



Winter
2013

This summer's drought was reported to be one of the toughest in 40 years and it wasn't just the farming community feeling the heat. In April the NZ Herald reported on century old rimu and other stately trees around the North Island that were succumbing to the big dry. Fortunately Northland's soil moisture levels appear to be returning to field capacity as reported in NIWA's June climate update. So for those of you with trees to plant you're good to go! However, the drought does remain as a cautionary tale for species selection when planting. As a general rule (especially for native plantings on streamsides) your species mix should go heavily in favour of the more resilient pioneer species, these being flax, cabbage tree, manuka and kanuka. These species tend to cope with the wet and dry temperature extremes that we experience in the north.

Despite the dry conditions there were some highlights to the summer, in particular the return of Northland brown kiwi to areas where they had been 'lost'. Thirteen kiwi were released into the Brynderwyns in April and a further 14 kiwi were released between May and June at the Mataia property on the Kaipara Harbour. All the birds have been fitted with transmitters so their movements can be tracked over the coming years.

Waitangi River Catchment

Several of the catchment's farmers met in June to develop a course of action in relation to land and water management. Using a workshop format, those attending identified the issues that unite the farming community, discussed what their vision for the future might look like and, most importantly, identified a set of actions to support their vision. The regulatory implications of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management was a topic that influenced much of the debate. The actions identified will help the farming community to engage in the science underpinning water quality monitoring and to connect with the wider community by showcasing the efforts being made on farms across the catchment.



Andrew Vesey preparing for the Watercress Creek planting day, July 2013.

One farm making the effort is the Vesey Farm in the Pakaraka area. Andrew and Susan run a small dairy herd and they are determined to make a productive, profitable business around a small herd. The family are very aware of their position in the upper catchment and the clarity of the water in Watercress Creek, as it flows through their farm, is magnificent.

The Vesey's avoid conventional fertiliser use and last April finished fencing out stock from the farm's waterways.

Having fenced the creek Andrew and Susan were keen to further improve its value and this month received a helping hand from Oromahoe School, who planted out a 200m section of the creek. The Vesey's have a preference for planting native species (particularly manuka for Andrew's bees) which will in time shade the stream and improve the habitat for aquatic wildlife.

The plants, which were supplied by the Kerikeri Shadehouse, were of superb quality and Room Four made great progress, spurred on by teacher Luke Mattock's promise of a swim if they got the job done. Despite the time of year the glistening water proved too alluring for Room Four who rounded off a muddy afternoon with a quick dip.

If you are interested in participating in the project please contact Jon Hampson using the contact details on the back page.

Room Four takes the plunge.

Reconnecting Northland Update

The appointment by WWF-New Zealand of David Mules to the position of Programme Manager for Reconnecting Northland has been a critical milestone. Haere mai David! Over the past four months David has invested considerable time and energy in developing the governance structure that will ensure Reconnecting Northland can meet the regions challenges.

Initial conversations with key stakeholders about the project have been met with high levels of enthusiasm and support. So, with the governance structure embedded, the project team can now turn its attentions to the development and implementation of several flagship initiatives, the most advanced of these being the Kiwi Coast.

The vision of the Kiwi Coast – *To support and connect community-led kiwi recovery along the east coast of Northland* – is rapidly gaining traction from Bream Head all the way to Mahinepua / Radar Hills.

A Project Plan has now been completed which sets out the ideas, actions and strategies that explain the thinking behind the Kiwi Coast and lists the different types of support and on-the-ground work that will be undertaken. A 'Think Tank' has also been established to guide and implement the Kiwi Coast.



The goals of the Kiwi Coast are:

- To support the recovery of local kiwi populations along the east coast of Northland.
- To celebrate the presence of Northland brown kiwi in Northland as a taonga.
- To reduce pests that threaten kiwi.
- To facilitate the safe movement of kiwi and other native species throughout the Kiwi Coast.
- To encourage the restoration of the ecological health and integrity of kiwi habitats, including native forest, scrublands, streams, dunelands and wetlands.
- To encourage the natural return and spread of lost species such as kaka, kakariki and bellbird/korimako, some of which visit, but no longer reside in the area.
- To encourage people to engage in kaitiakitanga /stewardship to protect and nurture Northlands' biodiversity for future generations.

Now that funding has been successfully secured to implement the initial on-the-ground work it's time for this ambitious project to roll up it's sleeves and get going on making Northland a safer place for kiwi to live and wander. If you are interested in getting involved, we would be keen to hear from you.

To get involved, find out more, or receive a copy of the Kiwi Coast Project Plan contact Ngaire using the contact details on the back page.

Whangarei Heads' local "Clover".

Photo: courtesy of Todd Hamilton, WHLF



Biodiversity Northland's marquee February 2013.

Biodiversity Northland Forum

The inter-organisational forum continued to meet over the year to identify opportunities to engage landowners in biodiversity restoration and enhancement. The annual Northland Field Days was the main event and our marquee was transformed into a microcosm of Northland's habitats. Visitors to the marquee were able to traverse forest, wetland, farmscapes and dunelands and to gather useful hints and tips on their management.



