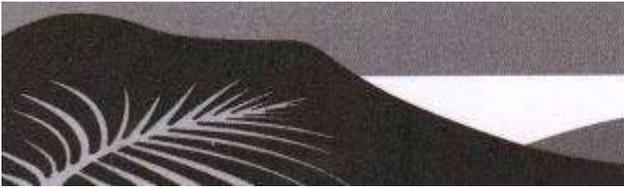


WINDY HILL ROSALIE BAY CATCHMENT TRUST



Newsletter #28 Annual Report December 2015

Seasons Greetings

Did you know that you can set a Snap-E rat trap so fine that it goes off when you blow on it? Yup, you can, and this is the level of pest management refinement that we are entering into as the Sanctuary matures after 16 years of learning. Thanks to a field audit by Darren Peters from DoC for establishing that our traps were set too heavy and to Scott Sambell from Glenfern Sanctuary for training the team how to set the traps 'blow fine'. To the end of November we have caught 3438 rats. Our grand total since 1999 has now reached 45,000! Darren believes that Barrier has rats at plague proportions most of the time similar to the infestations in South Island beech forest during a mast year. Another refinement from an earlier field audit from Brian Shields, Auckland Council Biosecurity team, had us aligning all our stations parallel to tracks and clearing vegetation from around stations. It's all about maximising the opportunities to catch that rat, especially when they are at low numbers!

The Tryphena based Station Rock pest sanctuary area, managed by Murray Staples, uses diphacene inserted into toilet rolls with the ends folded (great recycling) and then the whole unit is dipped in wax before being stapled at head height in trees. Tracking tunnel indices there have been stable at zero for 12 months. Based on this result we trialled stapling diphacene and cholecalciferol in trees in two of our pest managed areas over the last three months with good results – in September Big Windy area tracking tunnel indices stood at 35% and went to 4% in November, and for Rosalie Bay area the percentage went from 10% to 0%. A concern from the field team about this more insecure placement of baits impacting on kaka was closely monitored and two bags indicated the birds' interest which ended the trial. This method would be best trialled again in the winter when kaka are at low numbers.



Volunteer Grant Elliot fine setting traps

Field Team Education Fund

Thank you to the 25 people who gave field team member, Henry Cookson, such great feedback to our last newsletter which he wrote as part of his English NCEA1 qualification. Henry is funded by Foundation North and was sponsored by the Trust to complete this qualification. Scott Macindoe was one of the respondents to Henry and was so inspired by his story that he has established a \$250/month donation towards a Windy Hill field team Education Fund. From this generous donation we were able to fund Field Team Manager, Kevin Parsons, to a Landcare Research two day seminar on Fungi. Kevin can now identify the more than 200 types of fungi we have found so far in the Sanctuary. Our long standing field team member, Rachel Vlasich, will benefit next from this fund with a trip to Tiritiri Matangi planned.

Funders and Supporters

The Trust has had a successful year of applying for funding – thank you to the DOC Community Conservation Fund, Foundation North, WWF, Auckland Council Heritage Fund, and Auckland Council EIF. Thank you to our Local Board for supporting our applications. Thank you for the donations received from landowners and supporters. The key to this project is the sustained employment it creates especially in a remote rural location where jobs are not easily created. Special thank you to our volunteers Dave, Hazel, and Grant.

Thank you also to Sealink and Freightlink for your generous freight sponsorship and Kelvin Floyd for awesome maps.

Work Placement Trainees



It is great to be able to support young people in their training – for a month late this year Eloise Goodison and Josh Robles-McGill (pictured here) undertook work placement in the Sanctuary as part of their Bachelor of Sustainability and Outdoor Education with Christchurch based CPIT. They participated in all aspects of the Sanctuary activities including annual bird counts and a Sanctuary Open Day. They were a delight to have and participated well within the team.

