



**Friends of Matakohē-Limestone Island
2017 Annual Report
(Written and presented by Pam Stevens, Chairperson
at the
Society's Annual General Meeting on 23 April 2018)**

This year we have focussed on keeping the ship steady. With the challenges of mild weather we have had to concentrate on the basics of pest control, regular maintenance of gear and getting visitors and residents on and off the island safely.

Last year we met the Charities Commission's requirements for a Performance Report following their format and attached it to the Financial Report.. This Report follows a similar format.

Outcomes

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

Structure

A community committee 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 reintroductions are carried out in conjunction with the Department of Conservation. A Ranger is employed and the job is currently shared by Emma Craig and Jono Carpenter. This is a fulltime position and requires them to live on the island in a two-bedroom cottage off the grid. They have a barge for transporting visitors to and from the island and Emma Craig is a fully qualified Boat Master. There is a small boat for their personal use. A trapper, Margaret Jones, is employed for two-three hours a week – the time can be extended as required. Our thanks go to our previous trapper, Bevan Cramp, who is now working hard in Pukenui Western Hills.

Resources (Funding)

We are dependent on the regular long-term funding from our major sponsors, the Whangarei District Council and GBC (Golden Bay Cement). In addition we receive funding from Carter Holt Harvey Woodproducts NZ and Kiwis for Kiwi, together with invaluable support from UBER Group, Rentokil Initial and local businesses that give us discounts, such as Marine North and many others. 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 are from 10 to 30 plus. The volunteers 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 still does an excellent and highly valued job of mowing. Ken Massey again facilitated the annual shearing of sheep. Ian Page provides daily reports to the Rangers on the fire index when needed. Other groups participate in one-day events – the FMG work day.

Our Outputs (What we do)

We continue to host visitors. Groups visiting this past year included Whangarei Girls' High, Matarau, Poroti, Portland and Ngunguru Schools, Blomfield Special Schools, Onerahi, Kamo, Hurupaki, Manaia View and Parua Bay Primary Schools, several different home school groups, Kohatu and Drains to Harbour Holiday programme, Back to Nature Childcare, Engage Childcare, Regent Training Centre, Work Ready, NorthTec, Shutter Room Photo Group, Women in Lions, Opuia Walking Group, FMG Insurance, participants in the School Science Technicians' Conference. Although casual visitor numbers were down, due to the absence of the pontoon, many still visited via boat and kayak.

Hold Community Events

Our most significant event was the celebration to mark the occasion on which the 150th kiwi left the island. The event was held at the Onerahi Yacht Club and was a great team effort by the FOMLI committee. We are part of the Kiwi Nest Programme and an essential cog in the wheel which runs so smoothly that at times it is barely noticed or acknowledged, so we took this opportunity to pause as a reminder to others and ourselves. We are grateful to our Mayor, Sheryl Mai for attending, also Marama Davidson, now co-leader of the Green Party, Pari Walker and Freddie Tito of Te Parawhau with whanau support. Richard Drake gave structure to the occasion. Despite inclement weather Marama was keen to visit the island with two of her six children so was given a very quick tour, an opportunity too good to miss.

Emma and the barge, played a key role in a weather affected Sea Week event and, helped by naval ratings, Black Dog Cats and Sea Cleaners, gathered 15m³ of rubbish from the harbour.

Again, Spring saw the planting of the hutihuti and tapu tini kumara, organised by Te Parawhau and Wairiki Onerahirahi Food Forest, ready to harvest in late April.

Over the winter a number of trees were planted in specialist areas, however, this year there will be no planting. We had to cancel our order at Tawapou as we were notified they have rainbow skink and therefore we cannot add a threat to our lizards and skinks. We will, however, probably hold a family day with some tree releasing and, perhaps, seed spreading.

Facilitate Communication

A monthly report written by the Ranger is distributed to over 200 people. This gives details of all happenings on the island during the month. The Island's Facebook page attracts attention from all over New Zealand and some from overseas. Quincy and Charlie (junior rangers) have recently appeared on the New Zealand Herald website with a short clip and story about life on the island. They have also raised rubbish issues with the Whangarei District Council - parking tickets that washed up on the island. This attracted a lot of publicity as did their audience with the Mayor.

