



Matakohē-Limestone Island Rangers' Report April 2019

Visitors, Volunteers, and Other Comings and Goings

- We have been busy for the last three weeks inducting the new ranger, Darren Gash, into his duties on the island and will continue to support him over the next month before we leave. Darren comes from Mangawhai, studied at NorthTech for his Bachelors in Environmental Studies and has undertaken prior contract work doing pest control for the Department of Conservation.
- This month the Wednesday volunteers cleared the tracks around the petrel station, repaired some of the burrow boxes and generally got everything ready for the nesting season. Grant Stevens also came over and fitted some additional runners to the little boat trailer to stop it bouncing around so much which has contributed to ongoing problems with cracks in the transom.
- We had a lovely visit from Waipu Primary School whose Year 3s were having their school camp at One Tree Point. We had two classes visit over two days, despite one day being very wet. The kids were full of beans and full of questions despite the weather and were probably the most attentive and engaged group Emma has ever given her lunchtime kiwi talk to at the Visitors' Shelter. The kids seemed to particularly enjoy finding crabs under the rocks along the south coast and Australian bell frogs at the cement works' ruins and the rope swing at the Managers' House ruins.
- We also had a visit from the Parua Bay Primary School environment club with teacher Renay Brown. We didn't have time to get them to their adoptaspot at the western end of the island, but we did get some vigorous and enthusiastic weeding of wattles done in the bush between the Managers' House ruins and the six pack quarry, and under the macrocarpas.
- We had Andrew and Murray over from Northland Parkcare for a day doing their usual stirring work scrub barring the tracks.
- As you read this report we will have concluded another week of transporting the Limestone Rangers School Holiday programme to the island – we will let you know how it went in the next report.



Waipu Primary School kids enjoying the island

Flora and Fauna

Plants

Sadly, the feijoia tree has finished its run, with about three weeks of small but tasty fruit with very little guava moth. The rain from mid-March was a huge blessing as both the water tanks were within a few days of running dry and established trees had started falling over. Now the cracks in the island have started disappearing thanks to regular rain over the last few weeks. The plants are all looking much happier with lots of new flowers on the hebes and hibiscus.

Kiwi

The last kiwi transfer from the island this season was a great success, with four birds coming off without incident and all the birds were easy to catch, apart from Todd disturbing a wasp nest and getting stung while grabbing one bird. Two of the birds were seven years old and definitely well ready for leaving the island. One of the birds was a male named Ellis who hatched and got himself named after the Webb-Ellis Cup shortly after the All Black World Cup victory in 2011

The kiwi were released at the Imeson farm at Tanekeha, and you can find out more about the release at the Kiwi Coast project page here:

<https://kiwicoast.org.nz/tanekaha-farmers-release-four-new-kiwi/>

Emma was off for a night on Motuora to assist with the kiwi roundup for the release into Pukenui. Seventeen birds were captured overnight, with Emma assisting with the processing. Twelve of these were moved to Pukenui the next day.

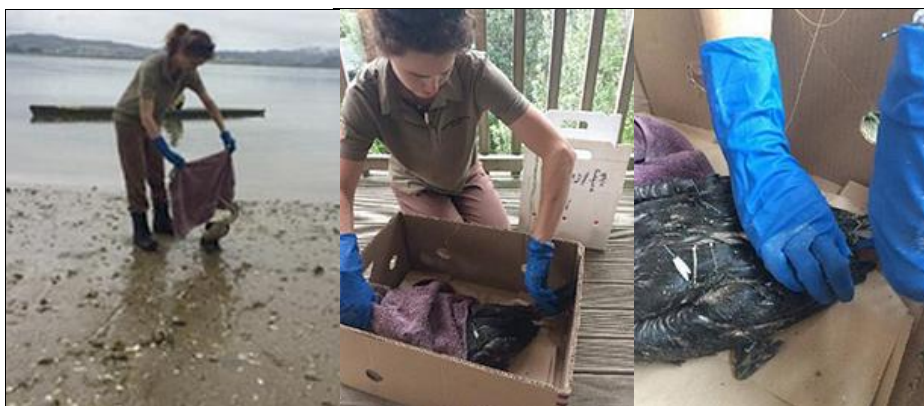
Petrel

The Wednesday volunteers tidied up the petrel station this month in advance of the expected arrival of the birds from mid-April. Emma, Darren and Charlie spent a morning setting up the monitoring sticks in front of the seventy burrows and regular monitoring will now commence.

Other Fauna

We found a very distressed shag on the beach below the Managers' House ruins, all caught up in fishing lines and multiple hooks and sinkers. Just over the last couple of months we have noticed more and more shags aggressively going after fishermen's bait and catch at the Beach Road pontoon, and it may be that this particular bird got fouled.

Emma caught it in a towel and got it up to the house where she removed what she could then Jono delivered it to the ladies at the native bird recovery centre. They and Robert were able to sort it out and it was released back out at Onerahi a week or two later.



Mr Boombastic the shag getting disentangled.

One Sunday morning at the end of March we received a call from the DOC Hotline to say that fishermen had reported a leopard seal on the island pontoon, thinking it was in distress. The leopard seal experts were consulted and provided the advice that this was normal behavior.

Jono rushed over with caution tape thinking to prevent anyone approaching from the landward side getting a surprise, as happened the last time Owha the leopard seal turned up on the island a year and a half ago. Sadly the seal was gone by the time Jono got there but we have been keeping an eye out around the island and on the water over the last couple of months once they were sighted in the harbour. Luckily Ricky Shelford from Golden Bay Cement had been on the water and took some photos and passed them on to FOMLI Deputy Chair, Theda.



Owha on the pontoon (Credit Ricky Shelford), and fishing

Emma had a bit of a feeling at the end of last week and while returning with the kids in the little boat after school, took a detour out to the piles between the west end of the island and Port Nikau and there she was. They spent half an hour watching her fishing. The next day Emma was again returning with the boys and the fishermen on the Onerahi pontoon said the seal had been around. Emma headed over to the channel marker and there she was again, fishing up a storm. She had caught what Emma thought was probably a parore, and spent a bit of time turning it around in her mouth so it was head first down the gullet, then swallowed it whole. Smart seal

Pest Control

We continue to have mice turning up in the traps, and tracking very high in the indexing tunnels. Happily we have not had stoat sign on the island recently.

Other Events

- We had the outboard on the little boat serviced, and a broken grease nipple replaced on Petrel Tua Toru.
- Emma has prepared and submitted the interim report on the funding received from Kiwis for Kiwi.
- Jono gave a talk to the Onerahi Garden Club about the island.

Finally

- Don't forget Volunteer Wednesday, Wednesday 1 May with pickup from the Onerahi Jetty at 9.00am as usual.
- We will also be having a mainland open day to talk about the island and the work of FOMLI at the Onerahi Yacht Club at 1pm on Sunday, 19 May.
- 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