



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – July 2011

It has been another wet month on the island and things are very soggy underfoot; trying to get up and down some of the steeper parts of the island can be both fun and rather treacherous. On the bright side though, we are past the shortest day and on the downhill to spring and all the island fun that it entails. The little signs are already there, such as the dotterels being back on the island and colouring up for breeding. We have been lucky enough to have new Wednesday wollies, Sue and Don, who are doing some shorebird monitoring (and beach cleaning) for us as well as taking some beautiful photos like the one below.



Mowgli's mate at the sand barge looking very rusty indeed.

Photo: Sue Davy

Kiwi

It's all on for the kiwi on the island now and they have been leading us on a merry chase indeed. We also received the good news this month that our BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust funding application was successful. BNZSKT will once again be sponsoring the mustelid trapping portion of our predator control programme on the island and in the buffer zone. This funding makes a huge difference to the project and means we can maintain our trapping programme at the highest level.

- Early in June when we went to do a transmitter change on Sir Ed, we found him with a very new egg. This was a bit unexpected as it was early in the season and his transmitter was still saying non-incubating. Unfortunately he abandoned the egg after being disturbed.

- We were hopeful that Kahui whetu would lay a second egg with the first and he would return to incubate them both but instead Kahui laid a second egg a couple of weeks later about 10m from the first. Sir Ed is now diligently incubating this egg. We uplifted the first egg and took it down to Auckland Zoo where they are now attempting to incubate it. Because it is such an early egg there is only a small possibility of it being successful but we should know in a week or so whether it is developing.
- Baldrick is now overdue for her transmitter change but has been keeping so close to Glen for the last three weeks that we cannot catch her as we don't want to disturb Glen in case he is sitting on a new egg too. They have both been sitting in the same place for the last two weeks so that hopefully means that they have an egg in there somewhere and Glen's transmitter should switch over to incubating shortly.
- There has also been a kiwi calling near the house again recently. It was very close but before we could mount a search party the rain kicked in so that will have to wait for another night.

Fauna

- We had another great turn out for the second gecko release on 15 June with 17 people coming along to see the nine geckos and the kiwi, 'Te Rata', who was heading off the island to Whangarei Heads to join the mainland breeding population there. It felt very special to be able to farewell a kiwi and welcome the geckos all on the same day. Many thanks to kaumatua Freddie Tito who once again came across to undertake the blessing.
- We were crossing our fingers to find petrels settling down to business in burrows this month but haven't had any more petrel sightings. This means we will have to wait at least another year for a few more older birds to return to the site and consider breeding. However, we will keep monitoring, as last year we had birds still visiting the site until September.
- The spoonbills are back over-wintering in the harbour in good numbers, and can usually be seen around Rat and Knight Island and over toward Golden Bay Cement.
- The stormy weather this month has resulted in a few dead sea and shore birds washing up on the island, including a fairy prion, a sea bird that nests on offshore islands around NZ, including the Poor Knights.



Spoonbills on the north coast

Photo: Sue Davy

Predator Control

For the second month in a row no predators trapped on the island – hurrah! In the buffer there was a bit more action; Ben trapped two weasels, four rats and eight mice.

Sadly we can't expect this nice quiet winter to last though and we are planning an autumn island-wide '**Mouse bust**', using a different pesticide, to see if we can target the low numbers of mice that may be on the island and have survived the winter period. We will be needing lots of vollie help for this so keep an eye out for the email notice and add it to your diary.

Many thanks to Rentokil who have once again donated 10 large buckets of rodent bait so we can continue with our baiting programme. It makes a huge difference to our project to have access to this bait and we really appreciate it.

Visitors

- A small but hardy group of Wednesday wollies refused to be turned away by ghastly gusty weather and came to help with a bit of coastal planting and then cleaning and servicing the mouse bait stations and traps and covers that have been out since the incursion response began. As if that wasn't a grubby enough job we then added drain digging to the mix. The always handy builder, Ian Buckley, also tackled the roof of the sleep-out to track down the source of a troublesome leak. It's days like these that remind us how lucky we are to have such great vollies.
- We currently have Nick Bamford volunteering on the island on a work experience programme. Nick is a second year conservation studies student at Northtec and will no doubt be a great help to us over the next few weeks.
- We had a small group of six planters across at the end of June, all new to volunteering on Limestone, and they helped Ben to finish off the last bits of planting from our big planting days.

General

- We have a beautiful new sign up in the shelter explaining the island's Geology. It is a brilliant addition to the information that is already up there and is a great help for those of us who don't know much about the ground beneath our feet. Many thanks to Fred Brooks and Olly Ball for the technical input and to John Barber for getting it all organised.



- Ben and Nick installed arboreal artificial cover objects (ACO's) for monitoring the forest and pacific geckos. They are essentially a type of foam installed around tree trunks and branches to create artificial refuges that you can then check. It is still quite a new technique but is being used with some success around the country.
- Ben completed the annual Lizard translocation monitoring report.
- Jo completed the annual report for BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust.
- No mowing (but only because it is too soggy).

Upcoming

- **Volunteer Wednesday – 3rd August.** Pickup at 9am at the jetty, returning after lunch approximately 2pm. See you there.
- **Mouse Bust** – Date to be advised. We will need heaps of vollies for this one as we want to treat the whole island in one go and have it all done before summer kicks in.
- The last of the planting - still waiting on the wetland site to dry out – don't hold your breath though..

Hei konei ra
Jo and Ben



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