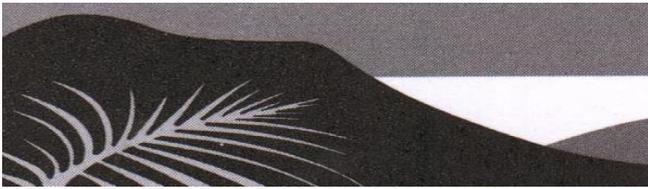


WINDY HILL ROSALIE BAY CATCHMENT TRUST



Newsletter # 11 June 2007

Kia Ora

Winter has finally settled in on Aotea after a long warm and dry autumn. Pest management on the 12 properties currently managed by the Trust is in full swing with rat densities since last the last Feracol pulse in December at an all time average low. Bird monitoring at Windy Hill, Benthorn Farm, and on our control site have just been completed, 500 new wooden trap covers put into place with the assistance of four members of the Biodiversity team from the DoC mainland island at Te Urewera, and the development of trapping routes on the two new properties to be managed is completed. New and interesting research is underway on lizards in partnership with Landcare Research and the field trial with the new No-Rats rodenticide begins next month.

In the field

Our field team of three full-timers (Kevin, Rachel, Dave), a part time contractor (Dean), and a volunteer (Des continue to manage the project areas to a high standard. The current balance of all year round trapping with two 5-6 week pulses of Feracol, a pulse on the perimeter track only over autumn to reduce reinvasion, and extra bait around the robin nesting area, is producing good results. The average percentages indicating rat activity for the last six months are : Control 91%, Little Windy Hill 8%, Benthorn Farm 10%, Big Windy 10%. It is interesting to note that as for last winter, however, rat tunnel percentages are higher now than at any other time of the year. Climate change? It has taken some two years of trialling to find this balance between trapping and toxins with the goal of determining the least toxin use for best outcomes. Measuring the outcomes from the next extended pulse will give us some idea how effective this is over the winter.

Twenty three robins from 5x4 pair fledged in the 2006-7 season, our best outcome yet. The report from the June bird counts may indicate this has improved outcomes for other bird species. A new wooden cover for rat traps has been trialled here and at the Ureweras and proven to be more effective than our existing plastic covers. Thank you to the DoC Te Urewera team led by Lindsay Wilson for their huge input into putting out new covers . It took a team of eight people three days to deploy some 540 covers around the perimeter track of Little and Big Windy Hill area. It is always useful to have other professional conservationists to review practice and share experience. Over the next 12 months, as funding allows, all covers will be replaced. This new cover will also mean that the Feracol baits can be placed inside them during pulses and improve confidence about safe use, particularly for dogs.

Four pigs have been removed over the autumn from the managed area - thanks to Dean Medland.

Control Project

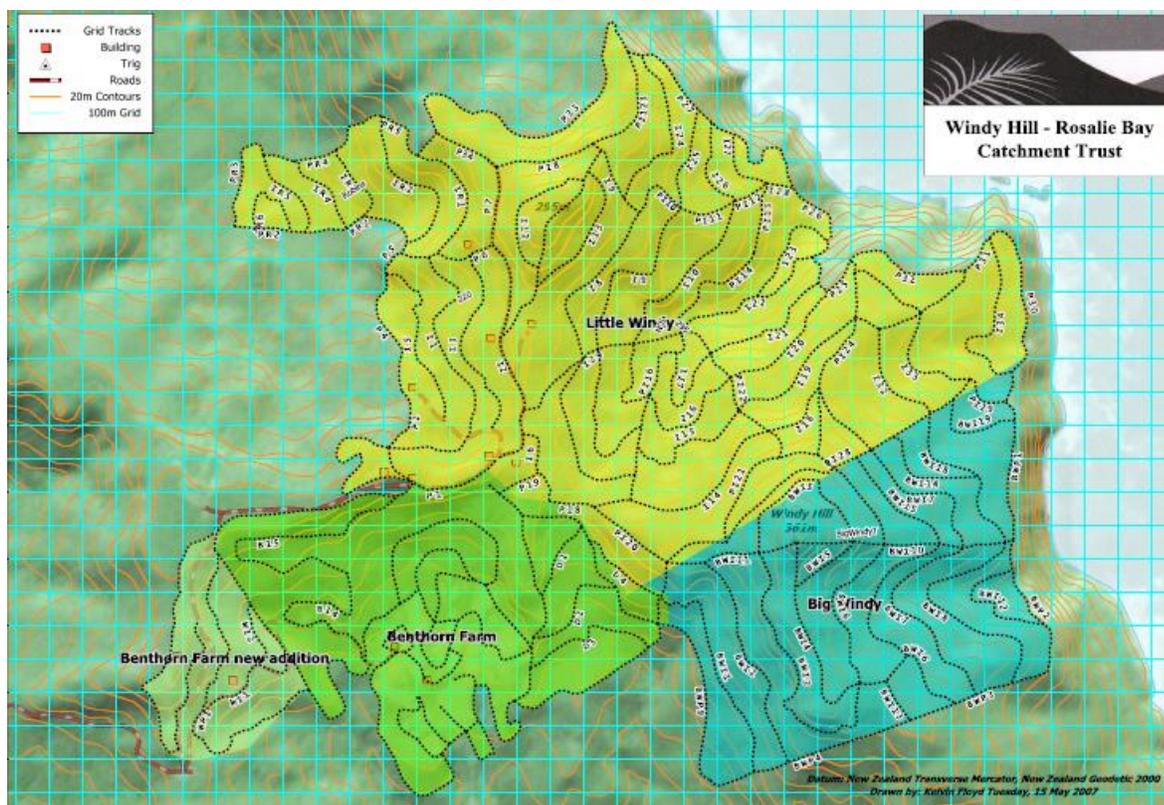
The 'To protect it you need to measure it' control project was established a year ago on unmanaged land in this area thanks to a grant from the Biodiversity Advice fund. Dean Medland has been contracted to monitor rats, weta, lizard, seeds, and birds over the year at the same time and in the same way as these species are monitored in the managed area. The results for rats, weta and lizards have been startling. Rat tunnels indicated 100% (that is every tunnel had rat prints) this month in

