

UPDATE ON THE OKAREKA MISTLETOE RESTORATION PROJECT

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On Saturday 13 April 2013 the Rotorua Botanical Society (RBS) had another workday at Okareka. We had a small group of seven turn out for the morning. Our plantings are now very large and well established so need minimal effort to maintain. As we had volunteers with the right mix of skills and equipment (chainsaws, slashers and knapsacks) it enabled us to focus on some of our bigger weed problems. As our workday in October 2012 was cancelled because of wet weather we had yet to do any weed control work this season.

With no releasing needed, it allowed us to focus on removing the myriad of weed species that continually appear in the understorey under the plantings, most of which have been introduced by birds. Ivy (*Hedera helix*), cherries (*Prunus serrulata*), and jasmine (*Jasminum polyanthum*) were commonly established weeds in the understorey. Convolvulus (*Calystegia sepium*) was again problematic amongst plantings and needed cutting back and spraying.

We were able to focus on re-spraying various wandering willie (*Tradescantia fluminensis*) patches around the two reserves (Lake Tikitapu Scenic Reserve and Lake Okareka Marginal Strip) and also targeting jasmine populations in particular around the Mistletoe Walk where more jasmine populations seem to have established. Unfortunately some of these populations in the marginal strip amongst kiokio (*Blechnum novae-zelandiae*) couldn't be touched due to a rather large wasp nest in amongst it.

Some time was spent in Lake Tikitapu Scenic Reserve cutting and poisoning cherry trees which are still present in clearings and canopy gaps throughout the mistletoe area despite ongoing control work over the last few years. Some chainsaw work was also undertaken on further grey willow (*Salix cinerea*) in the wetland area near the boatsheds in the marginal strip area.

It was a very successful day for the small dedicated group that turned out. Although the re-vegetation work is mostly over for RBS the weed control work is never ending. As we only managed one workday this season it shows that it is easy for weed infestations to rapidly start re-colonising if the pressure is taken off them. It is a sad fact that small semi-urban reserves like these seem to be totally dependant on ongoing management to prevent them being heavily impacted by the surrounding weed infestations.

In other news DOC staff assisted by John Hobbs and volunteers from Forest and Bird re-measured the Tikitapu Mistletoe Foliar Browse Index (FBI) lines in January 2013. While DOC is still analysing results of this work anecdotal observations from this monitoring suggest an increase in both density and distribution of *Tupeia* within the Tikitapu Scenic Reserve, a pleasing result given this is one of the key objectives we founded the project on with our partners at Forest and Bird, DOC and BoPRC. During this work a large number of cherry trees were found and removed from the NE corner of the reserve as we came across them.

In March DOC contractors also spent time in Tikitapu Scenic Reserve working under the power lines corridor along Okareka Loop Rd controlling Old Mans Beard (*Clematis vitalba*). Quite a large number of flowering vines were found scrambling over blackberry in the lines clearing, despite having been controlled previously and the area being well visited by volunteers doing bait station lines. Exacerbating the problem was Unison who heavily trimmed the vegetation under the power lines in spring 2012 which further opened the area up to weed invasion, in particular old mans beard. This work also left a large pile of slash and branches which took Forest and Bird volunteers substantial time to clear so that they could access their bait station lines.



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



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



Photo 3: Okareka Mistletoe Restoration Area, April 2009, 4½ years after planting potential mistletoe hosts



Photo 4: Okareka Mistletoe Restoration Area, June 2013, 8 years after planting potential mistletoe hosts.
(Photos 1-3 were taken from the power pole)