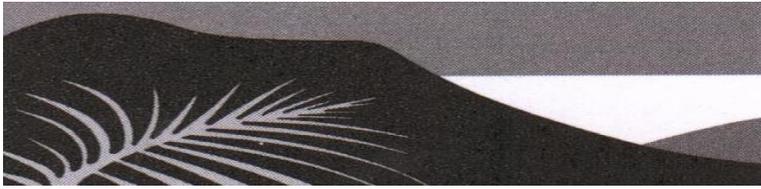


WINDY HILL ROSALIE BAY CATCHMENT TRUST



Newsletter # 17 June 2010

Wintery greetings from Aotea

After a very long hot dry summer we enter winter with a shortage of forest food and relatively high rat numbers. The climate dictates and it is almost unnerving to have observed the awesome rate at which rats can respond to favourable conditions.

Tracking tunnel percentages in the Windy Hill project area stood at 3% in November, 6% in January and 25% in April! Other project areas within the Sanctuary fared better but all had increased levels of rats monitored. This was also observed at other Sanctuaries in the Auckland region.

It has been a real challenge to keep on top of and now to work the rat densities down, but having had some good rain we expect to see our July winter tracking tunnel rates at around 3-5 %. It has proven effective here, and on other sanctuary projects, to maintain pressure on the rats through autumn and winter so that the breeding population, come spring, is well down. We know from analyzing our trapping data that the rats breed all year round.

The continued use of a poison as the basis of our pest management programme has also been challenging for some landowners and it is clear that the minimum use of poison is a preferred option. **While this would be true for all of us, unfortunately until better methods are found this is all we have to stop the steady loss of our native species to predation and competition.** The balance is a fine one and we ask that landowners communicate with us if they have any queries, concerns, or a need for information. Attached please find an article about the research being undertaken currently towards improving the tools for pest management.

For us to be effective we need to be able to respond quickly and efficiently to monitored changes with the best tools available. Thank you to those landowners who have the good faith in us as to allow us to operate in this way.

Because the requirements of landowners do differ we operate in a variety of ways within the Sanctuary - one five hectare block uses trapping alone but they manage their own trapping, another smaller block uses the Feracol(cholecalciferol) which they also deploy, and the DoC blocks permit the use of Feracol which the Trust manages.

Over the next few months the Little Windy Hill project area will discontinue the use of Pest-Off (brodifacoum) and use the less potent bait Ditrac (diphacenone) with other project areas remaining as they are until the end of this year then converting in the same way. This change is to reduce the possible risk of bio-persistence from the more potent brodifacoum.

Managing rat re-invasion has also been a consuming job for Tony Bouzaid at the predator fenced Glenfern Sanctuary. Rats have come from many directions -round the ends of the fence, over the mudflats, possibly swimming from Fitzroy wharf and

hopping off boats. Over a thousand tracking tunnels are being monitored fortnightly to keep the lid on these critters and to catch or poison them as soon as detected.

Nevertheless, the biodiversity gains at both Glenfern and the Windy Hill Rosalie Bay sanctuaries are significant with rats at hugely reduced levels than in unmanaged areas. We are achieving the goal of at least sustaining and in some ways improving NZ's biodiversity.

Field Team

The team had a fantastic week in May with herpetologists Trent Bell, Dylan van Winkle, and DoC's Halema Jamieson, joined by native frog expert Sarah Herbert, undertaking a survey for lizards.

Five chevron skinks were found in the Waterfall Gully catchment with juveniles, sub-adults and adults all present indicating successful breeding. To find out more about the survey I have attached both Trent and Dylan's blog pages.

As well as joining the survey for frogs and chevron skinks the team was also trained by Trent in identifying, measuring, weighing, and handling lizards. This kind of up-skilling means we can take on more complex monitoring ourselves. A second survey and training (funded by ARC EIF- thank you) will take place in September.



Trent Bell holding a pacific gecko with (L to R) Rachel Wakefield, Dean Medlands, Kevin Parsons, Mallory Thompson, Mick Butterworth, and Judy Gilbert looking on.

Funding

The Trust is delighted to have received a grant of \$30,000 from the ASB Community Trust. This confirms our third team member Mick for another year. Continued funding from the Biodiversity Condition Fund is dependent on the results of our audit due late this month. Applications are pending with the Auckland City Heritage Fund, ARC EIF fund, Lotteries Environment, World Wildlife Fund, and the Guardian Trust. Much effort goes in to this number of applications and then reporting our results and expenditure.

Thank you to those few landowners who have made their 2010 contribution to the work of the Trust – please check to see if you need to do this now - **YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS ESSENTIAL TO THE VIABILITY OF THE TRUST AND THE**

SURVIVAL OF OUR TREASURED NATIVE SPECIES HERE ON YOUR LAND ON GREAT BARRIER.

Thank you also to Sealink and Freightlink companies for the re-approval of our freight subsidy for this year.

Spreading the word

National Radio (101.4 fm) has recorded a programme about our Sanctuary here and it will go to air on the Spectrum programme on Sunday 13th June, just after the news at noon. It will be repeated Thursday 17th June 00.10am, and 7.30pm.

The Sanctuaries of NZ workshop run by Landcare Research is to be held on Barrier in August. The workshop draws together people from all over NZ working within Sanctuaries to share progress, ideas, and challenges. The participants will be doing a site visit to both Glenfern Sanctuary in Fitzroy and Windy Hill as part of the workshop.

Winter well until I report in early summer
Kind regards

Judy Gilbert
Trust Manager