



Matakohē-Limestone Island Rangers' Report March 2019

Visitors, Volunteers, and Other Comings and Goings

- We started the month with the annual Whangarei Hash House Harriers run around the island. Two boatloads of boisterous Hashers enjoyed a twilight run around the island and a sunset swim and sausages. We don't really understand their rituals but as we promote tolerance for all peoples and cultures, even the unusual and inexplicable ones, we look forward to their return to the island next year!



- We also had another lovely visit from the junior students from Blomfield Special School. Once again we are in awe of the teachers and carers, and their students. We really appreciate the effort they make to get the kids out to the island. Charlie's cub troop from Shackleton Sea Scouts also came out one evening for a quick walk around the island.
- Dave came over to do the mowing so thanks Dave! We rescheduled volunteer Wednesday due to Emma's absence catching kiwi in Taranaki, but had Pam and Sandy over to work on their adoptaspot, while Jono, Sweetie and her friend trimmed the vegetation on the School, Badham's Knob and Loop tracks. On the rescheduled day, 20th of March, Diana, Pam and Kelsie came over. Emma, Diana and Pam set out new indexing tunnels across the island while Kelsie did a macroinvertebrate survey in the six pack ponds and bagged up more old fencing wire to take off the island.
- Johnny and Luke from Black Dog Cats came over to look at some repairs that need doing to the little boat. The transom is cracking around the outboard and they will be adding some reinforcing inboard and outboard to prevent it flexing so much.

Flora and Fauna

Plants

The feijoa tree at the Manager's house ruins is fruiting, and we are really enjoying the mostly guava moth-free treat of these small but tasty fruit every day.

Kiwi

We have released another kiwi chick on to the island, probably the last of the season.

Emma has been rounding up kiwi for the next transfer back to the mainland, with one nabbed on the back deck at 11pm one evening, making for the easiest catch of the year. A second bird was caught for the last transfer but was left on the island as its sibling was caught for transfer at the same time and we want to avoid any potential inbreeding back on the mainland.

The transfer is scheduled for 26 March and the birds will be going out to Tanekaha, north west of Whangarei, via a show and tell at Hukerenui School. The usual whakawaatea will be held at the Onerahi Yacht Club lawn at 10am that morning. You can find out more about the Tanekaha-Hukerenui Kiwi Community public event here -

<https://www.kiwicoast.org.nz/events/tanekaha-cpca-kiwi-release-hukerenui/>

Petrel

Petrel monitoring will start again in the middle of next month and, given the successful fledge last year, fingers crossed our breeding pair, with or without their frenemy, make it back again for another go-round.

Other Fauna

Emma, Pam and Diana were pleased to run into a banded rail family of two adults and at least two chicks, when they were putting out the new indexing tunnels. They were at the bottom of the hill track, and Emma reports the chicks were an "11" on the cuteness scale. These fellows are very shy so it's always a pleasure to observe them, however briefly.

Pest Control

- We have had three mice in the island traps over the last couple of weeks, and stoat footprints continue to appear on the sandspit at the western end of the island.
- Emma and Jono spent several days processing rabbit carcasses for bait this month. Never a pleasant job and certainly plenty of gallows humour ensues when dismembering and salting 40 odd bunnies and occasionally being spattered with blood. The process requires chopping the carcasses into small chunks, layering them with salt in buckets and leaving them to sit for a few days to draw the liquid out, then retrieving the bits from amongst the bloody brine and air drying them for a couple of days in a food sage, before bagging the salty morsels and depositing them in Pam's freezer for the trappers. Perfect fun for a hot February week!

Other Events

- We were pleased to receive 36 new indexing tunnels made by the 2018 Year 11 outdoor education class from Whangarei Girls High School, and their teacher Ben Smedley.



- We are still short on water, with the day of gentle rain which followed the last report a pleasant blessing, but a marked lack of any rain, let alone substantial rain, since. While the composite fire danger in Whangarei for grass and scrub is forecast to be moderate to extreme over the next little while, we are grateful for the cooler days and lack of wind to take some of the edge off the fire weather index but will remain vigilant; the smell of smoke on the island on Saturday afternoon gave us a brief moment of worry before realising it was coming from the mainland up the Waikaraka Valley.

- Emma took the structural engineers from WSP Opus out for a day to do their annual inspection for the GBC wharf at Portland. No-one lost their phone overboard this year so, apart from the discomfort of being on the barge for eight hours in full coverage PPE, it was an uneventful excursion.
- The gangway was taken away for repairs and reinstalled the next day, just after the last report went out. Thanks to the WDC and their contractors for such a quick turnaround and I understand we were lucky a barge was going past and could grab it.



Finally

- Don't forget Volunteer Wednesday, Wednesday, 3 April with pickup from the Onerahi Jetty at 9.00am as usual.
- Also, the Tanekaha-Hukerenui Kiwi Release, 26 March. Whakawaatea at 10am at the Onerahi Yacht Club, release at Hukerenui from 5.30 that evening.
- Also, for more photos of life and work on the island, don't forget to visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MatakoheLimestoneIsland/>



www.limestoneisland.org.nz