

NEWSLETTER SPRING **2016**

Well hallo to you all – time for another newsletter to keep you up to date with progress in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve.

The OWHANGO ALIVE Chairman's Report, August 21st 2016

Once again we have enjoyed a very successful year. Our team of enthusiastic volunteers have:

- Cleared and maintained our DOC 200 trap lines on a weekly basis.

TRAP DATA

Count - Kill	Kill											
Sponsor	Rat	Stoat	Hedgehog	Mouse	Weasel	Rabbit	Cat	Possum	Ferret	Magpie	Wasp Nest	Total
Anderson-Smith	13	1		3			1					18
Claire Stevens	6											6
David Partis & Suzanne Wilkinson	7			5								12
Derek & Ann Percy (Trap 1)	18			1	1							20
Derek & Ann Percy (Trap 2)	18	1										19
Fa'i Pudney, Tauranga	14	1										15
Jacob Simmonds	8	3	3				1	1				16
Knowles Family	15	1		2								18
Margie Riley	8		1	1								10
Rachel & Marty Cashin	14	1		5								20
Richard & Felicity Porter	9											9
Sally & Mark	13	1			1							15
Simmonds family, Melbourne	23	4		1								28
Stent Family	15											15
TMN Hort and Beaut Soc	12			1								13
Weir Family	9			3								12
Total Result	202	13	4	22	2	1	2					246
Overall Total since 2013	1099	82	60	100	21	6	43	27	4	10	100	1552

- Placed 50 gas operated traps in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve, which have certainly despatched a few rats. Whether the numbers have warranted the effort is disputable. Realistically, the only way to deal to the rat "problem" is to place poison bait stations through the Reserve. This always receives positive and negative reactions from our village, and as we want to keep our locals supportive of the OA mission, we are reluctant at this stage to throw poison around in our Reserve, effective though it may be.

- Planted more native trees in the Reserve.

- Barry, Colleen, Mark and Sally planted the last of the trees (60) just downstream from the Whakapapa Bridge. The area had been cleared of the nasties – privet, blackberry, and other pesty plants by our team of weed busters and the DOC team, so the saplings should enjoy their new spot, some even have a view of the river and the odd pair of who fly by's. And they are looking good – the trees I mean.

- Cleared blackberry, privet & other weeds from the Reserve. This is an ongoing job, of course, and we are slowly but surely making progress.
- Worked with local landowners & DOC in catching feral cats.
- Received "Good Sorts" award from Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board (displayed at Cafe 39 South).
- Received funding from KCE (\$600), Horizons Regional Council (\$524), and RSA (\$500) for traps, trees, brochures.
- Won a shotgun from Hunting and Fishing Taupo, for the number of stoats caught. Shotgun is currently for sale as a fund raiser
- Unveiled an information panel at the Whakapapa Bridge on World Rivers Day Sept 27th 2015. Thank you to DOC and all others concerned.
- We will celebrate World Rivers Day again this year, on September 25th, with nearly 200 trees to plant. These trees have been purchased through generous donations and funding from Horizons.
- Brochures continue to be popular, with 500 being printed this year, 250 sponsored by ORRIS and 250 by an anonymous sponsor. Thank you.
- DOC report an increase of whio on the river and bird monitors indicate that the forest birds are more than holding their own.
- The High School ran projects with students, undertaking studies on the ecology, flora and fauna of the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve. They then held an interesting exhibition of their findings at the High School hall, along with other science exhibitors.

Regards

Mark Fredericks and the Owhango Alive Team.

World Rivers Day

Since the August 2016 Chairman's Report we have held another World Rivers Day celebration at the the Whakapapa Bridge (Sept 25th) – the weather wasn't too unkind, so after a karakia from Peter Te Ahuru (Ngati Hikairo) and a blessing prepared by Reverend Merv Aitken, about 30 of us headed up and down the river tracks to plant nearly 200 trees. The areas for planting had already been cleared in previous working bees, so it was a case of carrying some trees to the sites. Most of the trees had been taken to their new homes a couple of days prior by some of our trusty workhorses. Then we all dug holes and set the young trees free into the soil with a tablet of fertiliser at their feet. They look very healthy and happy.



*Volunteers from Owhango Alive, Owhango Village, Taumarunui, Raetihi and even Wellington!
(photo courtesy of Rachel Anderson-Smith)*

Planting and “photo shoots” took us to smoko time, so it was off to the pavilion in the Owhango Domain for refreshments, kindly prepared by more volunteers. What a diverse team we have!

