



Matakohē-Limestone Island Rangers' Report July 2018

Visitors, Volunteers, and Other Comings and Goings

- We had a good turn out for our July volunteer Wednesday and got some important jobs done. We planted out 100 cabbage trees provided by Dwane and Angela Kokich, putting them in around Badhams Knob and above the quarries at the northern end of the island. We also put the loader bucket back on the tractor and re-metaled the driveway and laid rock in the steeper drains to slow down the water which has been coming down with such force and scouring out the driveway, with the work continuing for several days after as Emma was enjoying herself so much on the tractor. A couple of volunteers also installed the new No Fire signs provided by Rory Renwick of Northern Fire and Emergency last month, around the coast.
- We had a small but lively and efficient group over for our public working bee during the first weekend of the school holidays, and managed to pick up a huge amount of rubbish washed up around the island including what appeared to be a high school science lab cupboard door (which has since been upcycled into a coffee table top), yet another curbside recycling bin (we seem to get several of these every year) and the ever popular plastic-coated parking tickets, straws and sushi soy sauce fish. Over the last month and due to the frequent heavy rain, a huge amount of rubbish has been picked up from around the coast. Along with using reusable shopping bags and avoiding disposable wipes, we would encourage you all to pour your soy in-store, disdain soda straws or carry a re-usable one with you, and use the MPark app to pay for parking when you are in town (it's quick and easy, and creates zero plastic)!
- It's been a quiet month for visitors otherwise, due to the weather and season. We did enjoy having fellow island-Ranger, Sue Stoddart from Kawau come for a visit and join in on the public day. It's great to build relationships with other island rangers and see how the different roles compare and jobs get done.



Spreading metal



Tree planting



Rubbish collection



New lifejackets – thanks Hatea Lions

Flora and Fauna

Plants

As previously mentioned, there is no bulk planting this year. In many areas the trees are doing it themselves, with countless seedlings from a huge variety of species popping up all over the place. In areas where these trees aren't viable (e.g. too close to the track), Jono has started transplanting them to more desirable spots. We will monitor this and see if it's a good strategy to use into the future.

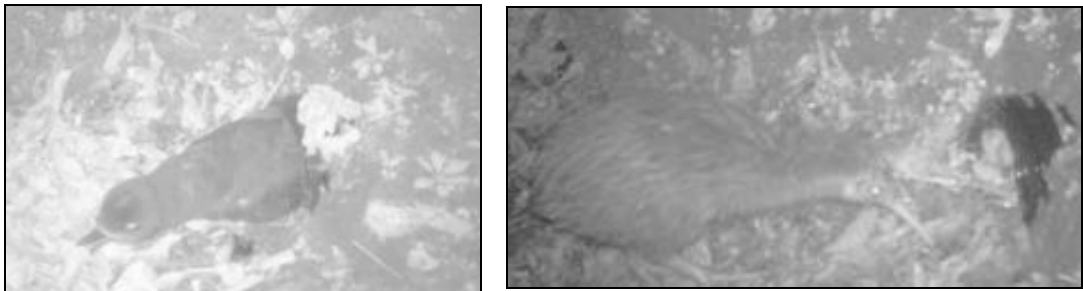
Kiwi

The island kiwi have been very active for the last few weeks, with regular calling around the rangers' residence an hour or so after sunset, including from a very vocal young female who appears to enjoy taking the lead in the communication. The birds are still at it first thing in the morning, with several of us being woken up around 6am by birds calling to each other between the office and the house.

We are very excited to have a substantial increase in funding, confirmed for three years, from Kiwis for Kiwi. This more accurately reflects the actual amount of ranger time involved in the island kiwi creche, buffer trapping, and associated boat transport for the kiwi coming on and off the mainland. Emma, FOMLI treasurer Sandy Page and Chair Pam Stevens worked very hard earlier in the year to produce a tight funding application showing where all the dollars lay and their hard work has really paid off, and we are grateful to K4K for recognising this, and the value of the island as a kiwi creche.

Petrel

We are pleased to report that we have a petrel on an egg up at the petrel station. It is the same pair (plus one) that laid last year, so we are hopeful they have themselves sorted this time around. We are grateful to Ngaire and the Kiwi Coast project for loaning us a trail cam to monitor the burrow and we have been getting some nice images and video of the petrel coming out to grab leaves from in front of the burrow to nest with, along with the usual curious kiwi and occasional pheasant. Some of the video footage has the petrel calling and we look forward to sharing some of this neat footage with you via Facebook.



