



**RANGER'S REPORT TO THE
PUKENUI/WESTERN HILLS FOREST
CHARITABLE TRUST
(May/June 2011)**



Northland Hospitality

With May being the month when kiwi listening around the country checks the pulse of our National bird, I have been busy with Max and Steve putting up our automatic listening devices in strategic sites around the forest. I would like to thank Paul Corneille from DOC for providing a four wheel drive to get us to some of the sites. These will be checked for any calls soon. Two sites have seen human listeners, myself and Max above the Whau valley Dam, and Margaret and Denis in the Pukenui Loop Track. Steve has also been around while servicing his possum traps. I gather to date he has dealt to 50 possums...well done Steve! So far no kiwi have been heard, even though we know there are just a few birds hanging in there.

Some good news is that Alan Gardiner and his hunting team have taken out another hundred goats, reducing them to very low numbers. No goats were heard by Max and I when we were listening for kiwi, in a site usually favoured by goats.

I was funded by KiwiNorth (Museum/ kiwihouse) to fly down to Napier to attend the national kiwi hui. This was attended by several hundred kiwi practitioners from around the country and gave us the opportunity to learn about the state-of-the-art of automatic traps for possums and stoats. Max has decided to purchase two of these "skull-crushers" as he can't wait to see a little pile of fur under each one of them every morning!

There were also presentations on automatic listening devices which will soon make kiwi listening so much easier. The latest on genetic research was also very interesting, and very pertinent for NZ which has so many species in critically low numbers.

Max and I have met with DOC staff to continue discussions on our proposed trapping and poisoning in the "Ark/ Park" area, and I met the CALM staff who will be taking out possums along the Western Hills section. This has entailed me ensuring the relevant public are informed of the proposed trapping exercise over the next three months. I have spoken with Murray Madden who has agreed to give us air-time on The Radio Network in their community noticeboard slots. There is an article I have written in the Whg Report coming out next week and I have also spoken with the Editor of the Whg Leader, who is happy to put in a story of what we are doing...all this to keep the Health Dept happy and get their written approval for the proposed trapping and poisoning programme.

We have got some great support from Keith Thompson, manager of Environmental Northland. He will be putting together a package for us to go to 5 thousand homes in the District, telling them about the Pukenui Trust (something I have again written), plus he will pay for as many BNZ/ DOC dog/kiwi brochures. Thank you Keith.

Bats: I plan to go down to Hamilton later this month for a couple of days to meet a scientist who is involved in long-tailed bat research. I hope to visit his research site in a piece of bush near Hamilton and what I learn from him I hope can be used to help our bats in Pukenui Forest here.

Before I flit off, I am curious to see what is happening at Miss Maddren's old home site. On the hill above, the Council seem to have sprayed some privet, which is great, but there is a lot of other exotic stuff one can see from the road, including a large macrocarpa, pine and the ubiquitous Taiwan Cherry. Further round the road is an Italian walnut. I thought if these were all removed, at a propitious moment we could invite the public to help plant some tea-tree and organize a BBQ for their efforts afterwards.

Gerry Brackenbury
(Part-time ranger).