



COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPORT PUKENUI/WESTERN HILLS FOREST CHARITABLE TRUST (October 2015)

Thanks to the good work of our Ranger, Luke Robertson, the efforts of our Trust have been highlighted again in the media. This is thanks to Luke's quick observation of what turned out to be a very rare white morepork.

Luke and I were interviewed by the Northern Advocate journalist, Lindy Laird, which has resulted in a very good profile of the Trust's work and aspirations in the paper. Apart from the good media attention, there have been several spin-offs in other areas of the social media, plus good working relations with our partners and fellow Trustees in Ahi Kaa. I would like to thank Richard Shepherd in particular, for taking the time out to visit the forest with us and share his knowledge of the ngahere. A good effort by all.

The Trust helped me to attend the Sanctuaries of NZ conference in Auckland recently and I am happy to report that it was well worth the trip and that the world of conservation is in pretty good heart.

The conference is organised every year by Landcare Research, and there were two days of excellent speakers covering topics ranging from the latest in bat research, why mice like climbing trees and why we should be worried, some great news on wasp control, and the bio-control of weeds. There was a very interesting talk given by a teacher on the conservation and science work being done by his pupils in low decile schools in South Auckland.

A paper that got me seriously interested, and of particular relevance to Pukenui Forest, is the success of the self-setting rat kill trap called GoodNature A24. A paper was presented by Darren Peters of DOC Science & Policy Section, and showed the use of these traps at three different sites where there was originally a high density of rats (like Pukenui Forest). The rat population density before the programme started was around 70%. The three populations were then reduced to less than 5%.

The traps are not cheap, so the Pest Team has suggested the Trust buys a small number initially and conduct a trial in the forest. If we have a similar result to the DOC trial, we may raise funds to purchase more.

Sometime this month, I hope to meet the Kiwis for Kiwi co-ordinator, Clea Gardener, to progress the Trust's programme to release kiwi back into Pukenui in 2017. Clea is a talented operator and will guide us through the DOC red tape with regard to a dog control programme, iwi/hapu relations and the whole drama of collecting kiwi from Motuora Island in the Hauraki Gulf to Pukenui Forest.

Luke has been liaising with the Northland Regional Council with regard to foot-washing stations at forest entrances re kauri die-back, and the construction of a board-walk around a very large kauri on a track above Barge Park. The NRC have been very helpful and generous regarding the above, and well done Luke for your initiative in approaching the NRC for assistance.

I attended the NRC Mangere Stream catchment meeting yesterday. The quality of the stream is definitely improving.

Finally, the "Ark-in-the-Park" poison operation went smoothly last month and we will do it all over again this coming December.

Gerry Brackenbury

Community Relations/Advocacy (Part-time)