WINDY HILL ROSALIE BAY CATCHMENT TRUST

Windy Hill Sanctuary Newsletter #48 June 2025

Kia ora from Louise Mack – Assistant Trust Manager

Winter is upon us and the team are hard at work keeping the Sanctuary running while dealing with all the joys that working in the field during winter brings with it. Freezing mornings, rain-soaked afternoons and windy and wild in between.

The news of the recent job cuts at the Department of Conservation (DOC) has hit close to home for me this month. DOC is proposing to cut 84 jobs, with a total of 168 roles being impacted. This is part of a larger government-mandated budget reduction across the public sector. The cuts are primarily affecting women, with over 90% of those losing their jobs being women workers. If I had remained in my prior role, I would be one of those with my job on the line.
I am a reasonably recent transplant to Windy Hill from 19 years working in conservation in the public sector. I first began working for DOC in the Auckland Conservancy office in 2007, before my first experience of a DOC restructure saw me move into a role in the Devonport base as part of the biodiversity team. From there my years with DOC were filled with amazing experiences, places and people. Travelling and working throughout Aotearoa and its offshore islands on a number of projects in a multitude of capacities.

Lou - Kiwi Release Motutapu 2009

Most recently after 7 years as the Senior Ranger - Biodiversity on Aotea, Great Barrier Island, following the birth of my son and further budget cuts, I decided that it was time to hang up the uniform for good. I had weathered multiple reviews, restructures, reshuffles, budget and staff cuts and it was time.

The move to working in conservation in the private sector was not done without some soul searching and heavy consideration but I can now safely say that it has been an incredibly positive journey.

What has been achieved over the last 26 years at Windy Hill Sanctuary is impressive. Every track cut, every trap set, every staff member hired, has all been fought for tooth and nail. With funding coming from a huge variety of sponsors, funders, donors and volunteers.

What remains the same in the private and the public sector? The incredibly passionate and wonderful people.

Speaking of those people.....

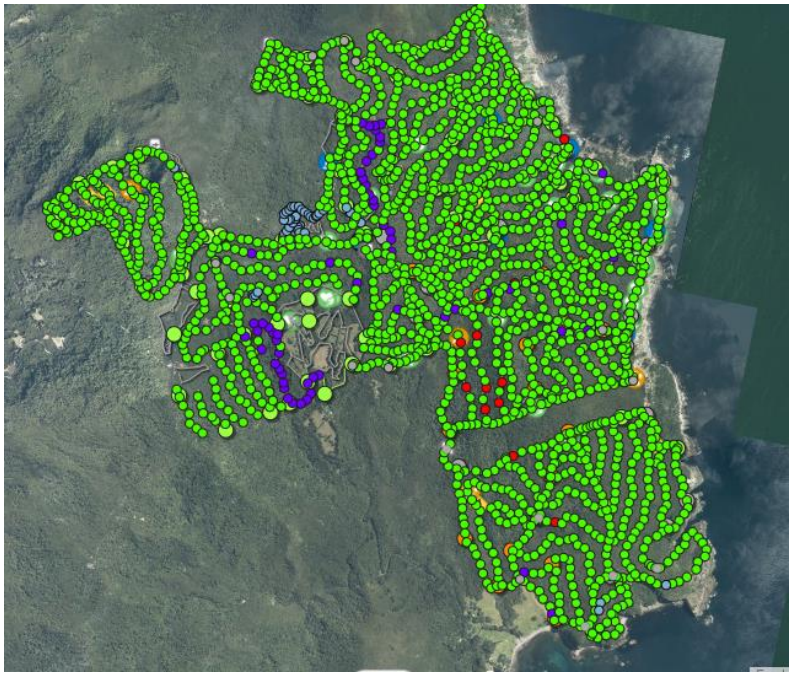
- After 26 years at the helm our voluntary Trust Manager Judy Gilbert has begun to handover the management of the Sanctuary operations and comms. She continues to hold a governance role and manage aspects of the Sanctuary such as funding applications, translocations, research proposals and keeps an overview of the day-to-day management.
- Our diligent volunteer Trustees – Judy Gilbert, John Ogden, Deb Badraun, and new Trustee Kiri Toki remain committed to our mahi.
- Our fantastic field team - Jordan Scarlett, Paul Lee, Kerryn Johnson, Corey Hardstaff, and Liam Clark have once again delivered big time this year despatching 1,472 rats and 10 feral cats, cleared and

marked 38kms of tracks, and a range of weeds attacked. 16 feral pigs have been culled by Dean Medland.