Windy Hill Open Day

Titled 'Behind the Scenes' this Open Day in November was planned to allow its 45 participants an opportunity to see the scale of the work that goes on behind the scenes in a Sanctuary over time. The Windy Hill meeting house was festooned with our 16 years of accumulated data and reports, dozens of published articles, lists of our employees, details of the funding raised, what an operational plan looks like, and graphs tracking rats densities over twelve years. Prior to a great lunch people were divided into groups and taken on a guided walk – how fantastic to have in my group a 3 month old baby and Nancy Cawthorn at 89!

The Goodnature A24 Project

For many pest management projects and Sanctuaries the on-going use of toxins poses a dilemma - trapping alone does not sufficiently reduce rat densities and toxin use comes with risk and social resistance. We are very excited by the recent approval of funding to undertake a collaborative project with DoC and the Great Barrier Local Board of the Goodnature A24 trap. This non-toxic, self-setting, multi-kill trap will be deployed over 100 hectares within the Sanctuary and monitored over a two year period. The area has been under management since 2006 and we have good data showing how well other methods have worked to compare it with.

A chocolate base lure will be used which has proved to work very successfully in several trials in the South Island. Our project will focus on how well the trap works with our suite of pests, particularly the shy and elusive kiore. The potential for this trap to be a game changer is huge – if it works better than manual trapping and/or toxins then the Sanctuary will be able, over time and with funding, to return to non-toxic pest management as we began. The possibilities for the rest of Great Barrier are also exciting, particularly with a new project for managing rats and cats up on Hirakimata (Mt Hobson) in the planning stages.



Pest Busting for 2015

Sustained and ruthlessly systematic management is the only way to keep pests at low densities. With our drier winters the whole of the Auckland region is dealing with elevated rat numbers. Of our 3438 rats just 8 were mice with more than half of the rats caught kiore. Six feral pigs were taken out and the meat shared (thank you Dean Medland), 21 feral cats, and a number of wasps nests dealt to. Rabbits are mainly managed by the landowners but are becoming a real problem. Weeds removed this year include aristeia, agapanthus, Mexican devilweed, and watsonia.

Hochstetters Frog

Earlier this year the Trust partnered with EcoGecko Ltd to carry out a second survey of Hochstetters frog in the Te Paparahi bush, northern Great Barrier. Sarah Herbert, herpetologist, has written an article for Forest and Bird magazine about the surveys and our frog and had this to say: *Aotea / Great Barrier Island is a special place in many*

ways, and it turns out that its frogs are also special. We had known for a long time that it was home to the only island population of Hochstetter's frog, but genetic evidence also suggested that the frog we currently know and love as *Leiopelma hochstetteri* is actually a complex of 13 distinct 'races'. These races have been earmarked in the most recent DOC threat classifications as potentially being different enough to be species in their own right. As for the Aotea 'race'? You guessed it, these frogs form a distinct group that are endemic to Aotea and have been earmarked as *Leiopelma aff. hochstetteri* "Great Barrier".



Te Paparahi Stream



Aotea Hochstetter's Frog

How special are we?

We can now add our very own frog species to the list of creatures unique to Aotea. Recently the Great Barrier Local Board and DOC organised a symposium to celebrate the marine and terrestrial species found on and around the island. "Ridge to Reef" speakers talked about how the waters around Great Barrier have larger pods of resident dolphins than anywhere else in NZ, that we have 25% of all native plant species present, and what a hotspot we are for lizards.

In looking out at the world and the chaos reigning, this Island and our Windy Hill Sanctuary feel more and more precious. It is worth every ounce of effort to be part of working towards holding the biodiversity we have and enhancing the successful outcomes for our special species, like Black Petrel.

I am truly humbled by the incredible dedication and effort of the Windy Hill field team – Kevin, Rachel, Dean, Henry, and Dave. The sense of 'ownership' they have of the outcomes of their work is inspiring.

On that positive note, Merry Xmas, happy holidays, and we look forward to sharing more of our story next year.

Judy

Judy Gilbert

Trust Manager

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