**Pigeon Post - November/December 2015**

Well it really is heating up out here, and I don’ just mean the weather!! The spring grass growth is starting to slow so we can turn the time saved mowing lawns into more important tasks like meeting and greeting visitors and monitoring Takahe breeding success.

In mid October we were blessed with some fair seas so have had many boatloads of 5 – 7 year olds from Hutt Central school with their  teachers and parents out exploring the island.  It’s great to see so many out here experiencing this special place.  Of course all school bags were checked for rogue ants and mice before departure, Eliot Falconer’s crew on the  ‘Charmaine Carol’ are setting a good standard in biosecurity checking – right down to cleaning the soles of their shoes!

We have been very busy monitoring our Takahe pairs on their nests again this year.  This year we have upped the anti a little and have an Otago Uni student here helping fit tiny transmitter harnesses to the chicks.  We’d like to learn a bit more about why so many young takahe don’t survive at many secure sites.  By tracking them regularly with transmitters we may uncover the secret – whether it be hawk/Pukeko predation, a bad spell of weather, weak genetics or just lazy parenting.  Hopefully this study will shed some light and help us to improve the odds even further for these precious Taonga.

Rowi Kiwi (from Okarito south westland) were first released on Mana in 2012.  Since then we have heard males and females duet calling in the deep dark of night, so there was every indication that they were pairing up and likely breeding.  The weed contractors on the island made an exciting discovery recently – the remains of a hatched kiwi egg shell, proof of successful breeding of the worlds rarest kiwi species.

Something of another milestone was also achieved recently.  Back in 1997 a concrete gannet colony was installed on the west coast cliff tops.  On the day it was set up, with the media cameras rolling a couple of real  gannets landed amongst them.  After a short time they took to the air again, never to return.  Until just the other day the ever eagle eyed weed contractors spied some movement in the concrete gannet jungle, which was later captured on camera by Colin Miskelly from Te Papa.  Lets hope he goes away to gather a few mates, as one gannet mating with a bunch of statues does not a colony make!! Although it might make a great ‘caption that’ segment.

So as you will see if you come across, things are really beginning to fall into place out here.  With no shortage of hard work and dedication by many people over many years,  letting the natives break free from the shackles of introduced pests and weeds – it must be time for bed, I’m starting to wax lyrical!.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year ,

The Islanders