



www.rotokare.org.nz

# ROKARE Bush Telegraph

Summer/Autumn 2016

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## DOUBLE ISSUE!

### Welcome

We are grateful for the ongoing support from the community.

Happy Reading from the Rotokare Team

### Thank you!

Thanks to Worley Parsons Graduate Engineers for an awesome working bee & donation of tools & equipment



Thanks to Geoff Marx for a wonderful chainsaw donation!

Thanks to Normanby & District Lions club for their generous donation, and Eltham Lions for helping paint our buildings



Watch this video on our website

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### Welcome to our new staff!

Three new staff members have joined the Rotokare family in 2016. Fiona Gordon—Site Manager; Aaron Jacobson—Halo Project Ranger; Tricia Jamieson—Administrator.

### Fiona Gordon—Site Manager

Kia Ora ki nga whanaunga o Rotokare! My name's Fiona Gordon and I'm Rotokare's new Site Manager.



Originally hailing from the beautiful city of Dunedin, in NZ's deep south, I was thrilled to make the move to Taranaki and Rotokare earlier this year with my partner Josh. I've been working in conservation for close to 10 years now, working in a range of places, with a range of different species and programs (though primarily with some of NZ's special bird life). I'm delighted to be joining such an awesome team, particularly at such an exciting time in the life of this project (with multiple species translocations looming) and am looking forward to the awesome opportunities and challenges ahead that go hand in hand with mainland island life.



Z Energy 'Good in the Hood' promotion  
Fuel-up at Z Stratford & vote for Rotokare!  
We appreciate your support!

## Aaron Jacobson—Halo Ranger



Hi, I'm Aaron Jacobson. Melissa (my wife) and I moved to the Rawhitiroa district in 2011 to be closer to Rotokare. This gave me a great opportunity to spend time volunteering, especially for the education programme. I am excited to be hired as the first Rotokare Halo Project Ranger — part of the Rotokare family! ...and after several years working indoors, can now get the tan I so desperately need! I am really looking forward to taking the reins of the Halo project and delivering an awesome community-led pest control programme - This will be a great challenge with inspirational outcomes, not just for me but also everyone involved in make it happen!

## Tricia Jamieson—Administrator

Kia Ora. Rotokare Scenic Reserve holds a very special place in my heart. It is where my husband Alan, taught me to water ski and where we have subsequently taught our daughters and their friends to water ski too. In recent years we have been involved as volunteers to help protect the unique environment that is Rotokare. We have brought many friends from around the world to this special place **and I never tire of 'showing off' Rotokare.**

In January I decided to go with my heart and add my skills to the amazing team here. I am now the Administrator for two days a week. I do the usual administration stuff and get involved in the amazing complexity that is Rotokare behind the scenes.



## Halo project—on track!

It has been a busy summer and autumn, with even more traps being deployed in May and June this year. So far the project has achieved over 800 hectares of trapping protection on 7 farm properties. The goal is to have up to 1,600 hectares covered by Spring 2016. By the end of the establishment, the Halo project will cover up to 2,500 hectares with around 1,000 traps.

### Trapping count since October 2015

|              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| Hedgehog     | 46         |
| Mouse        | 19         |
| Possum       | 18         |
| Rabbit       | 8          |
| Rat          | 61         |
| Stoat        | 21         |
| Weasel       | 5          |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>178</b> |

Special thanks to Union Yamaha for their fantastic quad bike sponsorship, a big welcome to the Rotokare family to Gerald Rooyackers of Union Yamaha in Stratford (seen here with Deborah Clough, New Rotokare



# SHAKIRA'S SANCTUARY SABBATICAL

I'm Shakira Derbyshire, a primary school teacher at Auroa School, currently undertaking the Science Teaching Leadership Programme (STLP). Funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and administered by the Royal Society of New Zealand, the purpose of the programme is for teachers to gain an understanding of science in the real world. Through leadership skill **development we aim to improve the school's science programme and inspire student engagement.** The Auroa School community knows students need a thorough understanding science to best engage as lifelong learners in a society increasingly reliant on science and engineering. Science is no longer a one off topic, but is part of everyday learning. My School is developing a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programme, which forms a base for all curriculum areas.

