NZ LANDCARE TRUST

LANDCARE IN THE NORTH

Summer 2015

Happy New Year! It's that time of year when spare moments are best spent down at the beach or casting out a line, but in these quieter moments its worth reflecting on the year ahead. Most restoration work is based on good planning (but not always) and if you are winter planting it's time to be thinking about site preparation. Are your plants ordered? Is stock fencing required? What's the existing vegetation, does it need clearing and do you have a planting crew lined up? Now if this has got your attention it's also worth thinking about the following planting season (2016) as the seed collection period for many native plants is from late summer into autumn.

North Kaipara Catchment Restoration

Following Reconnecting Northland's successful pilot planting project last winter a further three year programme of restoration is in development. This will expand upon the initial planting sites to include the restoration of inanga spawning habitat, farm environmental planning workshops, wetland creation and forestry initiatives that seek to manage naturally regenerating totara and enhance gully sites for native tree cover and honey production.

The programme recognises that the catchment is also a productive landscape and that its inhabitants need to derive an economic benefit from the land. Therefore, the programme comprises restoration work that is capable of generating revenue in the medium to long-term. Sustainably harvesting totara and honey production are examples of this.

Over the next three years, it is anticipated that a total area of 120 ha of riparian habitat will be created, although, it is hoped that as we engage with the rural community, much more than this will be achieved. Planning for the first year is underway with plants on order from several nurseries and labour support being provided by the Community, Business & Environment Centre.

Pilot planting site at Kaimamaku Stream, Whakapara Catchment, October 2014.

Weekend of Action

In late-October 2014 a small group descended upon Te Pahi stream in search of macroinvertebrates, small spineless animals with nothing better to do than to lurk in the shallows. But these little critters have an important story to tell about the health of our streams.

The gathering was part of the Landcare Trust's "Communities for Clean Water" weekend of action. Consisting of a series of events nationwide, Northland's contribution was the Te Pahi Stream workshop held near Maungaturoto. It attracted 15 volunteers all seeking to increase their understanding of freshwater monitoring techniques.

Accompanied by Otamatea HarbourCare group members, Kim Jones of the Whitebait Connection led the participants through a range of stream assessment techniques. These included habitat assessment, water clarity, and macroinvertebrate identification.

The stream is part of the Pahi River catchment, a relatively small pastoral catchment of around 40 square kilometres. At the workshop location the stream is lined with mature totara and an emerging understory of nikau palms, karaka, titoki and mapou. At a first glance the stream appeared to be in relatively good condition. However, a closer habitat inspection revealed the localised impacts of stock access and an expanding infestation of the pest weed *Tradescantia fluminensis*. If left unchecked these factors may retard future stream health.

Trawling the streambed with hand nets, the participants revealed several macroinvertebrate species, including

Macroinvertebrate sampling.

mayflies, stoneflies and freshwater mussels as well as the larvae of sandflies and mosquitoes. These species all differ in their tolerance of organic pollution but the presence of mayflies and stoneflies was particularly pleasing as these species are less tolerant of pollution.

Macroinvertebrates are also tucker for many native fish and Kim's fish traps (deployed at points along the stream) revealed a population of red fin bullies to be present. However, the absence of other fish, particularly inanga, raised questions about the downstream habitat and whether any physical barriers were impeding their upstream migration.

The workshop confirmed the potential of Te Pahi stream habitat to be improved, and, with the restoration efforts of Otamatea HarbourCare and the support of willing landowners, there is good reason to be optimistic about the catchment's future.

Catch of the day - a mayfly (subsequently released).

Otamatea HarbourCare coordinator Mark Vincent (in blue overalls) welcomes the participants.

Northland Catchments Community Forum

The focal point for the latest gathering of the forum was the Kerikeri Shadehouse. There is growing interest amongst stream restoration groups to produce their own plants and the well established Shadehouse was an ideal venue. The Shadehouse grew from the need to produce plants exclusively for island restoration projects in the Bay of Islands. Today it supplies upwards of 25,000 plants per year for the ever expanding number of mainland and island projects occurring around Northland. Rod Brown, the coordinator, and Vanessa Vujcich, the head grower, shared some of the secrets of the Shadehouse's success.

First and foremost the Shadehouse is financially self-sufficient, breaking even each year. All jobs are completed as pre-orders with the seed collected by those requiring the plants. It has a simple organisational structure and first class volunteers who all come to enjoy themselves. Keeping the bureaucracy to a minimum means all the energy and enthusiasm is channelled into growing plants. The volunteers are a talented bunch, and it's been said that one or two have no interest in plants whatsoever. Instead their practical minds are set to work on the Shadehouse's infrastructure, ensuring that the irrigation system, buildings and grounds are all in tip-top condition.

