

Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society
Annual Report
2013

Tena kotou, tena kotou, tena kotou, katoa.

The last 12 months have seen significant achievements by our society, particularly the completion of our North Island Robins or Pītoitoi Translocation project, as well as continuing with our pest control action and upgrading of the Pirongia Envirocentre building.

The high point of our year was the completion of our translocation project to re-establish a breeding population of North Island robins on Mt Pirongia. In April this year, a second group of robins was captured from Mangatutu Ecological Area in Northern Pureora Forest and released in our pest control area at the end of Grey Rd, Te Pahu. This brings the number of robins transferred to our maunga to 65, slightly over the number anticipated, as there was difficulty in sexing the second cohort due to their consistently small size. The icing on the cake came in the same month with a confirmed sighting of an unbanded robin on Mt Pirongia: evidence that breeding is taking place, and hopefully this is the first of many such instances. Over 74 volunteers put in some 1300 hours of preparation for the translocation, which was a fantastic commitment, and I would especially like to thank our Project Leader Selwyn June and his wife Dianne for their outstanding contribution to the success of the project. We were also thrilled to be win the Environment and Heritage category of the TrustPower Waipa District Community Awards in May, and I am sure that the robins project clinched that for us.

Pest control work in our bait station grid covering 1,000 ha has proceeded under the excellent guidance of Steve McClunie and Ken Allen. We are so fortunate to have the expertise and dedication of these two men and owe them untold thanks for their involvement. No extensions to the grid are planned at this stage as we wish to consolidate and build capacity for our operation. For the sixth consecutive year we have returned a post-operational rat index of 3% or less which is delivering the protection needed for nesting birds. What is really exciting is that we are starting to see the benefits to birds with reports of noticeable boosts to their numbers, especially Tomtits. Rifleman sightings have also increased. We still do not have systematic monitoring of bird counts but remain open to offers of help in this area.

Our envirocentre has seen pleasing progress with accessway construction, window and door maintenance, cleaning, and paving completed and electricity connected. Vic Hopkirk, Peter Bevan and Ed Brodnax have taken a starring role here, as well as many others contributing their time and materials to help us. Thank you all.

During this time we have continued with our wider activities such as landscaping of Te Ngahere Reserve, Native Bat Monitoring, Risk Management Planning, group presentations and liaison work. Our Mangakara podcast, available for free on the internet <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZO-Gxc1yfWk>, now has over 2800 views. Our appreciation goes to Gerry Kessels, Sally Uerata, Tonia Eckhoff, Annemarie

Verhoeven, Dianne June and Nicky Samuel for their commitment to these aspects which further the society's interests and profile.

These projects rely on funding being provided, and I would like to acknowledge our gratitude for the support from the following funders and donors:

The Southern Trust: \$20,000 for envirocentre steps, ramp and deck.

Meridian Energy: \$7,000 for pest control and native bat protection

Waikato Regional Council: \$5,000 for Pindone Purchase and \$10,000 for the Robins Project and Envirocentre electricity connection

Pub Charity: \$5,000 for envirocentre maintenance and \$6,000 for track maintenance

Waipa District Council: \$800 for administration and envirocentre costs

Donation of \$500 by A & P Cowan.

The support base for our society continues to grow steadily. We currently have 88 members, 108 individual and corporate sponsors of hectares with 160 hectares sponsored in total. The volunteer hours put in for the last 12 months to June this year are 1354 which largely excludes the robins project. So a combined total is more in the vicinity of 2680 volunteer hours, and portrays the tremendous contribution volunteers are making to environmental restoration in our area. I congratulate each one of you for getting involved and helping create a positive change for the environment.

My greatest pleasure is to acknowledge the fine committee who drive our achievements, especially Vice-Chair Steve McClunie, Secretary Dianne June and volunteer co-ordinator June Bright. All of you are brilliant to work with and totally committed to our mission, which continues to inspire and motivate me in my role. Thank you for your passion and pragmatic determination. We farewell two committee members: our treasurer Carol Croft and also Annemarie Verhoeven who stepped down earlier in the year. We appreciate your input to our team during your time with us and wish you the best for the future.

New Zealand's natural environment continues to face pressures and decline, and the future challenges to redress those trends remain daunting. Yet this is the challenge our society takes up willingly, while taking to heart these words:

What lies behind us, and what lies before us, are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

Clare St Pierre
Chairperson
11 July 2013