



**RANGER'S REPORT TO THE
PUKENUI/WESTERN HILLS FOREST
CHARITABLE TRUST
(September 2012)**



Northland Hospitality

This is Conservation Week and one of the major highlights for the Trust this past month was the recent big predator knock-down in the Ark/Park area of Pukenui Forest. Starting last Sunday, four of us gathered in Max Hutchings' garage and prepared the poison packs for a team of nine groups and individuals to fill the hundreds of bait stations in the designated 220 hectare block. The next day was reasonably fine and around twenty people finished the job by four o'clock. It was a brilliantly well executed exercise that will do a huge amount of good for the bio-diversity values in the area. Workers included a good team from DOC, someone from NRC, NorthTec and volunteers from as far away as Onerahi and Waipu. We are prepared for a second poisoning later in the year but, if the original poisoning is successful, this may not be necessary. I would like to thank Max for his organizational skills and dedication, plus the use of his property for the Trust.

As this is Conservation Week, we were hoping to do a small planting on the edge of the forest with Hurupaki School. However, the weather has not been kind and time is moving on so we will consider what else we can do but, be assured, we will get that prepared site planted this year. After the planting, we were hoping to get one of our volunteers, Ian Buckley, to show the pupils our weta box that is fast filling up and do a demonstration on stoat control at the stoat box nearby.

I had a call from the ASB Trust representative, who is coming up on Friday to talk to us about our funding application. She was unable to come up a few weeks ago due to sickness but is keen to see the forest. We thought an aerial view would give her a true appreciation of the size of the forest and the size of the challenge we have given ourselves, to protect and enhance its conservation and recreational values. Funding will help us employ a part-time trapper that can take on the toughest parts of the forest with stoat and weed control, etc.

Grant and I attended a DOC funded workshop at their Bank Street office, to discuss recreation issues that are being considered around the country and specifically around Northland. While there was a small turn-out, it was interesting to listen to an expert who was tasked by DOC to get feedback from people like us about how we saw Pukenui Forest and its potential as a source of recreational activity near a large city on its boundary.

Finally, Margaret and I took Denise Piper, journalist with the Whangarei Leader newspaper, on a short walk to the edge of the forest to show her what we are doing and hope to do over the coming years. She took some pictures for her story and we wait to see the result!

Gerry Brackenbury
Ranger (Part-time)