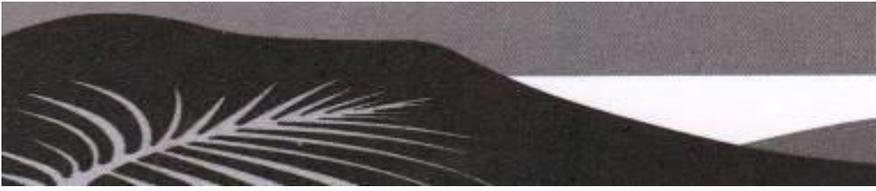


WINDY HILL ROSALIE BAY CATCHMENT TRUST



Newsletter #30 Windy Hill Sanctuary Annual Report December 2016

The Queen is not the only one that experiences ‘annis horribilis’ – this has been one tough year for Windy Hill.

While I may be considered the heart of the Windy Hill Sanctuary, field team member, Dean Medland, is indisputably its rock. Dean began work as the sole field worker in November 1999 and has been with us ever since. When he was diagnosed with an aggressive form of lymphatic cancer this year it rocked our world.

Dean is a fifth generation Great Barrier Islander and the most extraordinary bushman. Windy Hill was Dean’s playground as a child with this property being his immediate neighbour and pig hunting patch. He knows every square metre of this magnificent bush like the back of his hand and has designed and built over 80 kilometres of track network based on a great sense of its contours. I have a deep respect for, and have come to rely on, his acute observational skills and innate sense of the dynamic in the bush.

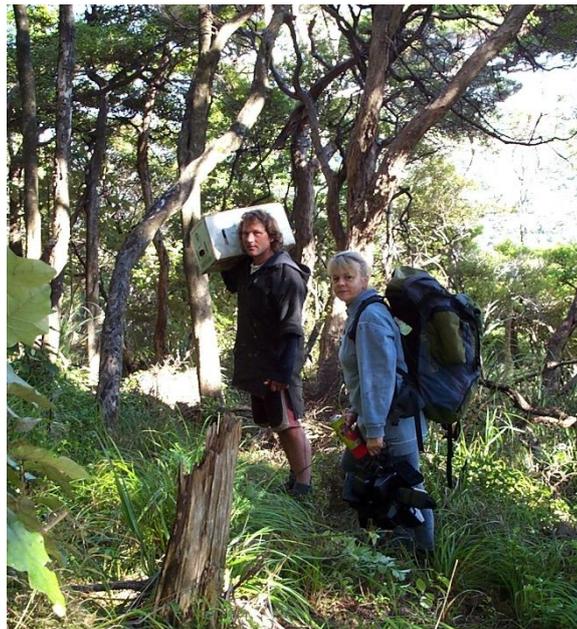
Beginning in 2000, Dean has undertaken every one of the more than 20 Sanctuary bird counts. Bi-annual monitoring of lizards, weta, invertebrates, and seedlings began in 2006 and Dean has done them all – he has become the team expert in this field. For the last eleven years Dean has carried out the Auckland Council Biosecurity programme in the southern end of the island and the twice yearly wildlife monitoring that commenced in the Kaitoke swamp area after the fire there in 2013 is also part of his work.

Since early times we have enjoyed delicious Windy Hill wild pork as Dean became the provider of meat following his many successful hunts to keep these animals at low densities in the Sanctuary. I have learnt much about the deep passion of pig hunting, the cunning and guile required, and the many unsuccessful hunts it takes to have a successful one.

Dean’s partner, Rachel Wakefield, has been part of the Windy Hill field team since 2005 and together this year they have been responsible for getting stuck into maintaining the track network that Dean has built thanks to funding from our Local Board.



Dean track clearing 2016



Judy and Dean in 2003 setting out rat traps

We wish him well with his treatment over the coming months.

Shortly after Dean went to hospital, Sanctuary Field Manager Kevin Parsons also went in for the removal of two areas of dodgy looking skin. Five hours on the table and over 160 stitches later he has had 3 weeks off work and can only come back on light duties. Fortunately, the medical team think they got it all.

Rachel Wakefield, Henry Cookson, and volunteer Dave Harland have incredibly picked up the slack and delivered on our annual bird counts and the final station checks for the year. Fantastic work team.

Pest Management

It has been a tough year getting high levels of rats down following our wet summer but the November tracking tunnel indexes indicate we have hammered them except in the Big Windy pest managed area where we have the A24 Goodnature traps.

