

**PUKENUI/WESTERN HILLS FOREST CHARITABLE TRUST
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
THURSDAY 08 AUGUST 2013**

It is with great pleasure that I present this Fifth Annual Report of the Pukenui Forest Trust.

Reading through the ranger's reports for the past twelve months, I was impressed by how much the Trust has achieved, to the point where it is hard to know where to start.

Talk is cheap, while money makes things happen. We were very fortunate that the ASB Community Trust seemed to like the "cut of our gib" and generously granted all that we asked for, being \$29,000.00. This enabled us to lift our game considerably, employing a part-time ranger and also a part-time trapper, namely Chris Windust. Chris has certainly earned his keep by taking on the toughest stoat lines and assisting with other tasks needed. The Trust paid to have Chris sit his poison licence, thus making his services even more valuable. ASB funding also helped purchase more traps and poison, plus a weed operation that, co-incidentally, helped us develop a good working relationship with one of the forest neighbours, the Quarry Arts Centre.

The Pukenui Forest Trust has several strategic partners and we say a big "thank you" to the Whangarei District Council. Along with their annual grant, they have assisted the Trust with the production of brochures and maps, weed control, conservation advocacy at the Dargaville Field Days and general operational support. Our thanks also go to the Northland Regional Council and the Department of Conservation. Both have supplied us with funding, labour and staff hours, plus lots of encouragement...thank you.

We thank the Royal Forest & Bird for funds to buy traps; Community Post for postage; Grant Smith for the generous gift of a Canon printer and the R&E Greenwood Trust for 100 stoat traps and boxes. Pukenui Forest eats traps! Finally, the Trust would like to thank both Fast Signz and Northland Hospitality for sponsorship of trap danger signs.

An exciting event for the Trust is our hosting (along with the Whangarei Museum) of a Royal Society Fellowship. Jane Norman, teacher at Kamo Primary School, is the deserving recipient and she will be working with our team in the forest over the next five months. She will be doing a lizard survey in Pukenui Forest with professional guidance from Ben Barr of North Tec, plus a member of the NZ Herpetological Society based in Auckland. Jane will also be looking at our weta population and helping out at the Museum which, of course, borders the Pukenui Forest at Maunu.

Once again, I give a big "thank you" to Max Hutchings and his amazing team of pest-busters who, in all weathers and terrain, upgrade the stoat trap lines and, more recently, marking properly the managed area we call Ark-in-the-Park, ready for the next rat and possum bust next month.

Another new initiative is that I have been appointed to the Mangere Catchment Group, who will meet soon to discuss how to improve the health of this river that flows out of Pukenui Forest. According to NRC, who has set up this catchment group, the Mangere Stream is the most polluted and degraded waterway in the whole of Northland! Watch this space.

Last April, one of our committee members, Hannah Mitchell, organised the Adventurer Games which was based at Cafler Park and took in part of Pukenui Forest. Hannah works for Manaia PHO and is the Child and Youth Friendly Cities Coordinator. We need more youth to get friendly with our forests...go Hannah!

I attended the North Island Kiwi Hui last May near Cambridge. There I made new contacts and caught up with old ones and kept up to date with kiwi recovery around the country, including new ways to control pests, etc.

DOC has signed off our Health and Safety Plan for the Trust, which was compulsory. I would like to thank Margaret for organising this and for all her other hard work for our Trust.

We are now developing a good skill base with our pest and weed volunteers and part-time trapper. Sara Brill, our minute-taker, has up-skilled us in the world of weeds, our trappers attended a pest workshop in Kaitaia, hosted by the Landcare Trust, and a number of us now hold poison licences.

It would seem that Pukenui Forest and our work in it will feature in a new book about sanctuaries in NZ. It is called "Paradise Saved" and will appear on bookshelves soon. Hopefully it will mention the 700 odd goats that have been removed from the forest, the increasing number of Tomtits being seen, some new fencing done and the tree planting undertaken by a group of enthusiastic young pupils from Kamo Primary School.

Finally, I would like to farewell three committee members who have made a big difference to the work of the Trust over the past few years. They are Denis Hewitt, Alan Martin and Grant Smith. Thank you for all your efforts, and I know you will follow the Trust's work in the years to come.

Gerry Brackenbury