



**RANGER'S REPORT TO THE
PUKENUI/WESTERN HILLS FOREST
CHARITABLE TRUST
(March 2013)**



Northland Hospitality

I have just returned from five days spent on Tiritiri Matangi. The main purpose was to help with the annual count of Little Spotted Kiwi and volunteering during the day helping a research student counting Duvaucel geckos, collecting leaf litter in preparation for a Stitchbird release and general track cutting. Every New Zealander should spend at least one day in their life on Tiri, to remind us all what this country was like before we, with our cargo of junk pests, turned up. All our Trust can do is the best we can, with our limited resources, to restore Pukenui Forest to a resemblance of what it was...keep setting those traps!

Further to which, good news on the Ark in the Park part of the forest. A recent count of possum knock-down using Bite-mark Index (BMI) has shown a less than 5% count. This is very good and a credit to all our volunteers and support from DOC.

Chris Windust, our new trapper, has been on the job and assisted with the BMI two-day setting and retrieving of the index markers.

In two weeks, the rat and possum toxins will also be removed. This will end another year of rat and possum control in part of the forest. In the meantime, stoat control remains on-going. On a more serious note, while I was doing my line I came across a smallish fire that I put down to illegal camping on the forest edge above Russell Road. The burned area needs cleaning up and then re-planted with tea tree to start the re-growth of this area. It was lucky it did not turn into a bigger conflagration.

We have been contacted by Andrea Beazley, Manager of the Quarry Arts Centre, with regard to improving signage to guide walkers to the start of the track into Coronation Scenic Reserve. It seems some walkers have given up on their walk due to confusion as to where the track actually starts. I have called in to see her and have started a dialogue.

Next week, I give a talk to Rotary and this may flush out a few more volunteers. I have already head-hunted a few from the Friends of Matakohe-Limestone Island to help with our pest control work.

As asked, I have sent an e-mail to Jack Crow, Head of Auckland Council Biosecurity, requesting a meeting to discuss the possibility of putting toxins in the Whau Valley Dam catchment. No response so far.

Finally, we note with sadness the resignation of Denis Hewitt from our Trust and committee. Denis has been a stalwart of the Trust and given much time and money to the protection of Pukenui Forest and Western Hills, which he has loved all his life. We will miss his wisdom and enthusiasm, not to mention all those kowhai trees! Thank you Denis, on behalf of all the kowhai trees and, in time, all the kakariki. One day, Denis, Pukenui Forest really will ring with your praises.

Gerry Brackenbury
Ranger (Part-time)