I am spending the first 6 months of the programme at Rotokare. So far, I have been involved with trap checks, fence checks, tracking tunnels, working with visiting scientists, GPSing points of significance, **robin monitoring and helping with the education programme.** I'm particularly excited also to be helping learn more about peripatus in the reserve. The Peripatus, also known as the velvet worm, is an invertebrate essentially unchanged for 500 million years. There are up to 30 New Zealand species, currently however only 9 have been named! Little is known about them, but we do know they come out at night, are only a few centimetres long, have between 13 to 16 pairs of stumpy legs on a worm-like body, and they spit goo to capture their prey! We hope to gain an understanding of the preferred habitat of the peripatus, and an estimate of the population, distribution and species present at Rotokare. This involves searching through rotten logs and looking carefully through leaf-litter. So far, we think two different species exist at Rotokare. Previously there had only been one recorded!



I am excited to have such a wonderful opportunity to gain experience of science in the real world, and to be able to help extend the learning within my school and the wider community. I wish to thank Rotokare community for this wonderful opportunity, especially the staff and volunteers who have been very patient teaching me many new skills.

To keep up to date with what I am doing on the STLP, check out my blog at [missnicholasauoa.blogspot.co.nz](http://missnicholasauoa.blogspot.co.nz)





During summer our volunteers were busy running arboreal tracking tunnels and pitfall traps as part of ongoing lizard monitoring in the reserve. The arboreal tunnels (pictured here) were a new addition. These tunnels were placed in trees and baited to lure geckos along the tracking cards placed inside the pipes to record their prints. With these we were able to identify prints of both forest & goldstripe geckos. Unfortunately **we didn't find anything in our** pitfall traps or some of the other monitoring devices in the reserve, however skink and gecko prints have been found on tracking cards, indicating a slow but steady increase in lizards overall.

## LIZARDS

## ROBINS

Our little babies are growing up! We have been super excited to see a number of un-banded robins popping up around the sanctuary where we haven't seen them in the past; with robins now around the main gates and bush classroom! Our Robins introduced themselves to the Rotokare in 2010 but the population has remained small. The robins breeding success is being monitored, with 4 out of 5 known pairs having been observed raising chicks.

Most of our small robin population was banded last winter, so it's likely the birds we are seeing are this year's juveniles leaving their parents to explore the reserve and find territories of their own. In time we hope to band these young ones too so we can keep track of the population as it grows and disperses!



## INCREDIBLE CLIMBERS—OUR BANDED KOKOPU

Recently some native fish experts visited Rotokare, to take a look at the banded kokopu in our forest streams. Banded kokopu are a native fish belonging to the **Galaxiidae family (which make up New Zealand's 'whitebait species')** and are pretty special in their ability to get around out of the water. In one instance a fish was actually found in the guttering on top of a 3 storey building in Dunedin, where it had climbed all the way up a drainpipe!! They move like a gecko and can survive for up to 24 hours out of the water in the right conditions. This mobility allows them to access the stream-side invertebrates that they love to eat. The kokopu reproduce in the lake at Rotokare (usually the species will go to the sea) but introduced perch are probably threatening the kokopu by eating their young before they can make it back safely to the stream. We hope in the near future to develop perch control plans, which we anticipate will improve survival of the banded kokopu at Rotokare.

KOKOPU



## TREE WETA

During Laura's (summer volunteer intern from Germany) time at the Reserve one of the projects she undertook was to continue monitoring the Tree weta population. At Rotokare. Our Educator, Melissa, had previously set up artificial roosts ('weta hotels') around the reserve to carry out this monitoring. The roosts are attached to trees up some of our tracking lines, and the process is simply a case of opening the hotel and checking for occupancy. Other details can also be recorded—such as sex of the weta, size measurements and weight.

The weta hotels checked by Laura revealed a 29% occupancy rate i.e had weta living in them. As they really prefer natural roosts in trees, this outcome suggests the population at Rotokare is large.

