

WINDY HILL ROSALIE BAY CATCHMENT TRUST



Newsletter #26 Annual Report December 2014

Kia ora

As I began this newsletter a Cooks Petrel, attracted by the light, had entangled itself in the Tecomanthe vine growing outside my window. I leaned out the window, gently freed it up, then turned off the light till I heard it fly off into the night – these close experiences with nature are still a treat and encourage our commitment to the Windy Hill Sanctuary, now entering its 16th year.

2014 has been a full on year of ecological restoration made all the harder by the rat abundance created by the ‘mast’ of kahikatea and a tough wet winter. In May, we trapped 500 rats – the highest monthly tally ever recorded. Record numbers of rats were also noted for the Waitakere and Hunua Ranges.

Following a snapshot of our catches for the last 4 years – note the high numbers for this year.

	Rats	Mice	Cats	Pigs	Magpies	Wasps	Rabbits
2011	3096	48	10	5	5	6 nests	16
2012	2715	14	24	5	0	5 nests	10
2013	2627	15	21	7	0	4 nests	15
2014	3243	20	16	11	0	37 nests	30+

What we do off our patch

For unfenced Sanctuaries the job of keeping pests at low densities can be all consuming but over the 16 years of operation the Trust has extended its ‘sphere of influence’ well outside its Sanctuary borders - this Annual report is focussed on the many forms this takes.

- Great Barrier Biosecurity - Since 2002 the Trust has been contracted to manage various biosecurity programmes at the islands wharves and more recently the airport, jetties, and boat ramps. This creates an extra role and developed expertise for one of our field team as well as making a valuable contribution to protecting the islands biodiversity through biosecurity.
- From time to time when there is a suspected incursion of a possum or mustelid, we become part of the Auckland Council team to manage an array of equipment to pick up unwanted pests.
- Participation with other projects – In 2012, field manager Kevin Parsons was part of the translocation team sourcing Cooks Petrels from Hauturu for Cape Kidnappers Sanctuary. We work closely with Glenfern Sanctuary having jointly undertaken 4 robin translocations and had our field team there for robin monitoring.
- Mentoring and Advice – the Trustees and the field team are sources of pest management information for the community. Applications for funding, planning documents, and monitoring programmes are part of the assistance given in the community. Many private landowners have been mentored through the start up phase of their own projects, including iwi.
- Weed management – the Rosalie Bay Rd is managed for weeds such as pampas, Mexican daisy, watsonia, aristeia, jasmine, and hakea. This assists with preventing weed invasion through the road corridor into the Sanctuary and also contributes to the weed work of Auckland Council.

- Monitoring threatened species – Hochstetters Frogs have never been formally surveyed on Great Barrier. In 2012, the Trust began the first of three bi-annual surveys of this species in the Te Paparahi block of northern Great Barrier. Led by EcoGecko Ltd and funded by Lotteries Environment, the first report of the survey has been completed and the second survey funded for March 2015. The survey provided a unique opportunity for two of our field team to learn the craft of surveying from professionals.
- Lizard surveying and relocation was part of a Council requirement in the consent for the formation of Jenny's Rd in Tryphena. The Trust undertook this contract and relocated a number of lizards out of the area of road development.
- Provision of Equipment – over the years the Trust has identified the pest management equipment, including bait, that works best in this environment – the Trust sells this equipment to landowners on request and has also donated equipment for the Mulberry Grove Pest Project.
- Promoting the work of the Sanctuary and the value of Great Barrier's ecology – over 100 presentations have been made on site, at conferences, symposiums, and workshops all over NZ. A similar number of reports have been written and widely circulated, several formally published.
- Field data – the results of our trapping and baiting provide information for a range of agencies.
- Community social and economic benefits – the Trust has raised \$2M since 1999. Over \$1.2M of this is returned to the community in the form of wages. Creating long term sustainable employment based on conservation has been a key objective for the Trust since inception.

What's next?

We wait with anxious expectation for DOCs response to our translocation application – the plan is to uplift 48 red crowned kakariki from Hauturu to the Sanctuary in May 2015. Eight of these birds will be held in captivity in our aviary and be the starting stock for a breed and release programme. The remaining 40 birds will be released into the bush and hopefully anchor to the feeding stations and birds in the aviary. This will be the first facility of this kind in the Auckland region and will create some exciting research opportunities.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the 14 landowners that make up the Sanctuary for the privilege of restoring your properties. Thank you to our hard working and dedicated field team – Kevin Parsons, Rachel Wakefield, Henry Cookson, Dean Medland, Dave Harland, and volunteer Grant Elliot. A special thank you to volunteer Dave Harland – Dave pest manages the biodynamic farm that is within our Sanctuary. The macadamia nut orchard and the farming practice there creates high biomass so it is rat heaven extraordinaire. With committed vigilance Dave has managed to keep the tracking tunnel average at 6% since 2012, often recording a zero. Thank you to trustees John Ogden and Rose Harland for your input and support.

The Trust remains in a stable financial position with support from current funders: ASB Community Trust, Biodiversity Condition Fund, Auckland Council Heritage and EIF funds, WWF Habitat Protection Fund, and Lotteries Environment. Thank you.

Thank you to Sealink (Freightlink) for their generous on-going sponsorship of our freight, to AB Deliveries for the good deal, and to Kelvin Floyd, our map whizz, for recently updating all our maps.

Have a great Xmas, blissful holidays and we look forward to reporting in next year.

Judy Gilbert

Trust Manager