



Matakohē-Limestone Island Rangers' Report September 2018

Visitors, Volunteers, and Other Comings and Goings

- We had a lovely day with out with Chris and his students from Nga Ara Tonui/Successful Pathways this month. Although the weather wasn't the nicest, they happily cleared out the watertables and sumps along the driveway and the all-weather track over to the cement works' ruins.
- Our Northtec students Alsie, Kelsie, and Lei have been busy practising their telemetry and kiwi monitoring skills, getting to know the weedy patches on the island, doing pest indexing and control, clearing vegetation for the Caspian tern nesting area on the Knight Island shell bank and helping out with Petrel Tua Toru's monthly service, among other things.
- We also had Murray and Andrew from Northland Park Care over to weed-eat the public walking tracks. Jason from Marine North came out at short notice to fit a new drain plug and housing to Petrel Tua Toru, after Emma pulled the boat out for its monthly service and noted the hull was full of water.
- After almost five weeks we were able to secure the services of a gas fitter, and Gene from Northland Plumbing and Gas came over for the day and disconnected the old califont, replaced it with a new one, replaced all the undersized pipework under the house and replaced the clapped out regulator and pigtails and added an emergency cut off switch and drain to the bottle supply. Although it took a while, Northland Plumbing and Gas were the only ones who ultimately returned our calls, came back with a date and got the job done with a minimum of fuss, out of the half a dozen local companies we called. Thanks guys; a hot shower has never felt so good!
- Unfortunately we had to cancel volunteer Wednesday at the last minute this month, as just after sorting the gas, our generator stopped working. Getting it into town and picking up a hire generator required both rangers and the barge for several hours on the Wednesday morning and we apologise to those hardy souls who turned up at the jetty expecting a good day out.
- It was lovely to have Fred Tito, Rosa and Kora over to the island to bless our new oi/grey-faced petrel chick, and Todd came over to help Emma wrangle the first of this season's kiwi to be transferred back to the mainland; more about both these events below.
- We were very grateful to get Miriam Ritchie and her stoat dog Woody over to the island for a day this month, to see if there was any sign of the trap shy stoat we reported on last month. We are pleased to report that there was no indication of any recent stoat activity on the island in terms of scent or scat, which is a huge relief with the recent hatching of our first oi chick and the start of spring heralding the arrival of the first of this breeding season's kiwi chicks.



Flora and Fauna

Plants

The clematis at the Ranger Station is in full flower and quite spectacular at the moment and the tui are hitting the karo flowers pretty hard too, in between visits to the kowhai. The mountain flax around Badhams Knob have really come away over the last couple of months and are putting out stems at the moment, and the first native hibiscus flower popped up at the Manager's House ruin recently.

Kiwi

The first kiwi whakawaatea of the spring was held on 9 September. Todd and Emma successfully re-caught the birds Emma had found and transmitted in the previous weeks, one up at the petrel station and the other caught on the run around the school site. They took them over to Onerahi where a group of about 30 heard the kiwi conservation message. The kiwi were then taken out to the Whareora Hall for an event with the Whareora Landcare group and the Kiwi Coast team, attended by more than two hundred enthusiastic locals. Donald and Ariki the kiwi proved very popular and you can see photos from the day on the Kiwi Coast Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/kiwicoast/>. Both birds are getting out and about in their new homes at Pataua North, according to updates from Todd. Donald was named for the Donaldson family who have farmed at Pataua North for many generations.



Todd doing his thing at Whareora and Ariki the Kiwi
(Photo credit to Kiwi Coast)

The next release is planned for late October, so we will give you more details in next month's report.

Emma had a final meeting with DOC's kiwi ranger Rolf Fuchs, who has left for greener pastures at the NRC. He was always very accommodating of our kiwi needs on the island and has been a pleasure to work with over the last few years. He will be greatly missed but we expect to still see him around as he gets out and about in his new role.

Petrel

As you may have seen on Facebook or in the newspaper, Father's Day 2018 was particularly special as we had a new dad on the island! On Sunday 2 September Emma went up to check on the nesting petrel and found a brand-new chick tucked under its dad.

Fifteen years in the making, this one little chick is a huge milestone. In 2004 the first of seven translocations of juvenile oi/grey-faced petrels was made from Taranga/Hen Island to Matakohe-Limestone Island. This, and the subsequent six translocations took effort and dedication from dozens of people over the years, many of them volunteers. The birds have been returning since 2010, with two previous breeding attempts, in 2013 and last year, both of which failed at the egg stage.

The day after the chick was found, Fred Tito came over to welcome and bless the chick, and to give it a name. As the first kiwi hatched on the island was given the name 'Ahi Kaa', it was fitting that this new oi chick was bestowed the name 'Ahi Kaa Tuarua' as part of the ritual and blessing and to acknowledge the significance of the first oi chick to hatch on the island in living memory.



Ahi Kaa Tuarua going solo

Other Fauna

We have had some interesting finds out and about this month, including a shed forest gecko skin, a fantail nest made almost completely from mothplant 'kapok', and a washed up rat.



Mothplant kapok nest and
Forest gecko skin

Pest Control

- As noted above, we were pleased to get Miriam and Woody the stoat dog out, and even happier to find no recent stoat sign on the island. However we cannot afford to be complacent and while our traps on the island have still been empty over the last month we know there are plenty of pests over on the adjacent mainland.
- With that in mind we have elected to put a short pulse of brodifacoum in twelve limited access bait stations on the island where mouse activity has been recorded in tracking tunnels put out this month. We hope that putting a new poison through will appeal to mice which have built up a tolerance for bromadiolone, and that future predation of mice by any stoats making it to the island will kill the stoat via secondary poisoning. Brodifacoum requires a greater degree of care in its use, so if you visit the island over the coming weeks you will see signs out noting its presence; it is only being used in the mousy areas and any uneaten baits will be retrieved at the end of the operation.
- Emma attended a meeting with the Onerahi trappers hosted by Michelle. It was a good opportunity to touch base with how things are going on the mainland and maximise trapping opportunities in the urban environment. As noted above, the island traps have been empty this month but Margaret reports weasels and rats in the traps around the buffer.

Other Events

We were grateful once again to Ivan and Northland Waste, who came out to Onerahi and collected four bins worth of washed up rubbish and weeds, and another eight sacks full of coastal detritus, plus a couple of council recycle bins and a guitar case which had washed up! We also said goodbye to the much-loved yellow electric car we found washed up on Rat Island a few months after we first arrived.

Finally

Don't forget **Volunteer Wednesday, Wednesday, 3 October** 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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