Windy Hill	Benthorn Farm	Benthorn Bush	BW Goodnature	Rosalie Bay	Control 1	Control 2
2.5%	0%	5%	40%	10%	60%	52%

The annual tracking tunnel average for the Sanctuary was 11.75% just squeaking in to meet our KPIs for the Community Conservation Partnerships fund.

The Goodnature traps that were introduced to the Big Windy area in February this year have been really challenged to catch the high levels of rats in that area. This project, partnered by the Local Board, DOC, Windy Hill Sanctuary and great support from Goodnature, is just part way through a two year time frame and will be interesting to monitor further.

Over the year we have culled the following:

Rats	Mice	Pigs	Rabbits	Feral cats	Wasp nests
3525	126	6	53	20	15

Since we started in 1999 we have taken out over 48,000 rats through trapping and an unknown number by baiting. Mind boggling!

Funding

None of this work is possible without the generosity of our funders – thank you to Foundation North, DOC Community Partnerships Fund, Lotteries Environment, and the Great Barrier Local Board Environmental Heritage funding.

The recently approved funding from Lotteries Environment will enable us to commence pest management in our new 150HA Taumata pest management area in the New Year, and also send a team to the Mokohinau islands to undertake a red crown kakariki population estimate and disease screening exercise. Funding from the DOC Community Partnerships Fund, announced by Minister Maggie Barry when she was here in October opening our new DoC field base, goes towards keeping our skilled field team.



Judy with Maggie Barry and Scott Sambell who had funding approved for Glenfern Sanctuary

Securing funding to maintain our goals of sustaining the biodiversity of this part of Aotea and to cover the costs of an experienced field team has been a real challenge this year. A gap in funding meant that during the year the Trust had to raid some of its interest bearing Capital Fund. This fund was prudently created many years ago as a backup to ensure that we could meet our obligations to our employees through lean periods – thank goodness we had it to call on.

The Trust has established an Education Fund generously donated by Scott Macindoe. The purpose of the fund is to create an opportunity once a year for a field team member to upskill in some relevant way. Last year Kevin Parsons attended a two day Fungi Workshop and this year it was Rachel Wakefield's turn for a treat:

"I would like to express my gratitude toward Scott Macindoe for funding an Educational Programme for our Team at Windy Hill Rosalie Bay Catchment Trust. I had the opportunity to visit Tiritiri Matangi Island and was amazed to see how much work had been put into the Sanctuary with mass planting and large populations of Bellbirds and Saddlebacks - they love the sugar water that is provided for them in boxes with holes too small for the Tui to boss them. The Tuis have their own feeders which inspired me to provide the Tuis around home with sugar water, I have a few shot glasses tied into some trees, it took about 2 days for them to find it, which I have to fill twice a day. There were a large number of Stitch birds, also North Island Robins a few Kokako, not to mention the Takahe. There were nesting boxes for the Little Blue Penguin which is something I tried doing here but so far they haven't found them. It is awesome to see parts of New Zealand keeping these precious birds from extinction. Thanks Scott." Rachel

Research

The results from the yearlong trial of Nara long life bait indicate that against peanut better the polymer based lures cannot compete. While they do catch rats, it is significantly fewer than traps with peanut butter. We will now investigate the possibility of getting a nut based lure produced and field trialled as long life baits are an essential part of any electronic trapping system and necessary to achieve the goal of reducing the cost and effort of trapping. Currently, we await the results of our application to the Auckland Council Regional Environmental Funding for a 50 unit electronic field trial.

Acknowledgements

A Windy Hill Sanctuary hero to acknowledge is Kelvin Floyd. He has taken what Dean has created on the ground and converted those kilometres of tracks into a series of maps with layered elements such as where our black petrel nest, what lizards we have found and where, how our management areas are defined, and where our cat traps are. Every year Kelvin visits the Sanctuary and we yarn about his escapades doing this same work in the most remote islands all over the world while we update our maps. Thank you.

Thank you to Sealink and Freightlink for their generous sponsorship of Sanctuary freight. Getting stuff to Barrier is a significant cost and this sponsorship is much valued.

Looking forward to the new year with a healthy and well field team and the rats and feral cats on the run.....

Merry Xmas and happy holidays

Judy Gilbert

Sanctuary Manager

