



Summer 2016

Happy New Year.

In our last newsletter we commented on the seasonal increase in animal pests and the new growth occurring at restoration planting sites. All part of the annual cycle we say, but this is not a typical year. We are currently experiencing El Niño, a phase in the global climate cycle known as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation. For much of Northland El Niño is associated with warm, dry, conditions punctuated by the likelihood of stronger than average cyclones passing over or near to the country. Indeed, at the time of writing (12 January) Cyclone Ula is tracking south-southwest of New Caledonia in the direction of New Zealand although the forecast is for it to lose strength and downgrade to an extra tropical cyclone as it interacts with higher latitude oceanic and weather systems.

Given the El Niño prediction, farmers and growers will certainly have plans in place, but what are the implications for environmental projects across Northland? How will recent plantings fair after a sustained deficit in soil moisture? Are Landcare groups noticing any discernable change in their trap catches? Can trapping hardware be easily and safely retrieved from at-risk trap lines prior to an extreme storm? In the interests of citizen science we're keen to hear your experiences over the coming months with a view to sharing any common threads in the next newsletter. Contributions can be sent to jon.hampson@landcare.org.nz

Kiwi Coast

A range of events and workshops along Northland's east coast kept the Kiwi Coast busy through November and December. Hundreds of people participated, experiencing wild kiwi up close, gaining new skills in pest control, exploring different ways of working together and finding out about the Kiwi Coast and how they can get involved. Each event represented a partnership with a lead group, project or organisation - thanks to all those who took part and put in the hard work to make every single event such a roaring success! Find out more at www.kiwicoast.org.nz



Kiwi Coast at the Whangarei Summer Show



A Focus on... Northland Totara & Riparian Management Project

Over the past two years the Reconnecting Northland programme has supported a suite of projects within the Kaipara Harbour catchment. The Northland Totara & Riparian Management Project delivered by Tane's Tree Trust is one of these projects. Concerned with the management of a six hectare gully on a Titoki dairy-farm, the primary focus is on naturally regenerating totara stands to realise productive and ecological benefits.

The project capitalises on 10 years of the Northland Totara Working Group, and the silviculture techniques it has spearheaded, with a view to a future sustainable timber harvest. Progress to date includes stock exclusion from the gully, the planting of over 2000 native trees, thinning of totara stands and the establishment of permanent sampling plots and water quality monitoring.



Short fin eels caught during water quality monitoring at the farm. Photo courtesy of Whitebait Connection

The latter actions are critical to proving the viability of totara as a sustainable resource within a productive farm setting. Early feedback from Whitebait Connection who are undertaking the water quality monitoring in the gully and on the wider farm is encouraging.

One of eight permanent sample plots measuring the gully's forest composition and structure over time. Photo courtesy of Tane's Tree Trust



New wasp bait comes to the market

In April the Department of Conservation reported that pest wasps are costing the New Zealand economy \$130 million a year. These costs are felt across the primary industries as well as affecting tourism and healthcare sectors. From an environmental perspective wasps are also a significant problem. In the South Island they disrupt beech forest ecosystems by consuming vast quantities of honeydew produced by scale insects. In Northland their impacts are less well documented but they are likely to compete aggressively with native birds and insects for nectar and prey.

This month Vespex wasp bait was released for widespread use by Nelson-based company Merchanto. Previously it was only licensed for use on public conservation land. There it reduced wasp activity by more than 95%. The protein bait, which contains the insecticide Fipronil, specifically targets wasps and avoids non-target species such as bees. It's user friendly because the wasps take the bait back to their nests eliminating the need for the user to get near the nest. Vespex can be sold to individuals who have completed an online training test. For further information visit www.merchanto.com

Meanwhile, Landcare Reserach continues to investigate a wasp biocontrol, an unnamed mite, discovered in 2011. Wasp nests infested with the mite are 50 to 70 percent smaller than uninfested nests. The more recent discovery of immature mites in the nests suggests that there may be a parasitic relationship that is not coincidental. The research continues with support from the Ministry of Primary Industries' Sustainable Farming Fund.

A wasp infested with the tiny mites



Community Environment Fund

The Ministry for the Environment (MfE) has announced the next round of the contestable Community Environment Fund. The fund is aimed at projects that strengthen partnerships, raise environmental awareness and encourage participation. Projects must be for up to three years in duration and applicants can apply for funds of between \$10,000 and \$300,000. Further details of the fund will be released in late-January so keep an eye on the MfE website for updates, www.mfe.govt.nz.



Vacancy: Reconnecting Northland Programme Manager/Kaiwhakahaere



Reconnecting Northland is seeking a leader with strategic thinking and strong relationship skills who can identify the next exciting projects and opportunities to help restore Northland's incredible biodiversity. The closing date for applications is 29 January 2016. For more information about the position visit www.reconnectingnorthland.org.nz



The Kiwi Coast "Think Tank" with Mabel and Tindall the Kiwi. Close to two hundred people came to see Mabel and Tindall the kiwi be released by Backyard Kiwi on the slopes of Taurikura Ridge, November 2015.

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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