



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



*Northland Hospitality*

As I reported last month, the first week of September saw nearly 20 volunteers and some DOC staff do our third annual poison knock-down of possums and rats in the area we call “Ark-in-the-Park”. Thanks to Max Hutchings and his band of volunteers, including some environmental students from NorthTec, the operation went like clockwork. But wait, there’s more. The AIP area is being expanded as I write and will eventually create a pest-free area of around 400 hectares, free of rats and possums.

At present, this is the limit of endurance for our trusty volunteers and will stay at that size until we can score more resources and money for our predator and conservation work. Well done everybody.

Recently, Jane Norman, our Royal Society Science scholar and I got a crash course in lizard monitoring. Ben Barr, lecturer at NorthTec and Auckland, Dylan van Winkel of the NZ Herpetological Society took us into Pukenui Forest and showed us how to put up lizard monitoring covers and where. We will eventually have four permanent lines of thirty lizard covers per line and these will be inspected at regular intervals to see what species of lizard we have in the forest and how many. We assume that lizards in the treated block will do better than those in the untreated part of the forest.



I recently spent two hours with the developer who has bought Ray Smith’s farm that borders the forest along Three Mile Bush Road. This land is designated by the WDC for housing development so our role is to get the best outcome for Pukenui Forest. Initial discussions were encouraging and the developer seems prepared to listen to our concerns and aspirations for Pukenui Forest. I received an e-mail recently from a business that wishes to discuss the Trust’s ideas re pest control. I assume they have been put onto us by the developer to work with the Trust. Watch this space.

I attended the second meeting of the Mangere Catchment Group and we seem to be making some kind of progress. The group is to be holding a field day soon to visit various sites of the river catchment and I have suggested a site visit to the spot where the river leaves the forest and starts its convoluted journey to the Kaipara Harbour.

**Gerry Brackenbury**  
Ranger (Part-time)