



Matakohē-Limestone Island Rangers' Report March 2018

Visitors, Volunteers, and Other Comings and Goings

- The poor weather throughout February and early March has meant few self-propelled visitors turning up on the island. The seemingly weekly visit by tropical cyclones has kept most away and even the few still days have been mostly overcast.
- We had a visit from a home schooling group with families from as far away as Paparoa in late February. Emma was surprised to discover that home schooling mum, Dawn, who organised the trip was an old friend from primary school. We also had a visit from the two year-four classes from Hurupaki School who got the full island tour as part of their school camp in mid-March.
- We also had a visit from LeeAnn and her Shutter Room photography group. For many of this group it was their first visit to the island and they were able to get various interesting photographs from, and of, the island.
- We were grateful that Murray from Northland Parkcare was able to spend two days on the island to scrub bar the public tracks in advance of the planned 150th kiwi release event due to be held on the island, and Dave did another fabulous job trimming the bait stations access lines and fire breaks with the tractor and slasher.
- We had a great volunteer Wednesday with the focus on tidying around the Manager's House and trimming the public tracks in advance of the 150th kiwi event. We were pleased to have two staff from Saeco Wilson in Whangarei come over; despite being local boys they hadn't visited the island before and enjoyed their time mowing the famously difficult visitors' shelter lawn and grubbing thistles around the ruins, before a quick run up to the pa. A lantana and a Taiwan cherry growing up the insides of the blocks of one of the Manager's House internal walls were removed thanks to volunteer Richard. It was deceptive how large they were; only the top few leaves were visible from the ground. Charlie and Alison weeded around the kumara and everyone has commented on how much better they are looking compared to last year. The combination of plenty of rain and the pukeko-proof wire cages protecting them has given them a much better start this time around.
- At the conclusion of the 150th kiwi celebration, of which more below, we were pleased to be able to take Green MP Marama Davidson, Freddie Tito and their whanau over to the island for a quick visit.

Flora and Fauna

Plants

Unfortunately, due to ongoing biosecurity issues we will not be undertaking planting this autumn. The break from planting will allow time for planning for future years' plantings and finding a plague skink-free source for new plants for the island. Growing them on the island from thriving resident stock may be considered.

Lizards

This year marks ten years since shore skinks were translocated to the island. This means it is time to monitor them as per the DOC translocation permit. This work is scheduled to occur shortly and it will be interesting to see what we turn up.

Kiwi

It has been a big month for kiwi on and off the island, with the major milestone of 150 kiwi being released from the island, being met. While the original plan called for the celebration to be held on the island, ex-tropical cyclone Hola intervened and instead 65 guests enjoyed FOMLI's hospitality at the Onerahi Yacht Club. Huge thanks to the Yacht Club for accommodating us at short notice, especially as they were hosting their own event at the same time.

The big day began with Emma picking up Todd and Jack Hamilton and Ngaire Tyson at 9am to catch the four birds that had been caught and transmittered over the month before. That work went fairly smoothly, although a close encounter with a wasp nest was less than desirable. The catching was wrapped up by 11am with weighing, measuring and transmitter attachment completed by midday and the birds taken over to the Onerahi Yacht Club.

Kaumātua Freddie Tito led the formal proceedings with the support of Pari Walker, and speeches from special guests, Mayor Sheryl Mai, Green MP Marama Davidson, WDC Councillor Anna Murphy and FOMLI Chair Pam Stevens. Kiwi Rukuwai and Ross were named by their new community at Parua Bay, and Harikoa and Mokopuna were named as they left Matakohe-Limestone Island. The four birds went to new homes in Parua Bay. Around 400 locals turned up to the Backyard Kiwi event there to welcome the kiwi to their community, and on the following Monday the birds were reported to be doing well and keeping dry despite the passing cyclone.

As everyone knows, kiwi are the big draw at these events, followed closely by the prospect of some yummy treats. The FOMLI crew tasked with catering the event certainly didn't disappoint with an excellent spread of savouries, scones and biscuits and an amazing kiwi cake! Thanks so much to Theda, Jan, Carla, Sandy, Michelle for calmly feeding everyone and coping marvellously with the last minute change of location, and to Jane for tying everything together so that things ran smoothly on the day. A media release put out after the event was picked up by quite a few papers for digital and paper prints, which temporarily made Sophia (see photo below) a big star!



150th Kiwi event (Clockwise from top left) Emma, Todd, Ngaire and Jack processing birds; FOMLI Chair Pam, Emma and Mokopuna the 150th Kiwi; Sophia Candy; the reason kiwi handlers have scratches and scars; the cutting of the kiwi cake; Mayor Sheryl Mai and Todd Hamilton.

Less than a week later Emma was off to Motuora Island, south of Kawau, to help with the kiwi round up in advance of the release of a dozen birds into the Pukenui Reserve on the western side of central Whangarei. Charged with catching and then processing the birds for most of the night, the crew managed about 20 mins sleep by the time they had to get up again at 6.30am to catch the boat home. Approximately 400 people attended the public event at Maunu to witness the return of kiwi to central Whangarei. We wish the kiwi and the communities which surround them all the best and hope the kiwi will flourish there once more.

In between the two events we submitted a three-year funding bid to Kiwis for Kiwi. This is the first time that multi-year funding has been offered and we hope we will be successful in securing a chunk to cover some of the costs of keeping the predators at bay and keeping the kiwi moving on and then off the island.

Emma has been working with Ngaire Tyson from Kiwi Coast to design and produce some new Kiwizone/No Dogs signs for the island. The current ones are made of corflute and are not faring well in the weather. Those supplied by Kiwi Coast are made of sturdier stuff so should last much better. Many thanks to Ngaire and Kiwi Coast for supporting us with these signs, and we look forward to seeing the finished product.