When kiwi leave the island they are met at the Onerahi Yacht Club ramp by Freddie Tito and well-wishers. Most are released at Whangarei Heads or Tutukaka and now also at Parua Bay.

Councillor Anna Murphy represents the Council on the FOMLI Committee and takes an active interest.

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

We target Pests

We had a worrying time when five stoats made it to the island but no rats. Mice numbers are much lower and there are indications of very few after an extra push to eradicate them. Margaret, our trapper has intercepted eight stoats on the buffer islands and dispatched five weasels. The Onerahi trappers are particularly successful having caught 146 rats and 1 stoat. An efficient team lead by Michelle does a great job looking after the traps which are placed mainly on private property. When we had our stoat incursion we were fortunate to be able to get Ange Newport over with her dog, Macca, to identify hotspots. Kiwi Bank sponsors Ange and Macca.

An audit of our traps and systems was carried out by Glen Coulston. He recommended a few improvements and these have been implemented. Rentokil Inital's sponsorship by way of supplying rat and mice poison is highly valued.

In late summer 2018 wasps became an issue and prevented the mouse bust. Unfortunately the successful programme of poisoning we observed in the Abel Tasman and Nelson lakes districts could not be applied on Matakoho-Limestone Island as paper wasps are not attracted to this poison.

Enhance Flora and Fauna

Kiwi numbers moving off the island have surpassed the 150. Many hours are spent annually reporting kiwi movements and making the funding application to Kiwis for Kiwi. This comes at considerable cost to our project time-wise as Ranger time, barge expenses and the preciseness necessary before our application is accepted, can take many hours. This year we are hopeful our unique role will be acknowledged and we will be funded accordingly.

The number of different bird species observed on the island stands at 51 and there are 9 species of lizard. Lizard monitoring shows that our precious geckos and lizards are breeding and spreading.

Three petrels have so far returned – at a time similar to last year.

Infrastructure and Gear

Whangarei District Council trimmed some trees for us and this has allowed more sun in to the Rangers' cottage. Also the solar system is coping better.

We now have a Maritime Operator's Certificate and Maritime Transport Operations Plan that will be audited in two years' time. During the 150th kiwi release celebration I took the opportunity to seek the advice of Marama Davidson and think it is worthwhile lobbying the Ministry to consider some concession for voluntary groups as it seems the high charges for Marine Certificates and Plans should be aimed at commercial operators.

A major expense recently was the replacement of the 12-year old motor on the barge which failed completely. Marine North personnel were fantastic as they realised how essential it was to speedily obtain and install a replacement – probably jumping the queue of recreational fishermen.

Despite it not being a dry year we have still been fire conscious. Wormald checked the fire extinguishers and FOMLI's Ian Page arranged for Rory Renwick, Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officer to visit and review our systems. One recommendation he made was to widen the central trap line to make an extra fire break.

Emma and the island's barge are now part of the Oil Spill Responder Team which means she is on call in the event of a spill in the harbour.

The pontoon has had to be replaced so has been missing for some time now. Whangarei District Council advise it will take some time but hopefully, will be ready for summer 2018.

I would like to acknowledge all the members of the Committee – Carla and Jan for administration, Sandy and Jerry as treasurers, John, Ken and Dwane for their practical contribution with strong backup from Theda, Michelle, Rosemary, Ken and Paul. During the year Jane Winton, Derek Bettesworth and Tanya Sinclair resigned from the committee – to them I extend a big thanks for their invaluable contribution.

A very special thank you to Emma, Jono, Charlie and Quincy who work hard and take wonderful care of Matakohe-Limestone Island, appreciating and reporting all

the action on and around it, not only raising issues regarding rubbish but telling us about sightings of orca, seals, a leopard seal and even messages in bottles washed up on the shore.

Pam Stevens
FOMLI Chair,