

Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society
Annual Report
2018

Tena kotou, tena kotou, tena kotou, katoa.

2018 stands out as one of our most significant years for achieving our aims with our kōkako project taking off while we also maintained momentum in our usual projects.

Following the restoration of kōkako to our maunga through the first release of 20 Waipapa birds in June 2017, post-release monitoring has confirmed that 15 of the 16 located have remained in our 1,000ha pest control area and that at least 2 pairs nested. Four chicks were found and 3 were banded but later monitoring could not find them. Our kōkako ecologist, Dave Bryden, has encouraged us to remain optimistic given that these birds have many years ahead of them for raising chicks successfully. In June this year, a further 10 kōkako from Waipapa were translocated and again the fieldwork proceeded very well, with excellent support from volunteers. Our kōkako project has attracted the interest of educators who have seen us as an inspiration for students and others to take environmental action in their own localities. Through the support of WWF, Waipa District Council, Waikato Regional Council and local iwi, a virtual fieldtrip was videoed by CORE Education during our Waipapa translocation and it can be viewed at <http://www.learnz.org.nz/kōkako182/videos>. The online resource is expected to reach as many as 3,000 students across New Zealand.

The crowning point for our project happened last week when 14 kōkako with Pirongia genes sourced from Tiritiri Matangi Island were released onto the maunga. It has taken a colossal effort to get to this point, and I am full of gratitude for mana whenua Ngati Manuhiri, the amazing catch team led by Dave Bryden and Kevin Parker, the volunteers from Tiritiri Matangi Island, and those from our own group, especially Dianne and Selwyn June and Tom Davies. It is tremendously emotional to know that the hopes that were behind catching the last kōkako here in 1996 to ensure the continuation of their line has succeeded and we now have a safe environment to be able to return them to their ancestral home. We look forward to further monitoring of the birds and their nesting success starting from October this year so we can be sure we are protecting them adequately. We remain committed to stepping up pest control if and when needed.

Our two pest control projects for Mt Pirongia and Okahukura, Northern Pureora Forest, continue to produce terrific outcomes and we appreciate funding support from DoC's Community Fund for both projects and also World Wildlife Fund and the Tindall Foundation for Mt Pirongia. This year has had its challenges with significant pig damage to our Pirongia grid but Steve McClunie put in many hours to rectify it. Residual rat population indices were 2.5% for Mt Pirongia from a pre-operation level of 50% while Okahukura's result was 10% from a start of 24%. Health and Safety-wise, we only had one serious incident over the year and I was the cause of it. Breaking my ankle while baiting at Okahukura tested our safety protocols and they worked brilliantly so all the effort to develop good safety practices for both our sites has paid dividends. We are totally blessed to have incredibly dedicated and enthusiastic long-term volunteers and new volunteers join us all the time, especially through our revamped website. We currently have 270 people registered for our

projects. I praise our pest control leaders every year and this year is no different. Steve McClunie and Ken Allen look after Pirongia and Dianne and Selwyn June handle Okahukura. They do an outstanding job with what looks like no effort to the rest of us, it all goes so smoothly, but of course it takes many hours and real commitment. To all four of you, we are immensely grateful for your commitment and thank you for all your input.

Our *Dactylanthus* team has made significant progress with hand pollination and monitoring of the plants at high altitudes on Mt Pirongia, and the sowing of seed on its lower slopes in the hope that we can re-establish it in more accessible parts of the forest park. *Dactylanthus taylorii* was prevalent in the Mangakaraa area according to local accounts but we will need to wait about 4 years before we know if we have any success. We appreciated the assistance of DoC's Avi Holzapfel in this initiative. We were also fortunate to have research on *Dactylanthus* flowering and pollination completed over the summer, and the researcher, Monique Hall will be presenting her findings later this evening. I want to congratulate her on such a successful project which has enriched our understanding of *Dactylanthus*, and thank the others who collaborated on the project: Alison Sellars our *Dactylanthus* convenor, the University of Waikato, the Len Reynolds Trust, Purekireki Marae, and the Waikato Botanical Society.

