

Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society

Annual Report

2012

Tena kotou, tena kotou, tena kotou, katoa.

This year, Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society celebrates 10 years of efforts to restore the native ecosystems on Mt Pirongia, and so it is fitting that this year also marked some momentous milestones for our pest control project and our aims for environmental advocacy.

The focus of our pest control work is a bait station grid on Mt Pirongia. Starting with only 250ha in 2006, we have now just completed our 6th extension to cover a total of 1016ha, taking us over that magical 1,000 mark which qualifies us to reintroduce species such as the Kokako. I would like to thank Steve McClunie and Ken Allen for their commitment and drive in achieving this long term goal, and for overseeing the bait station filling operations so competently. They are ably assisted by Vic Hopkirk and Gerry Kessels, while Tonia Eckhoff and Annemarie Verhoeven have progressed our risk management plan – your efforts are also greatly appreciated.

We have continued with our impressive results at reducing pest populations with our rat index starting at 75% and falling to a mere 2%, which rounds off five years of similar success and bringing visible increases of bird abundance as our reward. St Paul's Collegiate no longer undertake post-operational monitoring for us due to changes in the Hilary Awards timetable so Steve and Ken have picked that up, which was fantastic of them.

Last year we gained funding from Waikato Regional Council for the translocation of Pītoitoi or North Island Robins to Mt Pirongia and Selwyn June put in a huge effort as our project leader on this, earning our tremendous gratitude. We were also able to gain the services of Paul Jansen as supervisor, bringing with him an amazing depth of experience as well as a legendary sense of humour. Twenty nine Pītoitoi were captured from Mangatutu in Northern Pureora and released on Mt Pirongia near the start of the Mahaukura track in April amidst wonderful participation from iwi groups and support from the Department of Conservation. An outstanding feature of the project was the enthusiastic participation of volunteers, numbering at least 106, and we honestly couldn't have asked for better in terms of commitment, team work and a shared excitement at restoring a species back to our beloved maunga. Selwyn will give a tribute to those who were involved in the Robins project later in the programme and we look forward to releasing a further 30 robins next year, funding permitting.

Progress on our plans to set up an environmental activity centre in Pirongia Village was finally achieved with a permanent site approved on Rangimarie Reserve and funding for the shifting of the old Pirongia School library block generously provided by the Lion Foundation. The building was moved onto the reserve on May 9 and we

are hopeful that upgrading work will proceed smoothly so that we may hold an official opening in the coming year. An enormous amount of determination and effort was needed to bring this project to this point and I would like to thank the Department of Conservation, Tainui, Purekireki Marae, Peter and Shirley Kewish, Ros and Nick Empson, Sabina Owen and Councillor Diane Sharpe. Special appreciation goes to Waipa Networks who met the resource consent costs for us and Waipa District Council for waiving some of the fees.

Amongst our other projects, the Mt Pirongia Art Awards have been our major public relations event, being held annually in November for the last seven years as part of the Te Awamutu Spring festival. There are categories for two dimensional art and creative natural fibre, and a stand out feature of the Awards this year was the stunning artwork by students from Te Pahu and Pirongia School. We are especially grateful to the sponsors who make the awards possible, especially Waipa Community Arts Council, Gordon Harris Art Supplies, and TinyMighty Power. Thank you to you all.

Other society projects in the last 12 months included producing a podcast of the Mangakaraa Guided Walk which is available free off our website, landscaping of Te Ngahere Reserve, monitoring of long-tailed bat activity, entering into discussions with Youth Search and Rescue on a supplementary pest control area maintained by themselves, renewing our membership and sponsorship brochure, and continuing our school liaison work with Piopio College, Ngutunui and Crawshaw School and leading the Pirongia School environment group in making the robin carry boxes.

We have continued to secure grants and other funding in spite of the difficult economic conditions and we acknowledge with grateful thanks the following funders for the 2011/2012 year:

Grants:

NZ Lotteries - podcast	\$2,000.00
Pub Charity - insurance	\$1,000.00
Waipa District Council- Administration	\$700.00
Pub Charity - Bait Station extension	\$10,000.00
Lion Foundation - Envirocentre Relocation	\$20,000.00

Major Donations:

General public for Te Ngahere Reserve	\$ 2,895.00
Te Awamutu Community Public Relations for podcast production	\$ 500.00
Pirongia Tourism Association for podcast production	\$ 500.00
Waipa District Council for DVD Production	\$ 1,000.00
A & P Cowan	\$ 1,500.00

Major Sponsorships

Waipa Networks for envirocentre resource consent costs	\$4,361.80
Waipa District Council for waiving of resource consent costs	\$1,200.00
Total:	\$45,656.80

On an operational level, we are pleased with the continued growth of our support base. We now have 83 members and 105 sponsors who make up our sponsor a hectare programme with 153 hectares sponsored. Our 160 volunteers put in approximately 1460 hours on our various projects.

I will conclude with thanks to the sensational group of people who make up the committee for the Society. Apart from being great to work with, I admire you all for your passionate dedication to making a difference when you saw the environmental plight of Mt Pirongia. I especially wish to thank our wonderful secretary Dianne June, vice chair and leader of the Mangakaraa Project Steve McClunie, volunteer co-ordinators June Bright and Annemarie Verhoeven, treasurer Gerry Kessels and publicity officer Tonia Eckhoff. You have truly put into practice that saying by Bill Blackman:

“Now is the time. Needs are great, but our possibilities are greater.”

Clare St Pierre
Chairperson
12 July 2012