

## UPDATE ON OKAREKA MISTLETOE RESTORATION PROJECT

Paul Cashmore

In addition to the opening of the Mistletoe Walk for Conservation Week we have also held 2 other workdays in September and November with the July workday cancelled due to bad weather.

The September workday focused on releasing our plantings in the marginal strip area and along the old driveway in Tikitapu Scenic Reserve. A small number of plants provided by DOC were also used to fill some gaps in the existing plantings in the marginal strip planting sites. This didn't take long which gave us time to focus on more spraying and clearing of other weeds around the newly developed mistletoe walk and Branch Rd track entrances. Several patches of jasmine and wandering willie also received their annual respray.

The November workday featured on re-releasing of our plantings from spring growth with a heavy focus on weed control elsewhere in the marginal strip, particularly near Calder Rd. Several people attacked two known patches of jasmine which had come away again to the flowering stage which was disappointing given previous efforts while Mike Goodwin started tackling the willow infestation in the wetland at Calder Rd end of the area. John also spent time with a knapsack chasing wandering willie and other weeds at the Calder Rd end. Many cherry seedlings and saplings were pulled from areas of the marginal strip which are infrequently visited. In the end the entire morning was spent working in the marginal strip on weeds which surprised me given the amount of previous weed control this small area has had. Also at this planting Barbara Swale confirmed we had 5 new *Tupeia* plants established on tree lucerne in the marginal strip area. This has been much awaited with several unsuccessful searches for new plants in past years. It was only a matter of time before mistletoe plants had reached the size that we would find them so it was great to have some confirmation that we were starting to

boost mistletoe numbers in the marginal strip. This is what the project is ultimately all about.

In other news RBS through John Hobbs have been working with other Okareka groups to co-ordinate comment on the Rotorua Mountain Bike Club Mountainbike Track Proposal for Lake Tikitapu Scenic Reserve. The Club had proposed building a loop track through the existing part of the reserve between Tarawera and Okareka Loop Roads which is part of the Okareka Mistletoe Restoration Project.

The RBS submission on the proposal raised several issues regarding potential impacts on vegetation including threatened plant species, alignment of the track, steepness of some of the terrain, proximity to bait station lines and existing tracks and the lack of access to the proposed track from Okareka. Similar concerns were raised by Forest and Bird and the Okareka Landcare group. The Rotorua Mountain Bike Club took these concerns on board and has subsequently decided to withdraw their application to DOC for this proposal and is currently evaluating options elsewhere. Thanks must go to John Hobbs for doing a field recce on this proposal and putting together the RBS submission and attending community meetings at Okareka on this issue.

John Hobbs and Sarah Crump have also compiled an application to the Trustpower Spirit of Rotorua Volunteer Awards for the RBS part of the Okareka Mistletoe Restoration Project. We attended the Award Ceremony on Monday 17 November 2008 and were one of four entrants in the Heritage and Environment Category. Unfortunately we were unsuccessful yet again with the Kaharoa Kokako Trust runner up to the winner Keep Rotorua Beautiful.