

Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society
Annual Report
2017

Tena kotou, tena kotou, tena kotou, katoa.

I am in the wonderful position of reporting on one of our most successful years since we were founded. The first kokako were translocated to Mt Pirongia last month fulfilling a prime aim of our group, we won the national Green Ribbon Award for biodiversity protection for our kokako work, and progress has been made across a range of activities for restoring our maunga.

On 20 June, the first two kokako were released on Mt Pirongia with about 100 people present and what a privilege it was to be part of that experience. The occasion was the culmination of countless hours of preparation, persistence and fundraising, and all involved can be proud of their achievement. We only learned in August last year that translocating kokako to our maunga in 2017 could be possible, and there followed a flurry of documentation and consultation requirements. Our fundraising campaign was launched with an amazing concert at Vilagrads in March, thanks to the national ambassador for kokako, Dame Malvina Major and her students. We included a charity auction with the event, made possible by fantastic donations of items, and raised \$8,000 overall. A video of our project has also been produced, through the input of Nimbus Media and Chalky Digits. Waikato Regional Council agreed to funding the bulk of the first year of translocations in May and with that we asked for volunteers to help with the capture work to be led by Dave Bryden. I want to acknowledge the iwi donating their taonga to our maunga, Ngati Rereahu of Pureora, and we hope we continue to strengthen our bonds of friendship with them. Once we have released our permitted 20 kokako this year we will move into monitoring them, and a mobile phone app has been developed by Thundermaps to assist with this. We also turn our energies towards year two of the project where it is planned to return kokako with Pirongia bloodlines currently on Tiritiri Matangi Island to our maunga.

Winning the Green Ribbon Award for protecting biodiversity in June has also been a highlight. We entered the national award for our kokako protection work at Okahukura in Northern Pureora Forest. Here pest control to protect a remnant population of kokako located between two larger but isolated subpopulations has seen the remnant population expand so the separate parts can join up. They can now be classed as one population and in September last year were declared the first genetically sustainable population in the country, and therefore the strongest as well. Our collaborative pest control operation with DoC and Kessels Ecology played a crucial role in that achievement, and I think the response we have had from volunteers to complete the fieldwork in this very remote area has been simply marvellous, with 92 now registered to help. Last year, a kokako survey confirmed an increase in pairs from 22 in 2012 to 45, and we reduced rat populations from an index of 67% to 6% post operation. We currently have another year of funding from DoC for the operation and have applied for a further grant to cover the next three years as we remain committed to this part of Pureora which bears the same name of Kahu as our own maunga. We owe a huge debt of thanks to Dianne June who has

taken over co-ordination of that project from Jeanie Allport, and also to Selwyn June and Gerry Kessels who continue to put in extra to make it a success.

Moving now to Mt Pirongia itself, our 1,000ha of pest control here is still performing well under the master guidance of Steve McClunie and Ken Allen. Our rat results suffered this year, reducing to only 8.3% from our highest ever starting population of 88%. It was a difficult year controlling rats for other Waikato groups as well. Because of our kokako project, we are looking at expanding our pest control operation by 1,000ha if necessary should the translocated birds settle outside the existing grid. A small number of self-resetting traps were donated by the Ormsby family which we appreciated and we are looking at larger scale use of them although costs appear to be too prohibitive at present. An innovation we have introduced this year is recording actual bait take and Dianne has done a tremendous job of collating that data and using Maptoaster to portray the patterns of high and low take. We hope this will allow us to be smarter and more efficient about toxin use.

Our dactylanthus project has proceeded well, thanks to the efforts of Alison Sellars and a great working relationship with DoC. We now have funded helicopter transport to the summit where most of the plants are located and Heliworx Waikato have donated a free return trip. Good seed set has been found despite the absence of known pollinators. We plan to use the seed to try and re-establish the parasitic plant on Pirongia's lower slopes and university research on pollination questions is planned for the coming summer.

Pitoitoi or North Island robins are currently being monitored by Anna Coman as part of her university studies. She is systematically walking our bait station grid and is about 1/3 of the way through. She reports seeing 17 robins so far, with 11 without bands so successful breeding is taking place, but numbers so far are not building strongly. Anna also commented that there are plenty of riflemen around. Bat monitoring has been hampered by our monitors needing repair and little progress has been made on our envirocentre because of the demands of our other projects like kokako. We managed to complete some landscape planting there and are grateful to Forest Flora for the donated plants. I want to give special thanks to Vic Hopkirk who has resigned from the committee but did so much for kokako and the envirocentre. Laurie Roycroft has offered to take on the envirocentre project management and we welcome him to the team.

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	\$ 110,000	Kokako translocation project
Department of Conservation's Community Fund	\$ 18,034	Okahukura kokako protection
WWF and the Tindall Foundation	\$ 13,584	Mt Pirongia pest control
Waikato Regional Council	\$ 8,312	SSCIF Mt Pirongia pest control and dactylanthus monitoring

Trust Waikato	\$	4,000	Envirocentre
Greenwood Environmental Trust	\$	2,000	Kokako translocation project
Waipa District Council	\$	575	Administration
Total	\$	157,825	
Donations			
Purekireki Marae	\$	8,000	Kokako translocation project
Leo Koppens	\$	15,000	Kokako translocation project
Good in the Hood	\$	880	Kokako translocation project
Waipa Networks	\$	700	Mt Pirongia pest control
Tumbleweed Tees	\$	570	Kokako translocation project
Total	\$	25,150	
Inkind Contributions			
Thundermaps	\$	156,250	Inkind support for kokako sighting app development
Nimbus Media and Chalky Digits	\$	10,000	Inkind support for kokako video production
Ormsby family	\$	700	Inkind donation of self-resetting traps
Waipa District Council	\$	500	Inkind support for kokako project
Forest Flora	\$	500	Inkind support for envirocentre planting
Heliworx Waikato	\$	320	Inkind support for dactylanthus
Total	\$	168,270	

Our support base is growing strongly, mainly because of our kokako volunteers and I can't praise all of you enough for getting involved with a restoration kaupapa that is making such a difference for our native biodiversity. Volunteer hours came to 3858 this year involving about 105 people which is a massive achievement. We also have 138 members, and 79 individual and corporate sponsors of hectares with 182 hectares sponsored in total. Our Mangakaraa podcast, available for free on the internet <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZO-Gxc1yfWk>, now has over 4,392 views while our facebook page has 505 likes. We became GST registered this year, lifted our capability on Health and Safety thanks to the efforts of Selwyn June and Greg Hill, and we have a beautiful new website due to the great input of Stephen Way.

Lastly, it is time to thank all those on the committee who are absolutely outstanding in their dedication to our vision from 15 years ago, of bringing Mt Pirongia back to life. They are also seriously good at enabling others to play their part too. I especially want to acknowledge Steve McClunie as vice-Chair and our leading light on pest control, Dianne June as Secretary and Co-ordinator, Selwyn June for helping out whenever extra input is needed, Susan Brennan for bravely taking on the treasurer's role, Alison Sellars for publicity and Susan Emmitt for application preparation. All of you are heroes in your own right and I could not ask for a finer team in our mission for making our mountain a treasure-trove bursting with biodiversity once again.

Kia kaha

Clare St Pierre
Chairperson

13 July 2017