- Our volunteer landowners continued to manage rats and report catches.

The mahi

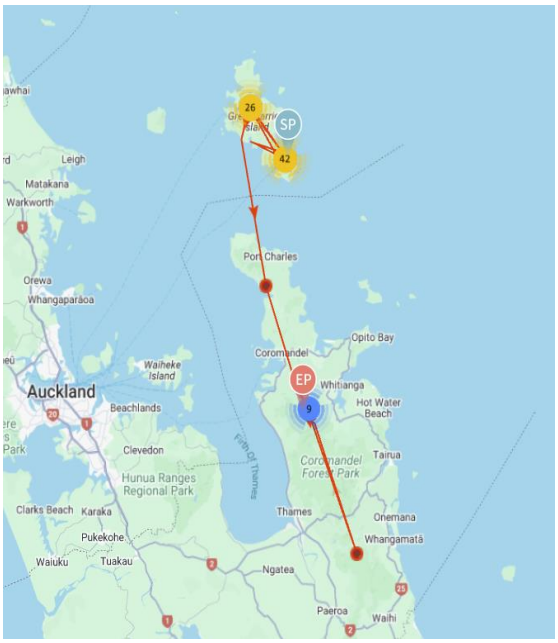
We are working with Scott Sambell from Ethos Environmental to bring our data collection online and away from pen and paper. The team now use apps on their phones for recording rat and cat catches, weeds tackled, sightings of rare and endangered species plus noting H&S hazards or points of interest. They also use it for marking tracks and navigation. The potential seems only limited by our own thinking. We are also working with Matt Way towards remote monitoring for cat traps using Econodes.



Windy Hill Sanctuary Online

- The 21ha expansion of the Sanctuary into the Wesney and Morrison property has been completed and the area is now fully operational. The team will now look at moving into the adjacent Speck property to complete the expansion.
- The Trust is in talks with the World Parrot Trust, DOC and Ngati Rehua Ngati Wai ki Aotea looking into a kakariki translocation next year to boost our local population, particularly in the southern end of Aotea.
- We have recently had a long life lure trial undertaken in part of the Sanctuary. Early results look positive but there is still 18 months of field trials left to complete the study.

- The team are currently trialling a pulsing method of bait delivery. This reduces the amount of time the bait is in the Sanctuary from 12 months down to 4.
- The Landcare Research Kaka Natal Dispersal research project led by Neil Fitzgerald has yielded some interesting results. Eight juvenile kaka left their nests in Windy Hill in late summer with solar powered transmitters fitted to their backs. Three transmitters are still calling in with 2 birds on Coromandel and 1 still on Aotea. All but one of the remaining transmitters are still operational but out of reception currently.



The route of one kaka to Coromandel

Judy assisting to fit the transmitter

- The fourth Hochstetter Frog Survey in Te Paparahi coordinated by the Trust was undertaken in April. Unfortunately, early indications are of a decline in the frog's abundance since the last survey in 2021. Sarah Herbert, the lead herpetofaunal specialist, took the opportunity to train up our field team in lizard identification while here.

Windy Hill field team attacking weeds – (l to r) Paul Lee, Auckland Councils Nik Erikson, Kerryn Johnson, Jordan Scarlett, Liam Clarke, Corey Hardstaff.

Thanks again to all the sponsors, donors, funders, volunteers and landowners who contribute towards making Windy Hill Sanctuary the special place that it is.

Nga mihi
Louise Mack

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Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau

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