



429 Rosalie Bay Road  
RD1 Tryphena  
Great Barrier Island  
Telephone 09 429 0306  
email lovebirds@xtra.co.nz

Newsletter #5 June 2004

**Kia Ora**

The Trust's translocation of 30 North Island Robins from Tiritiri Matangi to Windy Hill on April 6<sup>th</sup> was the highlight of our five years of pest management on Great Barrier. For those of us involved in the planning, capture, transportation, and release it was a very uplifting experience and one which we hope to repeat over the years as we continue to enhance the biodiversity here. We appreciated the many emails of support and congratulation - perhaps best summed up with the following received from Jim Flack, GBIs Department of Conservation :

*"There's many ways of describing this and here are three that come to mind*

- 1. A turning point in conservation for Aotea. The first (successful) introduction of a regionally extinct species.*
- 2. A landmark achievement after 800 years of decline.*
- 3. A meticulously planned and brilliantly executed private conservation initiative.*

*Words "don't do justice to the first two points and can't, it is just soooooooooooooooooooooo significant."*

The release has been followed by an intensive period of monitoring the dispersal of the robins, allowing us to gain a very good picture of the behaviour of such a species when released into a new area. As of this month we have nineteen birds that have been identified since release and three pairs that have established within the managed area. Three birds have been identified up to 3-4 kilometers away all west of the release site..

The involvement of the community has been great - photos of robins and a description of the banding system used to identify birds has been printed in the local paper and a tape of the bird's call is being played on local radio. This assists people with identifying birds by sound. Tape recorded robin song is also being lent out to people who think they see or hear a robin and this has resulted in us locating more birds than would otherwise be possible. The children of Mulberry Grove School, who participated in the release, have returned to call in and feed two pairs and will follow these birds through the breeding season beginning in September.

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

- ✈ **Biodiversity Condition Fund**
- ✈ **WWF Habitat Protection Fund**
- ✈ **Scottwood Trust**
- ✈ **Pacific Development and Conservation Trust**
- ✈ **QEII National Trust**
- ✈ **Auckland Regional Council Environmental Initiatives Fund**
- ✈ **Auckland City Council Heritage Fund**
- ✈ **Transpower Landcare Trust Grants**
- ✈ **Lotteries Environment**
- ✈ **Subritzky Ltd**
- ✈ **Wilson & Macindoe Ltd**
- ✈ **WINZ & DoC**
- ✈ **Great Barrier Airlines**
- ✈ **Fullers**
- ✈ **Reubens Water Taxi**
- ✈ **Great Barrier Landowners**
  - ~ **Little Windy Hill Co Ltd**
  - ~ **Benthorn Farm**
  - ~ **Macnee**
  - ~ **Wilkinson**
  - ~ **Sommerville & Nicolson**
  - ~ **Blaiklock**
  - ~ **Henderson**
  - ~ **Tschirky**

A Translocation Programme draft has been completed by Trustee Liz Westbrooke and will be reviewed by Windy Hill shareholders later this year before being submitted to DoC. We are advised to consider whiteheads as the next species to be returned to Barrier, once the success of the robin translocation has been ascertained.

### **Field Work**

The focus of our work to date has been maintaining low pest densities to ensure as best survival rates as possible for the robins. Much effort has also gone into monitoring the birds, however, the trapping routes at Windy Hill and Benthorn Farm continue to increase. All 70 hectares of Benthorn Farm is now managed with owners Peter and Helga Speck intensively trapping their commercial macadamia nut crop. Our field team - Dean Medland, Kevin Parsons, and Rose Harland, are continuing to prove that managing such a large area without the use of toxins is achievable. . Catches so far this year - 2428 rats/mice, 18 feral cats, and 2 pigs. 74 goats have been culled by the ARC/DoC contract eradicator Ralph Golaboski along this south eastern coast and an audit is due this month with the expectation that only sentinel goats will be left.

Dean has established 137 monitoring tunnels on two random compass routes crossing through the entire Windy Hill trapping area. This will be activated twice a year and give us an indication of the rat densities present over and above the results gained by trapping.

