



Kevin Parsons



Field Manager

Kia Ora

This mid-year Sanctuary newsletter is written by the field team – the much appreciated engine room of this 22 year old project. It is their opportunity to share their experiences of the ecological restoration of this beautiful part of Aotea Great Barrier Island.

How long have you worked in the Sanctuary?

I have worked 19 years from May this year.

What do you enjoy and what are the challenges?

Being in the bush and having an office like I have is great, but the only thing I do not like is at my age it's very hard doing the things which I did when I first started the job. The body says "No" - it is really a young person's job. The amount of walking (up to 21ks a day on my fitbit) and the weather is a challenge, but we have made the best tracks around through the different areas. I see something different every day, new growth, new flowers and new bird life.

What are the surprises?

The surprises are when you see a different bird ie, Tomtit, Robin, Fernbird, Kakariki, Bellbird, along with the 3 or 4 Chevron skinks you see each year and you get to take a photo on your phone.

How well supported do you feel in your role & in what ways?

I get all the support I need from both sides of the team. It all works with communication; we talk and get done what needs to be done. The Trust looks after us very well with the best safety gear and boots. Our tools are appropriate for the job and we get all the traps and bait we need to keep the operation going. The time I have worked at the Sanctuary we have grown as a team and we are still learning. Over time, the way we trap, and poison pests has changed, and we are still trying new methods as well as expanding into new areas.

Do you believe you are making a difference to the biodiversity?

We are making a difference and you can see it in the bush, in the trees fruiting, and the bird life.

Do you see the differences between the Sanctuary and other bush areas on the island?

You can see a difference between the Sanctuary and the bush outside by looking at the seedlings and the native bird numbers.

Henry Cookson



How long have you worked in the Sanctuary?

Over 8 years almost 9.

What do you enjoy and what are the challenges?

Finding and doing interesting new things and being in beautiful work-space. The challenges are the weather in winter and breaking in new areas of the Sanctuary.

What are the surprises?

How far we can walk in a day.

How well supported do you feel in your role & in what ways?

We are well organised by our field manager and the Trust provides all our gear.

Do you believe you are making a difference to the biodiversity?

Yes.

Abby Naismith



Do you see the differences between the Sanctuary and other bush areas on the island?

More wildlife and less density of rats.

How long have you worked in the Sanctuary?

I have been working at the sanctuary for just under 3 years.

What do you enjoy and what are the challenges?

I love being in the bush and having a job that keeps me fit and healthy (I have lost over 20kgs just from going to work!). I find the job can be challenging in winter time when tracks are slippery and on rainy days.

What are the surprises?

How far and fast I can walk in a day.

How well supported do you feel in your role & in what ways?

I feel very well supported by the Trust, there is no hesitation to provide us with top quality outdoor gear every year i.e. Boots, wet weather pants, raincoat, thermals, thick socks, solid tramping pack and other items if we need them.

Do you believe you are making a difference to the biodiversity?

Yes, I think we are helping the birds have a more successful breeding period.

Do you see the differences between the Sanctuary and other bush areas on the island?

The changes I've seen are more kakas nesting in our area and more food for the pigs.

Lotte McIntyre



How long have you worked in the Sanctuary?

Since the beginning of March 2019.

What do you enjoy and what are the challenges?

I love working outdoors and being able to work alone most of the time, but still feeling like part of a team. I take pride in our monitoring results, as they reflect all our hard work. I also like that we are able to adapt to changes in our environment by tweaking our methods to suit different areas. But most of all I love the beautiful bush we are surrounded by and feeling like we are caretakers of this unique piece of Aotea, following the different flora and fauna through the seasons and no two days are the same.

The challenges are to keep up your good spirits on wet, slippery days, when pigs have caused havoc with your tracks and traps.

What are the surprises?

How fit and able a middle-aged girl can get.

How well supported do you feel in your role & in what ways?

I always know that Kevin knows best, and he is always fair in his expectations of his team. He knows that every day is different, and you never know what the day brings, so he trusts that we do our best, always!

It is also nice to know, that we have stable employment in these uncertain times and I feel safe knowing Judy and the Trust are able to secure funding so all the amazing work that has been carried out for over 20 years can continue. We are also lucky to be able to upskill as part of our employment at Windy Hill. I have done a first aid course, Growsafe, and a chainsaw course to date. The latter especially has been very useful to me living on the Barrier. As part of our education sector I had planned to go and learn about banding black petrel chicks at Hirakimata this April, but Covid put a stop to that adventure. I look forward to another educational experience later on.

Do you believe you are making a difference to the biodiversity?

Absolutely! Listen to the kakas in February & March, watch the Ruru juveniles sitting on a branch right next to your path, find egg shells from a kereru nest, listen for the scurry of so many different lizards in the leaf mulch and tell me you see and hear this everywhere! Just watch the variety of trees growing within the Sanctuary.

Do you see the differences between the Sanctuary and other bush areas on the island?

Selina Ward



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Much more life and biodiversity within the Sanctuary. We should probably not expect to hear a chorus of birds as soon as we enter the perimeters of the Sanctuary, but if you spend a bit of time here, you will start to notice little things. This is partly due to the bush being allowed to mature, to create habitat for a variety of critters.

How long have you worked in the Sanctuary?

9 months

What do you enjoy and what are the challenges?

Working in nature every day, learning about our native flora and fauna, and knowing you're contributing to the restoration of our beautiful taonga. The challenges are wet, slippery, and muddy terrain on some dodgy angles at times. I am very uncoordinated, which doesn't usually go well with rocks and roots.

What are the surprises?

When you think you're up to a bait box, and you get an absolute heart attack when you pull a big fat ship rat out instead.

How well supported do you feel in your role & in what ways?

Well supported by an excellent team and leader. We may work alone most of the time, but our debrief catch-ups at the end of the day are always entertaining!

Do you believe you are making a difference to the biodiversity?

Absolutely. I haven't been here long enough to notice the long term effects myself. But something simple such as watching a Black Petrel chick grow up and leave home over 6 months, and not be killed off by predators, is very satisfying!

Do you see the differences between the Sanctuary and other bush areas on the island?

I took a trip up to Te Paparahi a couple of months ago for the first time, and I was shocked at the lack of birds, and the huge amount of cat and pig faeces everywhere! I was stalked by two very large pigs, and I heard little to no birds for the dawn chorus. It really surprised me! It goes to show that active, intensive pest management really makes such a huge difference!

The Trust is immensely proud of this team and in awe of their commitment to the job.

The restoration in the Sanctuary is also assisted by:

- Volunteer field landowners Rachel Wakefield, Helga Speck, Bruce and Cynthia Macnee, and Deb Badraun.
- Field worker Dave Harland who supports the work 10 hours a month.
- Dean Medland who diligently manages the feral pigs in the Sanctuary.

Many thanks to our funders and sponsors for keeping this Sanctuary alive and able to meet the goal of creating sustained conservation based employment and training on this remote island.

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Judy Gilbert
Trust Manager