



January 2008

Shore Skink Translocation (Summary)

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Following is a brief summary of the translocation of Shore Skink from Mimiwhangata to Matakohē-Limestone Island carried out in November/December 2007. A detailed report is available.

- A preliminary disease screening of the copper skinks already resident on Matakohē-Limestone Island was carried out in October/November 2007
- Thirty skinks were tested for Salmonella and 19 skinks were tested for Cryptosporidia at Massey University, Palmerston North.
- All tests were negative.
- The collection team arrived at Mimiwhangata at midday on Tuesday 13th November.
- Richard Drake performed a karakia on Kaituna Beach on behalf of Ngatiwai. Those present included Rosemary Drake, Pam Stevens, Marleen Baling, Gerry Brackenbury, Dwane Kokich, Peter and Cathy Mitchell, and a group of Conservation Corps students from NorthTec.
- The skinks were captured using a combination of hand searching and pitfall traps.
- A group of 4 worked the first afternoon from 2 till 5.30 pm. In that time 30 pitfall traps were dug in and set and 13 skinks were captured in hand searches.



- The following morning (Wednesday 14th), a group of 7 checked the pitfall traps, which contained 6 skinks. Hand searching continued and the full quota of 30 adult skinks, (20 female & 10 male) was captured by 12.30 pm.
- It was found that the number of skinks varied with the habitat. No skinks were found or caught in pitfalls on the sandy South Kaituna Beach. In contrast, there were good numbers of skinks found on all the boulder beaches at the north end of the Mimiwhangata Peninsula.

- A deliberate effort was made to spread the catches over as many areas as possible, so that the impacts of removal on any one source population were kept to a minimum.
- In total 61 skinks were caught, 15 of these were juveniles.
- The catch rate for hand searching was 3.9 skinks/man hour, and for the pitfalls was 21.7 skinks/100 trap nights. There appears to be a healthy, breeding population of Shore Skink at Mimiwhangata.
- Thirty suitable skinks travelled by car to the Massey University Campus at Albany on the afternoon of Wednesday 14th November.
- While at Massey University the skinks were all measured, weighed and had identification photographs taken.
- Samples, (faecal samples and faecal swabs), were collected for disease screening and were tested at New Zealand Veterinary Pathology and Massey University, Palmerston North. The samples were tested for Salmonella and Cryptosporidia.
- All skinks were negative for Cryptosporidia.
- Ten skinks were Salmonella positive, 9 for Salmonella Warragul and 1 for Salmonella Mississippi. On consultation with the pathologists at Massey University, P.N. it was decided that Salmonella Mississippi strain was a risk to the island and the positive skink was released back to the capture site at Mimiwhangata.
- On December 22nd 2007 29 Shore skinks were released onto the beach at Shipwreck Bay on Matakohe-Limestone Island.
- Te Warihi Heteraka, as a representative of Ngatiwai, and Te Ihi Tito and Freddy Tito as representatives of Te Parawhau welcomed and blessed the skinks.
- Those present included Richard and Rosemary Drake, Pam Stevens, Marleen Baling, Tanya Munro and Peter and Cathy Mitchell. In addition many members of the FOMLI Committee and members of the general public were also present, approximately 20 people in total.

Cathy Mitchell

Ranger, Matakohe-Limestone Island
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