The female has a long ovipositor at her rear, and the male has two small 'claspers' at his rear. Weta generally live in 'harems' of one male and multiple females.



## SWEET AS !

The bee hives which were at Rotokare over Summer have been removed, and honey has now been extracted. This 'Special Reserve Honey' is a bush blend of many native flowering species.

We are very thankful for the amazing sponsorship from Bees & Trees Honey and Beck Helicopters for making this exciting opportunity possible. Soon this special Rotokare honey will be on sale, with all proceeds from sales going back to this special sanctuary project.

A perfect gift, or just a taste of Rotokare at home! Every jar of honey sold helps the Trust continue its work. Details will be announced on our facebook page and website (see front page for details). We will also have our honey for sale from **the office here at the lake, and via our friends at various shops throughout the region. If you'd like to know more, give us a phone call—we welcome the support for this exciting fundraising project.**



## THE ART OF GIVING...

We are humbled and appreciative of all the great people in our community who help towards making Rotokare a success. One such person is Ashley McDonald, a sixteen year-old Hawera High School student who used her fledgling international art career to provide the Trust with a \$750 donation from an anonymous American buyer.

"Beyond the value of the donation itself there's a really amazing gesture here, things like this really inspire everybody involved in the project." commented Sanctuary Manager Simon Collins.



Recently Ashley attended the 13th annual Sir Peter Blake Youth Enviro-**leaders' Forum in Nelson. She was** selected from hundreds of applicants, to be one of fifty-four students. The forum focused on pest eradication, biodiversity and ocean health, with students learning leadership skills and meeting some **amazing experts and leaders. We couldn't think of a** better representative to attend—we wish her all the best! To find out more about her art visit "Ashley McDonald- Nature Artist" on Facebook.

## NEW SPONSOR WELCOMED TO THE FAMILY

We welcome Methanex to the Rotokare Family. Through their 'Safe Days' programme they will be providing sponsorship to the Trust later this year. We truly appreciate their support for our work, and look forward to bringing more of this story soon.



## BIOSECURITY IN ACTION



This trap (left) under the fence hood is just outside the main gates to the sanctuary. Rat traps placed under the fence hood are catching heaps—6 rats in the last 2 weeks!!

Our full sanctuary pest audit was recently completed, with over 1200 tracking cards set around the reserve for a week. A big job of carefully checking these cards (checking and checking again) for any pest prints follows.

Routine trap checks recently uncovered a couple of mice in our northern most reaches (the first mice and pest animals detected since June 2015). Detailed surveillance in these areas has been increased in response. At the same time, our tracking cards revealed mouse prints near the start of the barrier free track and we have since caught a mouse by the public area.

Great to see our systems are working well!

This is a timely reminder of how important it is to check your vehicles carefully before you visit, and to consider having traps and/or rodent bait in your garage to keep pests from making it as far as your car in the first place, we appreciate your vigilance! Rodents love nestling into nice dry car boots and toasty warm engines!



## THE WAR ON WASPS

**It has been a bad year for wasps! Until this season, we've spent a lot of time hunting nests, and treating them one at a time. We are now trying out a new wasp control product, Vespex, to try and get on top of numbers here at the reserve. The bait is protein based so is safe to use around bees., and delivered via bait stations, so also much safer for our people! Signs are good so far with heavily reduced sightings in treated areas. We hope to use Vespex again next season, making it safer for visitors and our volunteers out and about.**

Right: Wasp nest uncovered after conventional treatment.



We are seeking the following items, and are grateful for any offers!

Wish list

- Wet weather clothing for volunteers
- Good quality binoculars for bird monitoring
- Petrol powered hedge-trimmer
- Forestry ladders
- Blue-tooth speakers for bird monitoring
- Office chairs
- Upgrade of office computer software
- Portacom for additional office space



New storage shed under construction generously sponsored by Eltham Vets



World Wetlands Day January 2016



Volunteer Anna Kissick meets a kiwi during population survey, part of Kohanga Kiwi partnership project with Taranaki Kiwi Trust

Proud to recognise major sponsors & supporters:



Keep checking for pests before you come through our gates, thanks for helping us stay pest-free!