Other tips and tricks include keeping the overheads down and having an experienced grower at the helm. For example potting mix has a finite life and Rod advises purchasing in small quantities and storing under cover i.e. purchase by the trailer load (determine the volume required from number of plants x size of pots/bags being used). Vanessa showed the participants how to prick out and pot on seedlings to ensure that there is a healthy seedling survival rate. Generally speaking, to avoid damaging the roots and compressing seedling stems handle the seedlings by their lower leaves during potting.

Community plant nurseries also need to be vigilant for pests, specifically rainbow skinks and Argentine ants. This is a two way threat whereby a nursery can potentially send out plants infected with ants or skink eggs, or when well meaning folk return used trays and pots bringing new infestations into the nursery. Guidance on controlling Argentine ants and rainbow skinks is given in section 5 of the Animal Pest Management Strategy produced by NRC, www.nrc.govt.nz

Vanessa Vujcich of the KeriKeri Shadehouse demonstrates how to prick out and pot on seedlings.

Other news from the Forum:

The Community, Business and Environment Centre (CBEC)in Kaitaia has launched Grow Northland, a subsidised riparian planting team to assist farmers and landowners with planting projects, mainly around the Far North. If you would like to know more about the scheme please contact Lizzy Petera at admin@cbec.co.nz

Bay of Islands group, Living Waters, has really expanded its efforts in recent times. The restoration of Whangamumu wetland is progressing well with 15,000 trees planted this winter. The next stage is to establish suitable conditions for the pateke. Coordinator Ruth Marsh says that the hardest part is getting support to maintain the plantings but they have managed to access labour support from Northland Corrections.

Wairoa Stream is another restoration focus with approximately 8km of riparian zone from Bulls Gorge down to the Kerikeri Inlet. There is an established walkway the entire length of the project area, providing a great opportunity to involve rural and urban communities in managing water quality.

The latest development is Maungaparerua StreamCare which is currently in the process of forming. Maungaparerua Stream is around 5km long, providing an important ecological stepping stone for Puketi forest.

Summer Stoat Trapping on the Kiwi Coast

The Kiwi Coast now stretches over 175km from Bream Head to Hihi. Summer is the height of the stoat trapping season as far as trappers protecting kiwi on the Kiwi Coast are concerned. At this time of the year the trappers are working extra hard in the summer heat trying to catch stoats before the stoats prey upon our vulnerable kiwi chicks and other native wildlife.

Stoats are very good hunters and kill several times a day. As an introduced species their behaviour is somewhat distorted from the behaviour they display in their native habitat of Eurasia and North America. During the colder northern hemisphere winter, stoats stash their prey and return to feast on it later. This does not work in Northland where the catch deteriorates quickly in our warm, wet climate, so they just keep killing.

Did you know that stoats kill 95% of kiwi chicks before the chicks reach their first birthday? Successfully controlling stoats to a level that will help kiwi and other wildlife to thrive is only achieved by sheer hard work and dedication using purposely designed traps. Stoats are however very intelligent hunters and can be difficult to entice into a trap. Check out this video of a stoat investigating a DOC 200 stoat trap, www.kiwicoast.org.nz/summer-stoat-trapping-kiwi-coast

In 2013 alone, 647 stoats were trapped by groups and projects throughout the Kiwi Coast. Imagine how many kiwi and other wildlife were saved by this. The trap catch for a host of other pests within the Kiwi Coast is equally impressive with 8,997 possums, 11,999 rats and 456 weasels removed from forest and rural areas in 2013.

KIWI COAST

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.

Many thanks to the Biodiversity Advice and Condition Funds for their support.

This newsletter was produced with funds from the Ministry for the Environment.

Ministry for the Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

Biodiversity
Our Living Treasure
He Kura Taiao

A stoat investigates a DOC 200 predator trap.

Coming up…

Feb Maungaparerua StreamCare workshop. Venue: Puketotara (please register your interest with Jon).

Mar North Kaipara Land & Environment Plan Workshop. Venue: tbc.

Apr Northland Pest Control Workshop. Venue: tbc (please register your interest with Ngaire).

May National Kiwi Hui, 13-15th May. Venue: Marsden Bay Christian camp.

Contacts…

Jon Hampson, Northland Regional Coordinator
jon.hampson@landcare.org.nz
Ph 09 430 0954

Ngaire Tyson, Biodiversity Coordinator
ngaire.tyson@landcare.org.nz
Ph 09 430 0954

NZ LANDCARE TRUST

PO Box 3026, Onerahi
Whangarei 0112
0800 526 322
www.landcare.org.nz