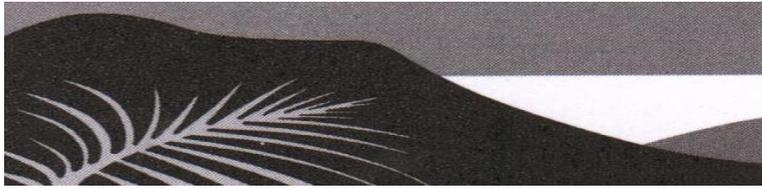


WINDY HILL ROSALIE BAY CATCHMENT TRUST



Newsletter #18 Annual Report December 2010

Christmas and Holiday Greetings

It has been both a rewarding and challenging year for the Trust. A highlight has been passing the DoC audit of our field and financial programmes - this was a condition of a further two years funding from the Biodiversity Condition Fund. Richard Gillies, (consultant for Wildlands), concluded in his report: *"Overall, for a community-based project reliant mainly on voluntary contributions for project governance and management, the WHRBCT project is being operated to a high standard and is demonstrating, across a range of indicators, significant improvements in the condition of biodiversity that is considered to be a high priority for improved protection on private land. The project and its personnel have made major contributions to raising the profile of indigenous biodiversity conservation on Great Barrier Island, and to wider ecological research."*

Also of outstanding value to the Trust, and to those interested in the conservation of lizards, is the comprehensive report (103pages!) that Trent Bell and Sarah Herbert from EcoGecko recently completed of their Lizard and Frog survey within the Sanctuary. The Report lists the species present, possibly present, and also outlines future options for translocations of lizard and frog species. A lizard and frog field guide for the team has also been completed and is of such quality that it is to be adapted for the Auckland region by DoC. Thank you to the ARC EIF Fund for their grant towards this survey and field team training. Thank you also to Lotteries Environment for their grant towards lizard monitoring.

We have had a most successful year with funding. Grants approved total \$154,000. Such support allows the Sanctuary to continue to sustain and improve the biodiversity, refine our pest programmes, provide sustainable employment, and further develop our research and monitoring capacity.

Bringing rat densities down has been the most challenging work over the year. The field team has had to work doggedly to get rat numbers back down to lower levels after a marked increase in most project areas through the autumn.

The tracking tunnel results table below show this path:

	LWH	BH Bush	BH Paddock	Big Windy	Rosalie Bay	Sanctuary Average	Control
Jan	9	8	0	5	0	4.4	40
April	25	5	4	11	12.5	11.5	70
July	19	5	0	17	19	12	90
Sept	12	8	4	5	0	5.8	100
Nov	6	11	8	11	12.5	8.7	80
Yr Aver	14%	7.4%	3.2%	9.8%	8.8%	8.6%	76%

To have completed the year with an average of 8.6% for the Sanctuary area is a real credit to the field team and our volunteers.

Field Team

For most of the year we have had four full time workers –Kevin Parsons, Rachel Wakefield, and Mick Butterworth - Mallory Thompson left mid year and was replaced by Jess Rutherford. This team works really well together and a bigger team contributes to a more dynamic work experience.

We have a new volunteer – Brendan Kerr – who recently has accompanied the team 2/3 days a week. Dave Harland, who has been a volunteer for the past 18 months, is now to be employed 1 day per week to continue his management of the Benthorn Farm Paddock area.

A total of 7 people are currently provided full or part time employment by the Trust – a significant contribution to the economy of the Island.

Field Work

The Sanctuary continues its trial of a toxin based programme. Little Windy Hill project area converted from Pest-Off (brodifacoum) to the less potent multi-feed Rat-Abate (diphacenone) over the winter. Early next year there will be further conversions to Rat-Abate with the programme varying from project area to project area as we work towards finding the most effective, acceptable, and cost efficient method to maintain rats at low levels. The goal is to minimise poison use while still achieving low tracking tunnel percentages. Traps continue to be a good tool for assessing reinvasion on the perimeter, while providing a good back up to the baits.

It would appear that the current methods used are effective against mice. No mice have shown up in tracking tunnels since 2008 but trapping the perimeter track through the year yielded 8 mice at Rosalie Bay and 15 at Benthorn with none trapped in Little Windy or Big Windy Hill project areas.

Grants

We highly appreciate the funding that has been granted from the following organisations:

ASB Community Trust \$30,000,

WWF \$15,000,

Biodiversity Condition Fund \$70,000,

Auckland City Heritage \$6,300

Lotteries Environment \$32,620

And for 2011 Auckland City Heritage \$11,950, ARC EIF \$2,600.

Thank you to our sponsors Freightlink for their generous contribution to our freight costs and to Living Simply (Newmarket) for the discounted field team gear.

Research

Landcare Research Science leader Phil Cowan is conducting research into whether or not genetic resistance to rodenticides occurs in New Zealand, and if it does, where. To assist this work the field team have collected 35 rat tail samples from areas where poisons have been in use for the last few years.

Trent Bell from EcoGecko recently trialed a new lizard trap designed to capture arboreal lizards in tree canopies. Further trials will take place next year.

Trent continues his research here into Artificial Covers for monitoring lizards with over 400 covers in the managed area and a Control site. His first published report details the success of these covers at Windy Hill, Fanal Island in the Mokohinau Islands, and at Zealandia in Wellington. This research will continue until 2013.

Visitors

- The Auckland Conservation Board visited in August with Tim Brandenburg, the Area Manager for the new Warkworth and Great Barrier Office.
- The following week the 65 participants in the Sanctuaries of NZ annual conference, which was held on Great Barrier this year, had a day site visit.
- DoC community ranger Des Casey also visited in August with the new Area Community Relations Manager Liz Maire.
- DoC ranger George Wilson and his weed team came for a day in November to check compliance of the toxin permit conditions the Trust has for the two DoC stewardships within the sanctuary area and to assist with culling wilding pines in Rosalie Bay.

What's next....

In keeping with the recommendations of our DoC Audit a number of exciting projects are proposed for next year with a focus on threatened species.

Prof John Ogden is to undertake a survey within the Sanctuary for Cooks, Grey faced and Black petrel. Seabirds are an important component of island ecology and are highly impacted by rat predation.

Halema Jamieson is to train the field team to carry out monitoring for short tailed bats.

Tony Bouzaid of Glenfern Sanctuary is in the process of applying for our third joint translocation of North Island Robins.

Trent Bell will investigate a relocation of Towns skinks into the sanctuary area. This species is present on Barrier in only two small pockets of unprotected coast.

Sarah Herbert will investigate the suitability of relocating Hochstetters frog into the sanctuary.

As I complete this newsletter for another year the moreporks are tapping on the windows as they feast on puriri moths attracted to the light, the Cooks petrels are calling overhead, and I know I will wake tomorrow morning to lots of kaka and tui calls welcoming in the new day. While there does not seem to be much to celebrate about the environment internationally, at least here, in a tiny little corner of a remote island in NZ ,we are giving the native species the best shot we can to thrive. I can't think of a better way to spend my time or energy.

Thank you to the landowners who participate in the Sanctuary, thank you to our field team who make it happen, thank you to our funders, and thank you to those people who enthuse and encourage us.

Wishing you all a very abundant Xmas and lazy holidays.

**Judy Gilbert
Trust Manager**