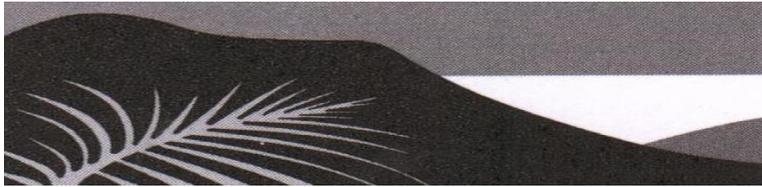


WINDY HILL ROSALIE BAY CATCHMENT TRUST



Newsletter #21

June 2012

Kia ora

Our very recent three day 'Fungal Foray' with Dr Maj Padamsee of Landcare Research has opened our eyes to the wondrous world of fungi in the Sanctuary. Ninety four new specimens were added to the 40 from Great Barrier already on the Landcare data base with a further 6 collected on Maj's walk into the Hot Springs for well deserved soak. It is one thing to have an enthusiastic team out collecting but another to sit quietly working your way through each specimen to identify it, photograph it, collect DNA samples, and prepare it for drying. Thank you Maj, and partner Jamie, for the gift of your time and expertise. Our field team and interested locals thoroughly enjoyed the experience and are now avid fungi spotters.



Fungal Foray team – (l to r) Kevin Parsons, Rachel Vlasich, Dr Maj Padamsee, Emmy Pratt, Fenella Christian, Dave Vlasich, and Jamie Blackman. A stinkhorn fungus.

The release of 23 North Island robins into the Sanctuary on 20th April, following a successful translocation from Pureora Forest, has also been exciting with at least 8 birds still in the Sanctuary and a further 2-3 robins 40 km way up on Mt Hobson, one within a week of release! During the field surveys following release two robin pairs made up of our juveniles from last year were found, so at this early stage with new and established robins there may be over 10 pair to start the season. Fingers crossed. A special thank you to local bird rescue Karen Walker for her care of the birds during the translocation.

The restoration work within the Sanctuary continues to generate interest and there have been a number of visitors this year – Dr Liz Parlato from Massey University followed up on her doctorate on North Island robin translocations in

January and QEII National Trust Auckland representative Chris Floyd made a site visit to the covenanted areas and established photographic data points for future reference.

Sarah Herbert and Trent Bell from Ecogecko spent 2 weeks in March continuing their research into artificial covers for monitoring lizards. Keen conservationist Geoff Reid spent several days monitoring for bellbirds and found a pair with a juvenile in Waterfall Gully. Let's hope they continue to multiply and that other bell birds find their way here. Geoff also identified a pair of Fernbirds in the valley that had only been sighted once before.

Emma Cronin from Glenfern Sanctuary and Amelia Geary from DoC joined our field team for a brush up on robin capturing techniques prior to our shared translocation. Amelia and Dave Havell (DoC botanist) spent a morning in May surveying our rare coastal plant *Pimelea tomentosa*. The coastal strip between Big Windy Hill and Rosalie Bay has the largest number of plants of this species in the Auckland region.

DoC Community Liaison Bec Gibson and new DoC weed ranger Adam Willets also had a site visit in June sharing knowledge and enthusiasm.

Pest Management Programme

Autumn 2012 has been a big one for rats with 95% tracking tunnel indexes recorded in our unmanaged Control site. At the same time Little Windy Hill pest managed area (PMA) recorded 15% with Big Windy Hill and Benthorn Farm PMAs both recording 10%. Rosalie Bay continues to be an anomaly recording a high 40%.

All PMA's, apart from Rosalie Bay, now have a 50% split between traps and baits as part of our research into finding the best balance between these two methods. Using a low potency multi-feed bait like Rat-Abate (diphacene) means that there will be numbers of animals with sub-lethal poisoning, especially with abundant food present, so traps are being used to mop up these animals. Throughout the Sanctuary 1347 rats and 8 mice have been trapped since January. Having two species of rat present – kiore and ship rat – presents real challenges to maintaining these pests at low densities. Our ruthlessly systematic approach seems to have worked acceptably over this autumn peak season for rats.

Six feral cats have been culled this year and several pigs – there seem to be more than usual about with the warmer wetter autumn creating plenty of food.

Kakariki Breed and Release Programme

DoC biodiversity ranger Amelia Geary has been working closely with the Trust researching options for this programme. Numbers of red crowned kakariki on the island are critically low and this species is close to local extinction so it is timely that a way of rebuilding their populations is being explored. To design a robust programme ensuring good disease free stock will involve a number of participants – from the Auckland Zoo who can hatch and then foster-rear chicks from wild sourced eggs, to scientists researching beak and feather disease, to DoC overseeing a programme that ensures genetic diversity. This type of programme is being looked into by a number of Sanctuaries so establishing good practice at these initial stages will hugely help those who follow on. A suitable aviary has been found and will be purchased subsequent to permit approval.

Translocation of Hochstetters Frogs

Funding has been received from Lotteries Environment to undertake the permit application and to survey possible source populations in the north of the Island. Discussions are underway with iwi and the DoC Lizard recovery Group. This species has only been translocated once before so requires a great deal of groundwork prior to submitting the application which we hope to do in August of this year.

Funding

Our field team is well supported from grants from ASB Community Trust, WWF Habitat Fund, and the Biodiversity Condition Fund. Auckland Council Heritage Fund covers cost of field team gear, bait, and other equipment. A grant from the Environmental Initiatives Fund has been approved to purchase acoustic bird recorders which will be used in the spring to locate seabirds. A new three year application for a further three years funding has been lodged with the Biodiversity Condition Fund.

Thank you to sponsors Sealink for their continued sponsorship of freight for the Sanctuary and to Great Barrier Airlines for support with our robin translocation.

Presentations

Over the last decade the Trust has made more than a hundred presentations to visitors, to organisations, at conferences both local and international. Later this month a presentation about the Sanctuary restoration will be made to the Hauraki Gulf Forum when they are visiting Great Barrier and in early June to a conference convened by WWF in Wellington. Sharing our experience and the knowledge gained is an important part of the process of restoration.



Robins – the moment of release in Waterfall Gully - Windy Hill

Kind regards
Judy
Trust Manager