The Forum's recent field trip to Pukenui Western Hills Forest was an excellent opportunity for members to reflect on the support they are providing to community groups. Jerry Brackenbury and Max Hutchings of Pukenui Western Hills Forest Trust very kindly hosted the field trip and stimulated some great discussion around the practicalities of community led forest restoration touching upon issues such as funding and volunteer support.

Currently the forum is looking at developing a series of workshops to coincide with World Wetlands Day which takes place in February each year.

Jerry Brackenbury and Max Hutchings of Pukenui Western Hills Forest Trust explain the project to the group.



Weta boxes, installed by the Trust's members for educational visits.





Steve Allen demonstrating his possum and feral cat trap

Regional Trappers Workshop – June 2013

A mix of Northland landowners, community groups and professional trappers congregated at Kaingaroa Hall in the Far North for this year's workshop. The highlights of the workshop were the use of firearms for animal pest control, ways to control pests safely in kiwi zones, the Steve Allen possum and feral cat trap and the 'Pee Gee' myna trap.

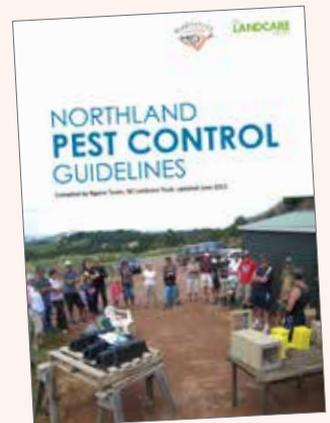
Mike Knight, Biosecurity Officer at Northland Regional Council, drew attention to the use of firearms in animal pest control emphasising that shooting can bring an additional and effective method of pest control to community projects. Mike was quick to point out the legal requirements surrounding the use of firearms as well as the need for safety, suggesting the hallmarks of a skilled rifleman is the ability to identify both the target and what may lie beyond.

The workshop participants gathered in the afternoon sunshine to see Steve Allen demonstrating his recently developed possum and feral cat trap. Steve first developed the trap for possums in 2007 and he has caught in excess of 10,000 possums using the design. His possum trap is highly rated by the Northland trapping community. Steve has further developed this trap into an easy-to-set feral cat trap specifically for Landcare groups after several requests. He recommends using a mix of peanut butter and cat biscuits in the cat trap although other baits have also proven to be effective.

Next up was Adrian and Judi Gilbert. The couple have been trapping Indian myna birds (*Acridotheres tristis*) around their home on the Tutukaka coast for over a decade although it wasn't until 2011, with the discovery of the 'Pee Gee' trap that things got serious. Pre-2011 the couple were catching around 60-70 birds a year but with the 'Pee Gee' trap they have caught 654 in 385 days of active service. Through much of the North Island, the myna is regarded as an aerial assassin, preying upon and displacing many native fauna. In Northland it is classified as a 'suppression animal' for pest control purposes. This means that the regional council supports and promotes efforts to reduce the density of bird populations so the impact on the environment is decreased.

While the 'Pee Gee' design is copyrighted, Adrian is authorised to construct and sell them "at cost" with \$100 of the proceeds being donated to local conservation charities. He currently builds them to order and for further information about the traps please contact Adrian directly. adriangilbert@xtra.co.nz

To order your own Steve Allan trap or to receive a copy of the updated 'Northland Pest Control Guidelines' that includes pest control information and trapping tips from workshops run over the past 10 years, please contact Ngaire Tyson using details on the back page.



The 'Pee Gee' trap consists of a 'trapping' compartment and a 'holding' compartment and uses 'decoy' birds, kept in the holding compartment, to call in further birds.



Measuring restoration success by Monica Peters

How do groups measure the success of their restoration projects? It's a question that I asked again and again during my 6 1/2 years as Waikato Regional Coordinator with the NZ Landcare Trust. Now a PhD student at Waikato University with the Lake Ecosystem Restoration team, this question forms the basis of my study. In recent years there has been huge growth in the number of community groups and restoration projects – both in New Zealand and overseas. Thanks to a lot of voluntary spade work, once degraded environments have been turned into healthy, functioning ecosystems.

A number of science-based monitoring and assessment toolkits have been developed specifically for community groups. These include FORMAK (forests), SHMAK and the Cultural Health Index (streams/rivers), Turning the Tide (estuaries) and WETMAK (wetlands). However, very little information exists on how effective these toolkits and the methods they contain are in meeting the needs of community groups and other stakeholders in the environment. We don't even have a national picture of how and why some groups use science-based methods to monitor their projects or why other groups don't.

Around September of this year, I will send out a questionnaire to community groups throughout NZ focussing on environmental restoration projects – what's being done and how. I am also interviewing what I call "community supporters" i.e. representatives from Regional Council, DOC and NGOs, as well as funders and toolkit developers, to get their perspectives e.g. on how community generated data could be better used, and what kind of support they are able to provide groups.



Participants at a Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Kit (WETMAK) training workshop.

I have set up a blog www.monicalogues.com which provides an outline of the study and questionnaire. As the study evolves, I will share preliminary findings from the questionnaires and interviews. The blog is also set up as a forum for discussion – any feedback on posts is welcome. If your group is interested in being part of the study, please email me at monica.a.peters@gmail.com to receive further information.

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, or if you would prefer to receive future newsletters by email, then please drop Jon a line.

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