

# Windy Hill Rosalie Bay Catchment Trust

## Newsletter # 7 June 05

### Kia Ora

There is always something new to be discovered as we expand our pest management projects into territory not previously walked. On the Windy Hill property a young kauri to add to the only two others found to date and a valley area of regenerating bush thick with young tanekaha unlike anywhere else on the property. Benthorn Farm has had its best crop ever of macadamias resulting from the intense trapping on the farm and in the orchards.

Of real delight has been the self introduction of a number of bellbirds, including females. First seen in March they are still around so fingers crossed that they breed within the managed area over spring. This first half of the year has seen a period of consolidation as the Trust completed its review of a trapping only style of pest management, published a detailed analysis of its trapping data, and reported on the outcomes of our North Island Robin's first breeding season.

### Trapping only review

After a period of six years managing the Little Windy Hill and Benthorn Farm pest management projects the Trust has now completed its comprehensive review of the effectiveness of a trapping only regime. It is clear from the range of monitoring programmes undertaken between 2000-2004 that trapping only has made a significant difference. Our managed properties have slightly higher bird numbers, more and varied seedling densities, good invertebrate numbers, higher levels of skinks, and reduced rat numbers compared to unmanaged properties.

However, through this review process, the Trust has concluded that trapping alone can not maintain rat densities at acceptably low levels. In this temperate climate, in mature and regenerating bush habitat with food abundance all year, and in the absence of mustelids, residual rat numbers have remained high - an annual average of 52% as indicated by quarterly

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

- ✎ Biodiversity Condition Fund
- ✎ WWF Habitat Protection Fund
- ✎ Scottwood Trust
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- ✎ Auckland Regional Council Environmental Initiatives Fund
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- ✎ Great Barrier Landowners
  - ~ Little Windy Hill Co Ltd
  - ~ Benthorn Farm
  - ~ Macnee
  - ~ Wilkinson
  - ~ Sommerville & Nicolson
  - ~ Blaiklock
  - ~ Henderson
  - ~ Tschirky

monitoring tunnels. The benchmark for the Department of Conservation is just 5%. Trapping only, despite an intensive effort to have trapping systems working at optimum, has therefore failed to reduce rat numbers sufficiently. The Trust is recommending that a twice yearly 'pulse' of poisoning be introduced to the existing management regime to achieve a substantial knockdown of rats throughout the more than 280 hectares that is now being managed. This to be followed by trapping in the intervening months to maintain the low densities achieved. The pulse method, essentially a short burst of intensive poisoning, keeps the level of toxin use and any side effects to a minimum. This recommendation is currently being considered by the Windy Hill and Benthorn Farm landowners.

### **North Island Robins**

The first breeding season for the Aotea North Island robins was moderately successful. Four and a half pairs (one flirtatious female had two partners) were closely monitored between September 04 and February 05. At the completion of the breeding season 13 young had fledged with twelve of these banded. Of the nine nests monitored five were successful with the other four nests predated by rats. The birds have established territories in two areas, both similar habitat to where they came from on Tiritiri Matangi. Three of this year's juveniles have stayed in the area and currently all known birds are being called in and supplementary fed over the winter. We await the next breeding season with anticipation.

### **Field Work**

Our team of four WINZ field workers - Dean Medland, Kevin Parsons, Rose Harland, and Rachel Vlasich - have continued to be the backbone of the work here. They are continuously refining the quality of their pest management, monitoring for outcomes, and learning new skills. The expansion of the managed area into neighbouring properties has been delayed whilst the Windy Hill territory established by two pair of robins, previously outside the managed area, is being included in time for the next breeding season. In March, Jo Ritchie from Natural Logic Ltd, spent 3 days with the team giving training in freshwater species management. This was great fun and resulted in healthy numbers of banded kokopu, eels, red gilled kokopu, and koura being identified. Reports of the findings were sent to NIWA for adding to their data base.

### **WINZ**

A new contract with WINZ has been recently negotiated for up to three workers to be employed on work schemes over the next year. Without this level of support from WINZ the Trust would not have been able to carry out field work or continue to create employment and training for people. Thank you to the Ministry of Social Development for this vital contribution.

A big thank you to Rose Harland who will be finishing her field worker contract with us at the end of this month - she has made a sound contribution to the project over the last two and a half years.

## **Finances**

Thank you to funding organisations and private supporters for your continued support. Subritzsky Sealink generously freights our equipment free of charge and Scott Macindoe meets all the Trust's Telecom costs. The Trust has recently received grants from Lotteries Environment for wages top-up to WINZ subsidies and equipment needs over the next year, and the Auckland City Heritage Fund. This puts the Trust in a stable financial position and planning for the next year can now go ahead with confidence.

## **Benthorn Farm Pateke Project.**

No ducklings have been observed to make it through to adulthood over the past several years. Despite intensive control of rats and cats families of ducklings continue to disappear, perhaps to predation from hawks or pukeko. The Trust has approached the Department of Conservation and the Pateke Recovery Group with a proposal to provide added protection to the pateke ducklings.

## **Rare and Interesting Bits**

Chevron Skinks - There have been three chevrons sighted this year but none were able to be captured and photographed for identification.

Black Petrel - while birds were heard coming in there was no sign of young in the old nesting sites this year.

Rat collections - Throughout March and April the team assisted an Auckland University study on rat distribution by collecting one hundred ship rat tail and paw specimens.

Specimens were also taken from other parts of the Barrier and will be compared for genetic similarities. The team has also recently collected specimens of kiore for display at the Te Papa Museum in Wellington.

Kind regards

Judy Gilbert  
Trust Manager