Our weed management is up to date and we are seeing fewer recurring infestations from seed banks of plants such as cotoneaster. With the removal of the browsing goats the pimelea tomentosa is beginning to become overgrown by other plant species. In order to conserve a good sample of this rare plant, we are going to mark and keep clear around 30 plants and attempt to collect seed for propagation next summer.

### **Benthorn Farm Open Day and Pateke Enhancement**

"Pests, Pasture, and Pateke" was the title of the GBIs Trust Open Day held in November on the farm. It was well attended by about 60 people, mostly local, who enjoyed a walk over the farm and hearing about the successful combination of pest management, farming, and habitat for pateke.

A follow up to the day has been the establishment of a new pateke project on the farm, working with Simon Stevenson of DoC, to enhance the roosting, nesting and feeding situation for the Pateke there. Observations over the last years indicate a very low survival of juvenile birds and it is hoped that some habitat enhancement and extra feed may improve this situation. The first step of the project is to gain more accurate numbers of birds present by night spotting over the next few months. Kevin Parsons will be involved in the counting of pateke, and construction of roosting platforms and nesting boxes.

### **New Landowners Signed on**

The four neighbours south of Windy Hill towards Rosalie Bay - Nick Wilkinson, DoC, the Blaiklock family, and the Sommerville-Nicolson families - have all signed on to become part of our area managed for pests. Thank you for your support and trust in us to undertake this restoration work on your properties. Work will begin on establishing trapping routes through these properties as soon as the last of the southern area of Windy Hill is completed over the winter. Further south we also have the Henderson block and the land owned by Rosalie Bay Farms awaiting our arrival.

### **QEII Covenant on Benthorn Farm**

This year the Specks also completed their QEII National Trust Open Space covenant process and 14 hectares of bush is now protected in perpetuity.

### **Partnership with Ngati Rehua**

Dialogue has been underway for some time with Ngati Rehua regarding the establishment of integrated pest management on iwi rohe in the North, and the assistance this Trust could give. At a recent meeting with Rodney Ngawaka much information was shared as to how this restoration project could be planned, established and funded, and the benefits to this northern Aotea community.

### **Visitors and Visits**

Around sixty people attended the powhiri and release of the robins in April. Along with a visit from the school, visitors included John Early and Rosemary Gilbert from the Auckland Museum Entomology Dept, Rosalie Stamp and Joanne O'Reilly(DoC), and Tim Lovegrove (ARC). This year I have visited the Tawharanui and Maungatautari Projects gaining knowledge about pest excluding fencing options and issues. These visits highlight how lucky we are to have such a small suite of pests to deal with on Barrier.

On 4<sup>th</sup> May I addressed the Auckland Conservation Board, focusing on the robin translocation, this Trust's relationship with DoC, and my perceptions of the Great Barrier Island community's relationship with DoC.

### **Fund Raising**

We are very appreciative of the grants approved by the Biodiversity Condition Fund, Lotteries Environment, and the Auckland City Heritage Fund . Thank you to those landowners involved who also continue to support the work of the Trust with annual donations.

It is important to note the social and economic benefits of our conservation work - there have been nine full time and one part time employment opportunities provided over the last five years, and a total of \$193,647 has come to the Island in the form of grants, and \$138,466 in WINZ subsidies to wages. A direct monetary benefit to this community which is currently experiencing a serious local economic downturn.

### **Contracts**

We are currently engaged with two stoat monitoring contracts with ARC. Dean has set up our twice yearly series of stoat traps in the Tryphena wharf area and also has an intensive trapping/baiting programme operating in Schooner Bay in response to a suspected stoat sighting. So far, so good - no stoats. Lets hope we can keep it that way.

There is an exciting focus on Great Barrier currently as its ecological significance becomes more prominent and the issues of tourism and its impacts - social, economic and environmental - are investigated. Funding is being granted to more landowners here for restoration work and this support from the 'outside world' along with the recent purchase of Kaikoura Island boosts confidence and enthusiasm.

Thank you to the many people and organisations that support this initiative and allow this Trust to achieve what we do.

Kind regards

Judy Gilbert  
Trust Manager