

Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society

Annual Report 2010

Tena kotou, tena kotou, tena kotou, katoa.

We are holding our 8th AGM in the week that the Waipa River made the front page of the Waikato Times for being the 4th dirtiest river in New Zealand. This country has a long way to go to improve the environment, and Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society was set up to be part of the solution. The mission we took on for ecosystem restoration on Mt Pirongia was on-going pest control to benefit native birds and vegetation, primarily through a bait station grid. In the last 12 months, we successfully expanded our grid by 120 hectares so that it now covers 470 ha and we currently involve over 50 volunteers with the bait station filling. The results of our project are impressive. Pre-operational monitoring of rats showed levels at 72%, the highest recorded so far, and after control, they were down to only 1.25%. Another cause for celebration is that we are now at a point where we can introduce lost bird species to the maunga, in particular North Island Robins (Toutouwai) and Kokako. We have also had the go-ahead from DoC for another bait station extension, this time 182 ha, which will give us over 700ha of controlled area and within striking distance of our long term goal of 1,000 ha. The expansion rate of this projects owes much to the passion and dedication of Steve McClunie and Ken Allen, and we are greatly indebted to you for driving forward with your vision. Thank you.

Bat protection has another aspect of restoration that has been progressed this year, with training of volunteers in the use of bat detection equipment, and the donation of 30 self-resetting stoat traps by Meridian Energy. Kessels and Associates have been tremendous supporters of this project as well, providing a bat expert free of charge to train us, and offering the use of their equipment. The response of volunteers to our requests for people to be involved in this new aspect of environmental care has been fantastic, with people coming from as far away as Tirau to be involved.

To meet the on-going costs of the Mangakaraa project, we launched a 'Sponsor a Hectare' Scheme in 2007 and we now have over 120 hectares sponsored. Permanent public acknowledgement of our sponsors is given through an information panel at the visitor kiosk at Grey Rd, Te Pahu which we erected this year. In May, we held a presentation function for our sponsors in May, where Dr Bruce Clarkson was guest speaker. Dr Clarkson has also agreed to be patron of our society, which we are thrilled about.

This year we have expanded our restoration activities to include vegetation. Northern rata trees were identified as in decline on Mt Pirongia so we initiated a project to raise seedlings and cuttings for ultimate replanting on the maunga. Selwyn and Dianne June, Nicky Samuel and Rachel Duncan have all got behind this project and I want to thank them for their fine efforts and commitment.

Increasing community awareness for our projects is important for our long term prospects, and we have four main ways of reaching out to the wider community. The highest profile one is the Mt Pirongia Art Awards, funded from Creative New Zealand. Last year we held our fifth consecutive Awards in conjunction with Te Awamutu SCREAM festival. In an effort to extend participation we introduced a new category:

Creative Fibre using Natural Dye, which stimulated some amazing creativity. We had a fabulous range of entries for the Awards, with artists contributing from as far away as Thames and Balclutha, and some amazing children's entries as well. I'd like to thank Nicky Samuel, Heather van der Hoek and Heather-anne Lang for all their hard work in setting up the exhibition with me.

Other ways we deliver our environmental message is via guided walks on Mt Pirongia, community involvement and our environmental activity centre project. In the last year, we assisted Pirongia School in a planting project at Pirongia Golf Course and gave talks to 3 schools, involving about 280 children. We love these opportunities to share our passion for the mountain and the care of its ecosystems and it affirms our close relationship with the Department of Conservation. Concerning our environmental centre, We have made some progress on this in the last 12 months, but we are still not at a point where a site within Pirongia Village has been secured. However we are grateful for the assistance of the Waipa District Council staff, Purekireki Marae and Sabina Owen in this regard.

I would like to now acknowledge those who have provided funds for our projects in the last twelve months. We received the following grants:

Waipa District Council	\$ 500	Administration
NZ Post		100 free envelopes
Greenwood Environmental Trust	\$1,000	Mangawawa extension
Waipa Community Arts Council	\$ 800	Mt Pirongia Art Awards
Pub Charity	\$5,000	Mangawawa extension
Total:	\$7,300	

Major Donations

A & P Cowan	\$2,000
Kessels and Associates	\$1,600
Brown Pennell Accountants	Photo copier

Receiving this financial and practical assistance makes our projects possible, and our thanks and appreciation go to all our supporters.

Lastly, all that this society achieves relies completely on those who make up our committee. Praise means little to these super-human, mild-mannered but reasonably good looking individuals who make magnificence look mundane in comparison. So I offer instead my deepest thanks to you, especially Steve, our vice chair and head of the Mangakaraa project, Dianne our secretary, Linda our treasurer and June our volunteer co-ordinator. You all lift my spirit with your future focus on environmental values and I am proud to have shared the journey with you.