



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



Northland Hospitality

One thing we have learnt over the past few months is that a mature, intact forest can cope easily with a severe drought. While removing the last of the bait from the Ark/park area, it was encouraging to see how well the forest has coped with the lack of rain.

The pest baiting season is now over for another year, until next September, and we can take down our poison signs. Sadly, these will be replaced with signs raising awareness of the threats of PTA (phytophthora taxon agathis) or kauri dieback. DOC is to give us a number of warning signs to put up at the various entrances to Pukenui Forest. The experts say there is no known control method for PTA. Preventing its spread to healthy trees is the only current management tool.

I have recently taken a number of school pupils from Kamo Primary into the forest and talked about all the many things we are doing there. One of their teachers, Jane Norman, is keen to apply to the Royal Society for one of their scholarships to develop teaching resources for students at her school and, if good enough, for other schools to use Pukenui Forest as a teaching resource. We may also develop a programme for her to study lizards in the forest and I have been in touch with an herpetological expert, Ben Barr at North Tec and he has agreed, if Jane is successful, to work on a study programme to do a lizard survey in the forest. This would be done in collaboration with Chris Parry, educator at Kiwi North (Whangarei Museum & Heritage Park). Margaret and I met with Jane and provided what help and advice that we could. This is the sort of thing that Fund providers like.

Further to which, Grant, Margaret and I have been busy with various funding applications. The Mazda Foundation application has been sent and I have had a meeting with Ngaire Tyson of the Landcare Trust, to progress the Biodiversity Fund application that has to be in by the end of this month. Congratulations to Grant on a successful application to the Ron & Edna Greenwood Environmental Trust. We have received funding of \$2,000.00 towards the purchase of traps.

Margaret tells me that apart from re-applying to the ASB Community Trust for another round of funding, we also need to re-apply to the WDC for the coming year's 20K that was granted to us last year.

I gave a talk to one of the Rotary Clubs in town on the work of the Trust and what we have achieved to date. I believe they are offering to buy us a personal locator beacon to support the work we are doing.

There was a meeting at the Quarry Arts Centre to discuss improved signage and some professional weed control that volunteers can then follow up on. It was also an opportunity to develop new relationships with other organisations that interface with the forest. By the time Sharon Morgan and Arts Director, Andrea Beazley had finished our visit, we had half the forest filled with statues of every description!

I have spent more time with our part-time trapper, Chris Windust, and continue to be impressed by his work for the Trust. It now seems that we have Chris to thank for calling out the Fire Brigade to the smoke he spotted over the forest. It was very fortunate that three appliances were quickly able to get to the seat of the blaze.

Finally, I have scored a few more volunteers to help with our weed and pest control.

Gerry Brackenbury
Ranger (Part-time)