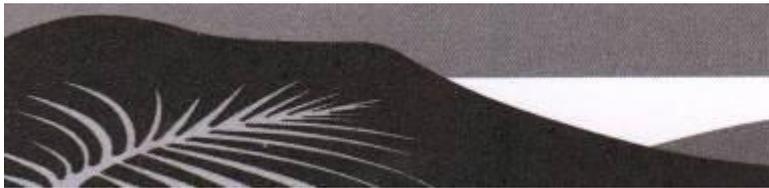


WINDY HILL ROSALIE BAY CATCHMENT TRUST



Newsletter #23

June 2013

Wintery greetings

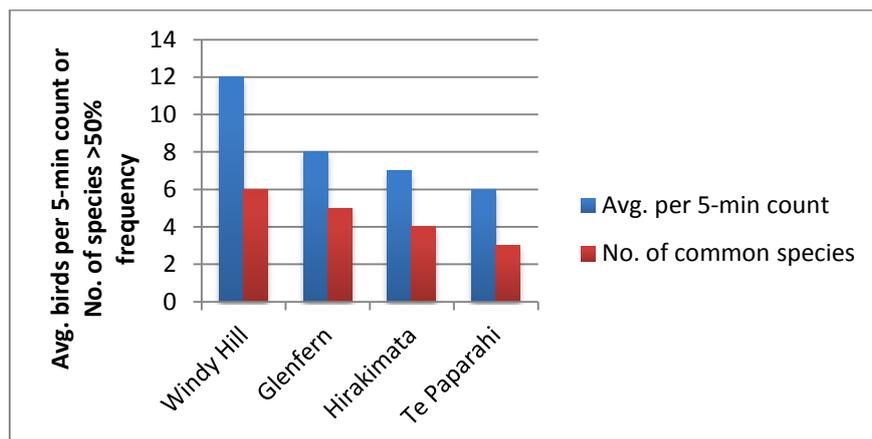
In April this year we began our 14th year of ecological restoration and that longevity has brought the spotlight onto the Windy Hill Sanctuary. The history and development of the Sanctuary is soon to be featured in a new book about Sanctuaries in New Zealand, and we are to be the lead in project to an article about Pest Free NZ coming out in Wilderness magazine shortly.

In May, I was the guest speaker at the launch of the Naturespace website at the Cloud in Auckland, and also spoke at the Kiwi Hui in Cambridge. These are great forums for gaining knowledge, and sharing information and expertise.

We are making exciting progress here and the continued improvement in our natural environment is something that the Little Windy Hill Company can be proud of, as a founding sanctuary landowner, and in celebrating its 41st year of kaitiakitanga.

One of the original objectives of the pest management project was to improve the outcomes for **birds**. Our Annual Bird Count is carried out each December and the 2012 report notes that all species have increased since 2008 and, for the first time, robins were counted in more than one area.

In January, Asher Cook, a student from Auckland University, carried out 5 minute bird counts at four Great Barrier sites - Windy Hill, Glenfern Sanctuary, Hirakimata, and Te Paparahi. His pleasing results are graphed below.



Kakariki – Four red crowned kakariki have been most welcome visitors over the summer. These, now rare birds on Barrier, have not been seen at this end of the island for well over a decade so a confirmed sighting was a thrill.

The Trust continues to work through all the issues of establishing a breed and release programme for kakariki with DoC but it is going to take several years. We have been granted funding to purchase the aviary (thank you Auckland Council EIF) and this should be established later this year.



Robins – We estimate that there are now around 20 resident robins in the sanctuary. Eight pairs produced 27 fledglings last season and it will be exciting come September to see how many of these have remained in the Sanctuary area. Next year we will continue to monitor nests but will cease banding the juveniles as well over half of the nests this year were in trees too high to reach.

Seabirds - Seabird monitoring and the acoustic recorder programme have confirmed black petrels and grey faced petrels are breeding in the Sanctuary with fluttering shearwaters heard in the area. The 6 acoustic bird recorders installed on the Windy Hill cliffs last December (thank you Auckland Council EIF) have produced vast amounts of data which is being analysed by field worker Henry Cookson. Calls are sent to seabird specialist Chris Gaskin for positive identification. Recently the field team discovered a breeding site with 35-40 red billed gulls nests on the cliffs towards Rosalie Bay – a new species to be found in the Sanctuary. Currently a seabird calling unit is being established out on the coastal cliffs and will soon begin broadcasting black petrel and fluttering shearwater calls. Thank you to Auckland Council for the unit and to James Ross for coming over to assist with the technical aspects of the caller.

The presence of an increasing variety of bird species is a testament to the efficacy of our pest management.

Lizards are also benefitting from lower rat, cat, and pig densities. The comprehensive lizard monitoring programme has led to some exciting discoveries over the last year. Prior to 2006 DoC had only one confirmed sighting of the rare striped skink. During the EcoGecko annual lizard monitoring in January and early February this year, 6 were positively identified.



Sarah Herbert, from EcoGecko, also worked with the team to establish arboreal monitoring for lizards and a striped skink and several gecko have been identified. What was disturbing was seeing how many rats were up in the trees.

Pest Management Programme - the Field Team of Rachel Wakefield, Kyle Penton, Henry Cookson, Dave Harland and volunteers Brendan Kerr and Grant Elliot, led by field manager Kevin Parsons, continue to confidently manage pests to low densities despite all the vagrancies that nature can throw at us. The current programme for managing rats using a balance of traps and the low potency bait, Rat Abate, with short pulses of the more potent Pest-Off when required, is to continue. Since 2010 we have replaced bait for traps in 50% of the sanctuary stations reducing the amount of toxin used in keeping with our commitment to finding ways of minimising our toxin use while keeping rats down. It is a fine balancing act between the managing the risks and maximising the benefits. There is no doubt that the biodiversity is thriving.

Winter work in the Sanctuary is focused on bringing the autumn bulge of rats down, culling feral cats (9 over the last fortnight), and catching up with the long overdue track maintenance.

The Trust remains in a stable financial position with support from current funders: ASB Community Trust, Biodiversity Condition Fund, Auckland Council Heritage and EIF funds, Lotteries Environment, COGS, and DoC.

Thank you to Sealink (Freightlink) for their generous on-going sponsorship of our freight, to ABDeliveries for the good deal, and to Kelvin Floyd, our map whizz, for recently updating all our maps.

Vision Pest Free Great Barrier – this vision continues to gain momentum within the community, and has been included in the current draft DoC Conservation Management Strategy. The Local Board is working with Auckland Council to prepare a community wide consultation on a natural environment vision for the island which will include the scenario of being pest free. The Great Barrier Island Trust continues to promote the vision through its newsletter, workshops, and visiting speakers.

The Windy Hill Sanctuary continues to be a model of ecological restoration for private landowners, a base for community led science, and to provide sustained meaningful employment for 7 people.

I look forward to your ongoing support.

Judy Gilbert
Trust Manager