

UPDATE ON OKAREKA MISTLETOE RESTORATION PROJECT

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This season we have had three workdays – one each in September, November and April. Our September workday was well advertised as it was part of the Conservation Week programme. Despite the good amount of free advertising we got with this the turnout was still poor with mostly just the regular volunteers showing up. The main task was to plant a small number of karamu plants near the start of the Mistletoe Walk in a blackberry and convolvulus dominated clearing. Some weed control and releasing was done as well, before wet weather curtailed further work.

The November workday had a low turnout also, possibly compounded by a date change for the workday. This day we focused on weed control in both the marginal strip and Tikitapu Scenic Reserve, targeting a range of species including jasmine and cherries. We also released our small September plantings from being overrun by convolvulus. As our older plantings are getting large now and have mostly gained canopy closure there are few weed threats other than from convolvulus seasonally. This has substantially reduced the amount of time we need to spend on releasing of plantings and allowed us to focus more on weed control elsewhere in the reserves. With canopy closure it is also pleasing to see native regeneration of species including mangeao, tawa and fuchsia establishing. The oldest plantings of tree lucerne in the marginal strip also have quite a few mistletoe (*Tupeia*) plants established on them although all are still relatively small at this stage.

This year we did not have a workday in February or March due to a busy field trip schedule and less work required to be done at Okareka. On the April workday we had seven members from as far afield as Hamilton and Opotiki making the effort to attend. With perfect weather we were able to focus on re-spraying all the wandering willie and jasmine infestations around the two reserves we were

managing while several members focused on convolvulus control and releasing of plantings. The main focus of work was along the old driveway and up to the Mistletoe Walk area where jasmine had started to get away on the hill-slope below the Mistletoe Walk lookout and required much hand-pulling. As the sub-canopy on that hill-slope had also opened up following some major windfalls of wattle trees, the rusting old corrugated iron tank lying in the reserve had now become very obvious from the lookout. A small group of us spent much of the morning cutting up and carrying the two tanks and dozens of sheets of corrugated iron and aluminium out of reserve to be piled on John Hobbs's truck to go to the scrap metal merchant. Along with that came several bags full of beer bottles long-discarded in the reserve. It is quite incredible the amount of rubbish – mostly bottles, which we have removed from these two reserves over the years we have worked on this project.



Photo 1: Mistletoe Restoration Area, Okareka. April 2004 showing weed infested area.



Photo 2: Mistletoe Restoration Area, Okareka. April 2005, 5 months after planting of potential mistletoe hosts



Mistletoe Restoration Area, Okareka. April 2009, 4½ years after planting of potential mistletoe hosts.