



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – October 2011

It has been relatively warm and wet on the island which is great if you're a plant, great if you eat plants, and great if you eat the things that eat plants. What I'm trying to say here is... all the island's inhabitants are going bananas over the spring time conditions from plants and bugs, to birds and lizards – yeehaa. Luckily most of the inhabitants are good, although there is the odd one that we are not so stoked on. Thank goodness for our trusty collection of volunteers who continue to help us wage war on the "bad things", all the while enjoying all the "good things".



Two of the "good things", a fantail chick begging from its parent.

(You can tell a fledgling fantail as they have a shorter tail and their "eyebrow" is fawn not white, and also they lack the black and white throat bands of an adult).

Kiwi

- Our kaumatua, Freddy Tito, came over to bless Sir Ed's chick from last season who we found in a penguin box. He was released in Purua and was named "Richie McKiwi" by the kids of Purua school.
- Another kiwi chick has come on to the island from Rarewarewa via Todd Hamilton. This is Wiki's chick and Todd has named her Penny after the ranger who will be looking after her on the island!

- Glen is still sitting tight on his nest and if he has a fertile egg(s) then they will be hatching at about the time you are reading this report. They will get microchips so we can recognise them once they have reached "stoat proof" weight. Then they will head off to the mainland, so don't forget to spread the word about controlling dogs.

Fauna

- The petrels are getting tantalisingly close to breeding. A petrel has been excavating one of the artificial burrows leaving behind tell tale grey feathers and a beautiful nest scrape complete with five finger foliage. As a new dad I know that this sort of behaviour only results in one thing - squawking, regurgitation and strange sounds in the night (and that's just the petrels). Here's hoping the next breeding season the nest scrapes will have their first eggs laid in them.
- We participated in the 2011 nationwide NZ dotterel survey. The last census was undertaken in 2004 when approximately 1700 birds were counted in NZ. This month we found eight birds (four pairs) on Limestone Island and surrounds (Rat and Knight islands) including a three-egg nest on the Limestone sandspit. Not a bad chunk of the population, even if I say so myself.
- A pair of reef herons has been lurking around the all tide berth. We are hoping to catch them nesting, which they like to do in and around rock crevices or caves, or under flax... no shortage of sites on Limestone Island.



A reef heron glides in to the all tide berth. Check out those eyes.

Photo: Sue Davy

- The Caspian terns are nesting again on Knight Island and at time of writing there are well over 20 nests, but this will increase as the season goes on. They said to pass on their thanks to the volunteers for clearing their shell bank. They are obviously suitably impressed.
- This month's piece of random flotsam was a dead red-eared slider (exotic freshwater turtle), which turned up in the mangroves on Knight Island. It was probably a liberated pet that got lost. These sliders have small colonies around New Zealand, although they are not known to breed in the wild as it is too cold.

- Dr Olly Ball and Nick Bamford from Northtec have been installing invertebrate pitfall traps at the vegetation monitoring sites. This will help us determine what critters we have and how they respond to the reforestation of the island. This information will also be important when undertaking reintroductions of animals and/or plants in the future as we will better understand the island's ecosystems.
- One of the six pack wetlands has a number of short-finned eels residing in it. They seem to be making a good living eating aquatic invertebrates and frogs.

Flora

- Dr Ball strikes again – Olly and Nick have been over continuing with the vegetation monitoring. Preliminary results suggest some sites have increased their woody mass 30 fold (yes thirty) since 2008. Wow. Watch this space for the complete analysis.
- Plant nut, Carol Fielding, found a karo with white flowers. Very curious indeed.
- The nettles are settling in well and look very healthy. No admiral caterpillars as yet.
- We've been getting stuck into the periwinkle at a number of sites. With a bit of spray and hand-pulling (thanks James Brooks) we are getting on top of the main site at Gerry's folly.
- I located and removed one reasonably large (shoulder height) phoenix palm plus many seedlings brought over by starlings and mynahs.
- NRC are supporting a bio-control method for moth plant and we did a submission to ERMA outlining our problems with this weed on the island.

Predator control

The buffer is still quiet with three mice and a rat caught on Knight Island. A weasel and a mouse were caught on Onemama Pt. Despite the quietness, Nick Bamford and I spied a dastardly stoat ducking into a hole at the boat ramp on the Onerahi foreshore. A rock was wedged into the hole... the end.

Visitors

- The Wednesday wollies made a great showing this month so we split into groups. One team gave the Onerahi school site a thorough weeding, putting paid to pampas, Mexican devil, and ivy amongst other things. Another group got stuck into our second "mouse bust" pulse. A couple of likely carpenters made some stellar shelves in our haz shed area as well as erecting a cleaning station for the buckets and bait containers, while another duo did a beach clean up and checked on our shorebirds.
- James Brooks and Nick Bamford have been coming regularly doing all sorts of tasks.
- Our very own dentist Michelle Martin has been supplying young Penny with anatomically correct pacifiers and toothbrushes as well as ripping around doing trapping and baiting and baking cakes.
- Maunu Health active kids came over and were guided by Nick Bamford.
- Leslie Allen brought her hiking group.
- The Waipapa has resumed weekend tours.
- There have been heaps of boaties, kayakers and fisher-folk getting on and enjoying the island. Good stuff.

General

- Freddy Tito came over and we buried the fur seal after a traditional blessing.
- The mowing has begun in earnest again. Hoorah (he said somewhat sarcastically).
- Lots of maintenance including replacing barge trailer hubs.
- Murray and the Parkcare team have given the tracks a thorough pruning.
- Brian and the team at Fastsignz did a great job on the dinghy signage and gave us an excellent discount. Thanks again to GBC and Fletcher Building who not only paid for the dinghy, but have stumped up for the signage too. Give us a wave if you see us on the high seas.
- Go the AB's you little beeee-auty.



Our flash new (& dry!) dinghy.

Hei konei ra

Jo and Ben



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