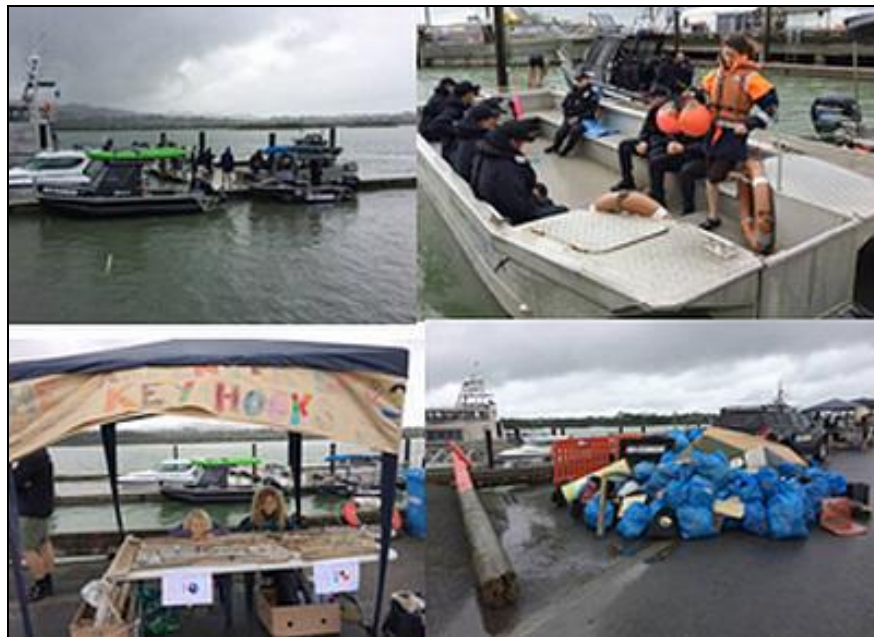
Pest Control

- We reported on our stoat incursion and response in last month's report and are pleased to relay that, while no new stoats have been trapped on the island, no fresh stoat sign has been observed over the last few weeks. Another stoat was caught on Knight Island to the south of Matakoho, so we can see the buffer trapping was working in this instance. With the reduction of stoat sign and the change of season (and a decrease in the number of stoats around) we are starting to adjust our regime from incursion response back to the usual methods.
- We have received a draft report from Glen Coulston following audit of our trapping regime and have already incorporated many of his recommendations and are working on the remainder. Emma made up some 100g weights to test the traps and Margaret has been using these on the rest of the island and buffer traps to ensure they are correctly adjusted. There has been a noticeable decrease in sympathy springing since the traps have been adjusted.
- We received another instalment of bromadiolone from Rentokil Initial which was very much appreciated and has enabled us to keep our bait stations topped up.

Other Events

- The Seaweek harbour clean-up event on Sunday 4 March was a big success despite the terrible weather on the day, with easterly squalls passing over and putting a bit of a dampner on the shore-based activities for the public. Nevertheless a huge amount of rubbish was collected from the upper harbour, and we were very pleased to be able to do our bit to contribute to getting this pollution out of the water. Emma took ten navy personnel out on Petrel Tua Toru and collected rubbish from around the railway causeways and bridges between Port Nikau and Portland. Jono stayed at Port Nikau with the boys, who set up a stall selling key and coathooks made from driftwood collected while picking up rubbish from the island and surrounding islets.
- The aim of the day was to remove 15m³ of rubbish and the target was reached via the usual sorts of flotsam and jetsam which washed up on the island, but also heaps of tyres, a long-lost HUGE channel marker, and a plywood dinghy. It was great to meet the crew from Sea Cleaners and we plan to try to tie in with their events in our area in the future. Also involved on the water on the day were Black Dog Cats, who looked after us so well last year with repairing and anti-fouling Petrel Tua Toru.

- Unfortunately while the rubbish collection event went off without a hitch, on the return voyage the engine overheat alarm on Petrel Tua Toru started sounding. After testing the engine the following day and having the same problem show up Emma contacted Jono from Marine North who dropped everything to come and have a look early on the Tuesday morning. Jono's hopeful initial diagnosis of a corroded terminal on the alarm sadly turned out not to be the case when steam started whistling from the tell tale and further inspection revealed a failed head gasket. A quick decision needed to be made between stripping the motor down and seeing if that and any other damage was fixable or finding and fitting a replacement motor at a considerable cost, with the 150th kiwi release event looming five days hence. As the motor was 12 years old and due for replacement in a couple of years anyway, FOMLI opted to go for the new outboard which was sourced, ordered, delivered and fitted by Jono on the Friday. A massive thanks to Jono and Marine North who went above and beyond to provide such speedy service!
- Regrettably the stuffed motor also stuffed up the day Dewi from Opus had booked Emma and the barge to carry out an inspection of the GBC Winstone pier at Portland. With the new motor functioning perfectly we now just need to wait for our calendars and the weather to align to reschedule this work.
- Colin from Wormald met us at Onerahi one morning to carry out the annual inspection of the island fire extinguishers. One issue that was discovered was blocked pipes – thanks to the building expertise of the local mason bees. These were all cleared out and caps added to the ends of the pipes to prevent reconstruction.



Sea Week Harbour Cleanup 2018 (clockwise from top left) the flotilla loading for departure; Emma and the Navy; Carpenter Bros. recycled/upcycled driftwood key and coat hooks; 15m³ of harbour rubbish.S

Finally

- Don't forget Volunteer Wednesday, **Wednesday 4 April**, pickup from the Onerahi Jetty at 9.00am as usual.
- Also, for more photos of life and work on the island, don't forget to visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MatakoheLimestoneIsland/>



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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