Petrel grabbing leaves for the nest, and a curious kiwi

Other Fauna

We have been enjoying seeing increasing numbers of white-faced heron roosting in the tops of the macrocarpas in front of the ranger station and manager's house ruin. This time of year huge trees are a bit of a pain as they block the afternoon sun from the solar panels and drop branches in storms, but we do appreciate the privacy they afford the ranger station and the habitat for the birds. We have also seen and heard banded rail around the manager's house ruin and ranger station several times over the last few weeks; it's always nice to confirm these shy little guys are still around. We have also had two pairs of paradise shelducks around, scrapping with pukeko on the manager's house ruin lawn, most recently.

Pest Control

- We had a frighteningly close call with a stowaway juvenile plague skink (formerly rainbow skink) spotted and grabbed by a couple of kayakers just after they arrived on the island. The kayakers had the wherewithal to capture it then found Emma to check identification. A combination of size and behaviour, and a close-up photo of the scales on its head were used to identify that it was indeed a plague skink, so our diligent friends took it back to the mainland to be disposed of. We are so grateful that these visitors were skilled up enough to realise the risks and know what to do with the lizard. This goes to show how easy these pests could get over to the island by hitching a ride (even on a small vessel!) so if you are doing a self-propelled visit, particularly on a vessel that hasn't been moved in a while or has enclosed spaces, rope storage and the like, please give it a thorough check before hitting the water. This is useful not only for lizards, but also ants, rats and mice.
- Speaking of mice, we are reassessing their control on the island in light of the amount of poison we have been putting out into the bait stations during the quarterly mouse busts over the years, much of which appears to be ingested into island invertebrates, and then presumably ascends up the food chain. As these second-generation anticoagulant toxins bioaccumulate and may also bioamplify or increase in toxicity as this occurs, Emma has been working through options to replace the ongoing use of bromadiolone on the island, supported by Jon Thompson from Rentokil Initial. In the interim, we are trialling targeting the problem areas for mice based on results from tracking tunnels, with pied piper bait stations and bromadiolone, rather than continuously rolling bait through the bait station grid to knock the mice numbers down, as we did last year.
- Our trapper Margaret had to rescue a couple of trap boxes that had been turned over (but luckily not floated away) after the recent huge tides and Emma found a bait station washed up at Shipwreck Bay from somewhere on the island buffer. Other than that, trapping is currently quiet on the island and buffer over the last month with a single rat caught on the island and buffer each since the last report.

Other Events

- We were absolutely thrilled to receive 14 new lifejackets worth \$1300 from the Hatea Lions this month. The ladies of the Lions had a fun (but wet and bumpy) trip out to the island earlier in the year and after asking if there was anything to do to help, kindly worked with All-Marine to provide us with a bunch of new jackets in a variety of sizes from small child up to extra large adult. These are a good quality vest-style jacket from New Zealand company Hutch-Wilco. They are intuitively easier to put on than the old over-the-head style, especially for younger passengers, so will undoubtedly make the task of getting everyone kitted up before any boat journey quicker. This is particularly useful when we have large school groups requiring 3-4 return trips to get everyone across. Added to the six matching lifejackets purchased with support from the Onerahi Lions last year, we now have 20 jackets from Lions. These will be well utilised and we really appreciate the support.
- FOMLI committee members and the rangers held a strategic planning session this month to plan for the next five years on the island, including core ranger work and new projects (Thanks to Commodore James Blackburn and the Onerahi Yacht Club for making their facilities available.) We are aware of both the level of competition for funding and volunteer labour in the conservation and environment field, particularly in Whangarei. With that in mind and in recognition that May 2019 will be the thirtieth anniversary of this special island coming into public ownership, we plan to celebrate the milestone and the continuing success of FOMLI's mission with a month of events and outreach on the mainland and on the island as a way of reconnecting with the community and hopefully introduce some new friends to the island. In particular we want to improve our relationship with the local community at Onerahi, make new relationships with District schools that are yet to include the island in their excursion opportunities, and develop relationships with businesses and corporates wishing to give back through volunteering. Stay tuned for more as plans progress.

Finally

Don't forget Volunteer Wednesday, Wednesday 1 August with pickup from the Onerahi Jetty at 9.00am as usual.



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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