After smoko, our invited guests Malcolm Swanney and Fern talked to us about the work they do with whio and kiwi. Malcolm and Fern work for DOC. Fern is a highly trained German Short Haired Pointer who indicates to her staff (Malcolm and others) where whio are on the river, and where kiwi are in the bush, so Fern is vital for assessing population numbers of each bird of these endangered species.

Fern has her own work clothing, ranging from muzzle, warm coat and a wet suit type of affair. It was a very interesting and enlightening presentation – it still amazes me how much goes on out in the field that most of us have no knowledge of. So many thanks to Fern and Malcolm for giving us their time, especially on Daylight Saving weekend.



Blue Duck recognition 101 (photo courtesy of Malcolm Swanney)

Featured Bird - Karearea

Also known as the NZ falcon, bush hawk or sparrow hawk. The karearea is one of a group of birds called *Raptors* which are birds of prey that hunt by day (diurnal). They prey mostly upon small birds, including bellbirds, catching their prey on the wing with talons and killing with the beak to the back of the victim's neck. They're also partial to insects and skinks, ducklings and even the odd magpie and heron. They are classed “protected endemic” – only found in New Zealand. Widespread but uncommon.

Description: A fast flying raptor with rapid beats of long pointed wings; also soars, glides and swoops. See photo for visuals or check them out on line for more info. Their call is a piercing 'kek kek kek' and they are very territorial, “bombing” anything or anyone they perceive as a threat, particularly in the breeding season (August to March).



photo courtesy of Paul Lacy

Karearea is one of my favourite birds – I am always thrilled to hear and see them doing their thing around the Ohinetonga Reserve and over Owhango village. Paul Lacy was able to take this great photo recently when three karearea performed very vocally and visually at the end of Omatane Road, Owhango. One of these amazing birds landed in a willow tree which Paul then climbed and took some great photos. It sat in the tree watching us muck about trying to get the best shot and merely moved it's head and incredible eyes. What a treat! We think it was a fledgling, with the parent birds flying around as protection. There are at least two pairs nesting around the village and one pair at the pumice pit on the other side of the Whakapapa Bridge. The DOC website is a great source of more information about New Zealand's native birds.



1500th Kiwi Release September 23rd

A group of us (Mike, Colleen, Barry, Tania and Sally) travelled to the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre to celebrate the release of the 1500th Operation Nest Egg programme chick. She was named Mighty Dash (MD is the Roman numeral for 1500) and she is a granddaughter of the first kiwi released under the ONE programme. We heard great stories from DOC staff who had been involved with the programme at the outset, had a photo shoot with Mighty Dash and then she was transported back to Owhango to be released in the Tongariro Forest Park. Tania Dewitt (our OA secretary) and a reporter from the Ruapehu Press travelled with DOC staff Jenny and Jerome out into the bush to place MD in her new habitat. By all accounts it was a fantastic experience – go Mighty Dash!



From the left, Sally, Tania, Colleen, Jerome and Mighty Dash, Mike and Barry (photo courtesy of Marie MacDonald)

New Volunteers

We'd like to welcome Mike and Christine Williams to the Owhango Alive team – they moved to Owhango a few months ago and have certainly embraced the village life, with Mike running his own trap line weekly in the Reserve, Christine helping at our working bees, and both attending meetings and "get togethers". Great – we may have another couple of volunteers join us too, so we're getting to have a pretty strong and active group of "vollies".

Quiz Night

In August we held another successful quiz night at the Owhango pub. More than twenty teams vied for the top spot, with one of the Owhango Alive teams doing rather well, if I say so myself, coming through in second place.

There were some great spot prizes offered by our local community, including a Five Tunnel Tour for two people from Forgotten World Adventures, a range of items from Vetent, and bar tabs from Owhango Lodge publican, Grant Lethborg. Thanks to everyone involved – we hope to hold another one in March 2017

In the previous newsletter I posed the question "what is a group of cats called?" For those of you who are still wondering it's a DESTRUCTION. Rather apt, don't you think?

So this time the question is "What do you call a group of rats?"

Well, that wraps it up for this newsletter – we have a new volunteer, David Robinson, who is helping me with the newsletter, so we will now be able to a little more regular with staying in touch with our Owhango Alive supporters.

So once again, many thanks to you all for your support and involvement in our mission to protect and enhance the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve and its inhabitants.

Sally Lashmar
Owhango Alive

Photo Gallery *Photos courtesy of Rachel Anderson-Smith, Marie MacDonald and David Johnston*



World Rivers Day 25 September 2016



Whakapapa Whio



Rattus defunctus