In the past year we have launched a new logo and kokako brochure thanks to support from Chalky Digits, and undertaken four big fundraisers – native planting for the van den Broeks, a calendar, a Pirongia Quiz Night and a Pureora Bait Bagging weekend. The organisation that goes into these takes a huge amount of commitment and Dianne June, Joanne Roxburgh and Heather-anne Lang rose to the challenge admirably. Thank you for really successful fundraisers for our group. We have progressed with our environcentre project by holding some working bees, and are also looking into the use of self-resetting traps to complement our other pest control methods.

Our full-on programme of projects and activities would not be possible without grants and donations, and I want to give sincere thanks to the following who have generously supported us over the past year:

Source	Amount	Purpose
Grants		
Waikato Regional Council	\$ 127,360	Kokako translocation project
Department of Conservation's Community Fund	\$ 16,650	Okahukura kokako protection
WWF and the Tindall Foundation	\$ 13,584	Mt Pirongia pest control
RSA	\$ 500	Envirocentre insurance
Pacific Development & Conservation Fund	\$ 27,000	Kokako translocation project
Waipa District Council	\$ 1,150	Administration
Chalky Digits	\$ 2,645	Kokako Project
Len Reynolds Trust	\$ 4,982	<i>Dactylanthus</i> research
Department of Conservation's Community Fund	\$ 40,000	Kokako translocation project
Department of Conservation's Community Fund	\$ 50,000	Okahukura kokako protection
WWF Environmental Education Action Fund	\$ 11,550	Kokako virtual field trip
Waikato Regional Council SSCIF	\$ 5,750	Okahukura kokako protection
Total	\$ 301,171	

Donations

Waipa Networks	\$	700	Mt Pirongia pest control
B & S van den Broek	\$	2,000	General
EB Firth Family Trust	\$	12,000	Kokako translocation project
Total	\$	14,700	

Society Fundraising

Pirongia Quiz Night	\$	3,118
Pureora Bait Bagging	\$	4,017
Total	\$	7,135

Grand Total	\$	323,006
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In-kind support and donations

Waipa District Council	\$	500	In-kind support for kokako project
OSPRI	\$	15,000	1,000 OSKA bait stations
Hyundai	\$	500	In-kind support for kokako project
Total	\$	16,000	

Our support base continues to expand, mainly because of our kōkako projects and it is really inspiring to see so many people willing to play a part in restoring our native biodiversity. We particularly appreciate the University's Science Students' Association who send two whole busload of young people to help on our Okahukura baiting weekends. Volunteer hours came to 4943 this year involving about 110 people which is a massive achievement. Our membership stands at 138, and we have 65 individual and corporate sponsors of hectares with 186 hectares sponsored in total. Our Mangakaraa podcast, available for free on the internet <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZO-Gxc1yfWk>, now has over 4,536 views while our facebook page has 925 likes.

This picture of success is due entirely to my amazing committee and I salute each one of you for your unswerving support. It is an absolute pleasure to lead such a proactive group. I pay special tribute to Steve McClunie as vice-Chair and pest control prodigy, Dianne June as Secretary and Co-ordinator extraordinaire, Selwyn June for Health and Safety, and for giving so much extra input whenever needed, and Susan Emmitt for application preparation. Susan Brennan our treasurer is stepping down after having done a sterling job while our finances have escalated with our larger scale projects. We are sorry to lose you but wish you the best for the future. I also need to thank my 'Ministers outside cabinet' Alison Sellars for Dactylanthus co-ordination, Antoinnette Wilson for publicity, and Ros Empson and Peter Smits for the envirocentre as they aren't even on the committee but contribute so generously. As individuals we could almost feel powerless at trying to turn around the tragic losses to biodiversity this generation is facing up to, but together as a group we are making headway. Our kōkako achievements are an important step in that journey - that of bringing our maunga back to life. Let's keep on doing that.

Kia kaha

Clare St Pierre
Chairperson

19 July 2018