same male and female oi together in a burrow on three separate occasions and we are hopeful for more signs of breeding activity over the coming month. Emma changed the card in the petrel call playback system to Barry White to try to speed things along. Emma and the boys have a system for regular burrow monitoring down pat with Quincy reporting on the status of the sticks in front of the burrows, Charlie keeping the notes, and Emma lifting the lids and handling the birds as required.



## **Pest Control**

The last month has been relatively quiet for pests trapped on the island and buffers. Totalling up the numbers for the year, we have had fifteen mice, six rats, three stoats and a weasel caught on the island from April 2016-April 2017. Unfortunately, it has been the first time in three years that mustelids have been caught on the island and the takeaway is that the price of pest freedom is eternal vigilance.

This month the volunteer trappers from Onerahi met with Emma and Bevan for morning tea at Pam's house one Sunday to talk about trapping, share information from recent workshops and hui and get to know each other. It was a productive discussion which generated suggestions for improvements to the predator regime.

Keep the afternoon of Sunday 28 May free as we will be having a mouse bust using the baits kindly supplied by Rentokil Initial. Pick up will be from the jetty at 3pm and instructions and equipment will be supplied.

## **Other Events**

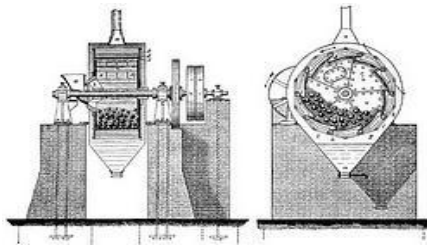
This month Petrel Tua Toru had some repairs and maintenance undertaken by Marine North, its annual survey by Steve Mabbett Marine Surveyors and a sandblast and anti-fouling treatment by Black Dog Cats, all at the Black Dog Steel yard to save transporting everyone over to the island to undertake the work. Thanks to Kev, Luke and Jonny and the different businesses for helping us to arrange all the work to happen at one mainland location to save the costs of travel to the island.

Bream Head Conservation Trust Ranger, Adam Willetts kindly invited us out to the Popokatea release on 13 May and we were privileged to be able to carry a box of birds up the hill and join in letting some of the 90 birds from Tiritiri Matangi out into their new home. A big crowd attended and it was wonderful to take part in bringing these chatty little birds back to the mainland for the first time in generations.

Early in the month we noticed an abundance of dead puffer fish washed up on the beach. They all looked to be very recently dead, and appeared to have all come in on the same tide. We counted 38 between the berth below the Manager's house and Shipwreck Bay. If fish are going to wash up it is not unusual for it to be puffer fish due to their natural flotation, but the numbers were far in excess of anything we had seen. We were concerned enough to contact the Regional Council who put us on to MPI. We have now been assured this was most likely due to a storm event, but it is still good to remain on the lookout for strange happenings in the environment. The coast was smelly for days!

## **Odd Stuff About Old Stuff**

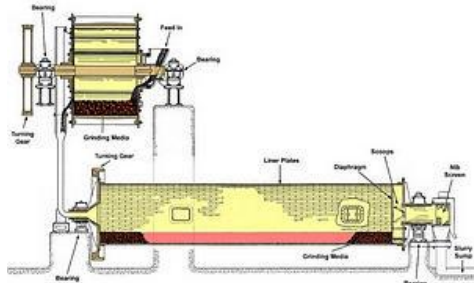
Even with the cement work ruins and quarry faces staring you in the face, and the available photos of the cement works from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it's still hard to comprehend the operation, especially in the general absence of the kilns, mills, conveyors, and steam engines that processed the limestone into cement. This is especially so as there were a number of major changes in processes and machinery over the years, congruent with international changes in cement manufacturing technology. The newspaper account is from the New Zealand Herald of 5 October 1901 (<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19011005.2.65?query=krupp%20limestone%20island>) and describes the cement works at that time. Images of the equipment described (below) have been sourced from [www.cementkilns.org.uk](http://www.cementkilns.org.uk) and those of you who have spent a lot of time around the cement works may recognize some of the remaining features brick and concrete features as supporting this plant. Further reading indicates the changes following the various fires and technological advances over the next fifteen years and the final descriptions of kiln and mill equipment as the island operation was wound up and shifted to Portland by 1925 are quite different. The cement works is thus a palimpsest or landscape of industrial evolution.



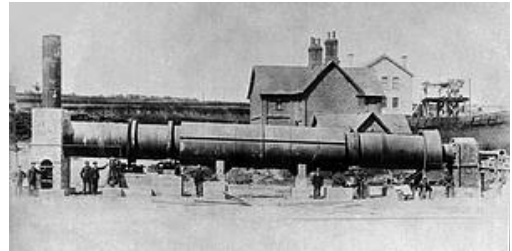
**Krupp ball mill**



**Krupp tube mill**



**Combined ball and tube mill set**



**Early UK rotary kiln c1901**

## Finally

There's lots coming up so don't forget to mark those important dates in May and June:

- **Mouse Bust, Sunday 28 May**, pick up at the Onerahi Jetty at 3.00pm, returning around 5pm.
- **Plant delivery to the island, Monday, 29 May 9.30am** at the Onerahi Jetty for loading and transport to the island. **Please let Emma and Jono know if you are able to help with plant transport from Tawapou at Matapouri, meeting at the nursery at 8.30am.**
- **Volunteer Wednesday, Wednesday 7 June**, pickup from the Onerahi Jetty at 9.00am as usual.
- **Public planting day on 25 June**, to coincide with the start of Matariki. Details to follow closer to the time.



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.

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