the control. At the same time tunnels at Windy Hill were 12%. The average for the year for the control site was 85%.

There were 13 lizards monitored at Windy Hill and none in the control site. Only one weta throughout the year was monitored in the control site compared with forty at Windy Hill. Bird monitoring in June 06 showed more birds in the managed area, however, more time is needed to assess seedlings. The project will continue for a further year with some funding from the Auckland City Council Heritage Fund. Thank you to DoC and Monique van Ditzhuyzen for the use of their land for this project.

Mapping

During this year Kelvin Floyd from Te Ngahere, a Native Forest Management Company, offered to assist us with the technical aspects of mapping the project. We now have most impressive maps of each project area, trapping routes, points of interest, monitoring lines, and bird monitoring stations on topographical maps or photos. There are 60 kilometres of tracks to maintain, over 3000 rat traps and 80 cat traps. Please contact me if you would like a map of your property showing tracks. Mapping of distances between tracks has also shown up gaps and currently monitoring tunnels are in place in these gaps to assess rat densities which will indicate if new tracks are needed through these areas. The map below shows the three pest management project areas and the tracking system within them.



Funding

Our budget has had to expand to cover increased salaries, replacement cover costs, traps for new areas, and toxins. Fortunately, we have been successful this year with grants from the Auckland City Heritage Fund and Lotteries Environment. Landowners continue to also support the project with donations and are mindful of these increased costs. Thank you to all our supporters. A two year

application has also been made to the Biodiversity Condition Fund for the balance of funding required for the next year with a decision made in September.

WINZ

We have had quality support through the Great Barrier Island Employment Initiative from WINZ since 2002. The wage subsidies from WINZ have been a very tangible input from that sector into halting the waning of NZ's biodiversity and been integral in our continued funding for top-up wages from other funders. Unfortunately this will cease from December 2007 and subsidies will only be available through the 26 week Task Force Green which is of very limited use for us. The pool from which to source labour for this project has also reduced with Great Barrier Island being declared a 'black' area for the dole. Our challenge now is to find a way to fully fund wages.

Research

In late summer over 200 artificial cover objects (ACO's) were wrapped around trees in the Windy Hill and Benthorn Farm project areas. This is part of a national survey on lizard populations and their use of artificial covers which is being undertaken by Trent Bell of Landcare Research. Trent will return next summer to assess the results.

In July we will begin field trials of the No-Rat rodenticide from KiwiCare Ltd. Over six weeks bags of the product will be trailed over 77 stations on unmanaged land. Pre-trial rat monitoring tunnels stand at an average of 72%.

Trustees

We have reluctantly accepted the resignation of Trustee Liz Westbrooke. Liz has been a stalwart member of the Trust from its beginning and her support to me as the Trust founder and manager has been considerable. The Trust has benefited hugely from her expertise with strategic planning, working agreements, resolution of issues, and her font of ideas and information. THANK YOU, LIZ. Liz will continue her interest in the project through her role as a Little Windy Hill shareholder. A new Trustee is currently being sought.

Thank you to the following current Trust & Project Sponsors:

Biodiversity Condition Fund

Kelvin Floyd - Te Hgahere

ARC.Environmental Initiatives Fund

Auckland City Council Heritage Fund

Lotteries Environment

Sealink Ltd

Barrier Energy Systems

Wilson & Macindoe Ltd

WINZ & DoC

Great Barrier Airlines

Great Barrier Landowners : Little Windy Hill Co Ltd, Helga and Peter Speck - Benthorn Farm, Macnee, Wilkinson, Sommerville & Nicolson, Blaiklock, Henderson, Tschirky, Wells, Vlasich, Harland, Rosalie Bay Farms.

I look forward to reporting in December.

Kind regards

Judy Gilbert

Trust Manager