



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



Northland Hospitality

Many hundreds of hours of hard, volunteer slog is drawing to a close in the Ark-in-the-Park site in Pukenui Forest. Twenty-five kilometres of cut lines now have a bait station at every hundred metres in every direction. This really has been a mammoth effort lead by Max Hutchings, who I cannot praise enough for his dedication and leadership. When the school holidays end in two weeks time, we will once again walk the walk and fill the bait-stations with toxins so our wildlife will cease to be food for rats, possums and stoats. Only yesterday, a team of us were at it again in the pouring rain putting out tracking tunnels to monitor rat numbers before we poison.

I was pleased to have finally got the sign-off from DOC for their required AEE and, before we poison, I have to put five signs up at discreet sites, warning the public of the upcoming poison operation. The Northland Regional Council have given us three thousand dollars worth of traps, plus paid for my poison licence, for which I thank them. One staff member has also offered to assist us when we lay down the poison.

Further to which, Calm Contracting tell me that on Friday 14th October, they will have finished their possum knock down on the City side as agreed. This will then require an RTC to see how successful they have been. Mike Baulcomb felt confident they had done a good job. I contacted a farmer at the Golf Harbour end of Pukenui, to get his blessing to allow a fur trapper through his land to kill possums and he was happy to oblige.

With regard to goats, Allan Gardiner tells me his goat cullers have taken out 360 goats to date. They will go in again for the last time next year, by which time all goats will just about be regionally extinct!

I attended a DOC function recently held at Kiwi North/Whangarei Museum, where they officially launched their dog/kiwi awareness programme. The Department has invested considerable time and money in education and advocacy to get dog owners to control their animals, especially in areas where kiwi are known to reside. This will be a big challenge for us to achieve this aspiration, if we are to get permission to re-introduce kiwi back to Pukenui Forest.

Conservation Week saw several Trustees plant kowhai trees and other natives at the Craft Quarry entrance to the reserve. It seems that WDC has made a start on weed control in that area, and we know that the weed challenge is huge. Even deep in the forest the other day, there were large patches of tradescantia along the banks of Mangere Stream.

Finally, our bird lovers will be more than pleased to read that a definite identification was made of the call of our small native parrot, the red-crowned kakariki. One, and possibly two, was heard by a DOC Officer while working in the Ark area. Also, a kaka was thought to be calling in the same area. It is things like this that make all the effort and pain worthwhile.

Gerry Brackenbury
Ranger (Part-time)