



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



Northland Hospitality

Another fun-filled month, with one major milestone passed and several smaller ones achieved.

The 'biggie' is that, with six months preparation and three days of hard slog, the 200 ha 'Ark-in-the-Park' mainland island has finally been poisoned. As you read this, the above area now has fewer possums and rats than for quite some time.

It is a little hard to come to grips with what has been achieved, starting several years back with the Wildland Consultant's report. This report highlighted just how important the ecological and conservation values of Pukenui Forest were.

We have been steadily ticking off the boxes of Iwi and public consultation; creation of our 'bible', the Pukenui Forest Management Plan; the creation of the Trust itself; setting up our website; fundraising; creating partnerships with the WDC, NRC and DOC; and finally, creating a pest-free zone of respectable size, thanks to the guts and determination of our volunteers.

This pest-free zone will allow both the wildlife that is already there to flourish, but now we can start to plan for the re-introduction for species such as kiwi, robins, kakariki and, who knows, maybe even kokako! We might even, with advice from Steve Pohe, think about starting a new colony of Hochstetter's frog that currently only reaches the Brynderwyn Hills south of Whangarei.

While helping with the rat-bust, I ran into Allan Gardiner, the hunter in charge of the goat eradication programme in Pukenui Forest. He told me that the tally of dead goats now stands at around 400...a fantastic achievement from him and his team. He says already the forest is starting to recover after a century of browsing.

I recently spoke to Mark Bellingham, a well-known conservationist who is the North Island Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Conservation Manager. Mark helped set up the Waitakere Ark in the Park which we have modelled ourselves on. He has huge experience working with volunteers and I tentatively suggested we could work together without poaching from each other, as there is a big challenge ahead for work to be done in Pukenui Forest. F&B have new members looking for volunteer work and I believe our two organizations can work co-operatively together to make Pukenui Forest something all of Whangarei can be proud of.

Finally, the possum bust by CALM Contractors has been completed with a 10% RTC. This is acceptable to us. I would like to thank Neil Cameron for his bush-bashing to complete the RTC review.

Gerry Brackenbury
Ranger (Part-time)