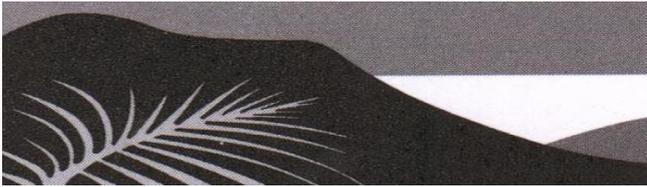


## WINDY HILL ROSALIE BAY CATCHMENT TRUST



**Newsletter # 13      July 2008**

### **Kia Ora**

I begin this newsletter in Hong Kong on my way home after a month spent in Croatia. Looking at my trip through conservation eyes I see that the way we can practice conservation in New Zealand is much related to its relatively recent inhabitation and its isolation. When you have had 2-3000 plus years of human habitation with mass movement of plants and animals across a wide continent the need to conserve 'native' is irrelevant. Being a country of comparative wealth also means we can conserve to the extent we do. On a local level, the pest management projects at Little Windy Hill, Big Windy Hill, Benthorn Farm and the developing new Rosalie Bay area are continuing to restore a better balance for our unique native flora and fauna. I am proud of the Trust's continuing commitment to the broader social and economic benefits to this community through sustaining employment. Times are lean out here with the rising fuel prices severely impacting on all transport, freight, and home power costs.

Assured long term funding remains a challenge and the Trust is broadening its contact with potential funders. The message that projects involved in biodiversity based restoration and enhancement must be supported into the future is getting to funders and Government organisations and other sources of funding are being investigated.

We welcome any ideas, thoughts or expertise any of you may have with this challenge.

### **Field Work**

The project field team increased from the beginning of the year and we welcome back Dean Medland, who joins Kevin Parsons, Rachel Vlasich, and Dave Harland. The team has worked through some hard weather this winter and we thank Auckland City Heritage for their 2008 grant which provides some of the teams wet weather gear.

While Kevin and the team have kept our existing 450 hectares managed for pests, Dean has had special responsibility for designing, and making the trapping route system in the new Rosalie Bay project area. It will take around 18 months to put in all the tracks and equipment - we will then need four full timers to manage the total sanctuary area of around 650 hectares. We welcome landowners Robin Henderson and Rosalie Bay Farms to our sanctuary area. There is a small DoC block between these landowners that we also manage, the second within the sanctuary area.

The new tracking system is being GPSed as we go and will be added to our comprehensive mapping data. Thank you to Kevin Floyd of Te Ngahere for his generous ongoing assistance with this.

### **Monitoring**

Having a systematic monitoring programme gives us good information about the seasonal fluctuations of species, what conservations gains are being made, and a good measure of

our pest management efficacy. The rat trap catch data shows us the rise and fall in rat numbers and the different peak times for ship rats, kiore and mice. The tracking tunnels undertaken five times a year show us what levels of rats we aren't trapping and how effective the two six week pulses of toxin area. Tracking Tunnel percentages currently stand at 9% for Little Windy Hill, 21% for Benthorn Farm, and 16% for Big Windy Hill project area.

We have just completed our mid year bird counts over 18 transects– a total of 432 three minute counts are recorded each bird count undertaken twice a year.

### **Lizard Monitoring**

Trent Bell of Landcare Trust returned in March to check for the first time the 196 Artificial Covers established in the sanctuary area. These covers were being trialed as to their effectiveness as lizard 'motels', the purpose being to find a system that makes studying lizard populations more effective than traps or night spotting. It appears that the covers work quite well in picking up lizards at very low densities in complex habitats such as here and Karori sanctuary in Wellington where the covers were also trialed. The Covers are to remain in place and now become part of our Monitoring Programme – they will be checked annually.

Trent also reported that our lizards are hanging in at relatively low numbers in separate groupings making for a slow recovery, to be expected when the populations have been hammered for decades by rats and cats.

### **North Island Robin**

The 07-08 breeding season was much less productive than the previous one -twelve birds banded and fledged compared to 23. Following the torrid storms of last year three of our males disappeared leaving just two pair to successfully breed. There was a reported crash of tui and stitchbird recorded at Hauturu where they also felt the brunt of severe south easterly storms.

The Trust plans to boost the current small population of birds with another translocation in 2009. Our application is being lodged with DoC. The goal is to have 4-6 additional pairs forming up and adding to our population thus reducing a possible genetic bottleneck from our low numbers and single source.

### **Funding**

Thank you to the Auckland City Heritage Fund for their grant Of \$10,100, to the Biodiversity Condition Fund for their two year grant of \$120,000, the ARC EIF grant of \$5000, and to Lotteries Environment for their recent grant of \$58,000. Landowners continue to make contributions annually.

The challenge is to maintain this level of funding when we have already been the recipient of generous funding from these same providers over the last nine years. Most funding criteria is set up to give a hand up to new projects and not sustain those established – regardless of proven conservation gains and the long term nature of biodiversity enhancement. The Trust continues to communicate this issue with many organizations.

When the Biodiversity Strategy was launched in 2000 it encouraged and offered support to willing motivated private landowners to do their bit for NZ's waning biodiversity. We have been at the forefront of that movement and it would be a tragic waste of money and effort if we were to fail because no further funding was

available. It would also make a mockery of that section of the Biodiversity Strategy for failing to recognize that to halt the waning of NZ's biodiversity one has to commit to the long haul and be supported in doing that.

**Thank you to the following current Trust & Project Sponsors:**

**Biodiversity Condition Fund**

**Kelvin Floyd - Te Hgahere**

**ARC Environmental Initiatives Fund**

**Lotteries Environment**

**Auckland City Council Heritage Fund**

**Sealink Ltd**

**DoC**

**Great Barrier Airlines**

**And to the Great Barrier Landowners:**

**Little Windy Hill Co Ltd,**

**Helga and Peter Speck (Benthorn Farm),**

**Bruce and Cynthia Macnee,**

**Hick Wilkinson,**

**Somerville & Nicolson Families,**

**Blaiklock Family,**

**Robin Henderson,**

**Martina and Pedro Tschirky,**

**Wells Family,**

**Rachel Wakefield,**

**Harland Family,**

**Rosalie Bay Farms.**

Kind regards

Judy Gilbert

Trust Manager