

Updated Report on Planting at Mangemangeroa 2015

Various circumstances brought about an extended season this year, from May through to September. We also encountered some new problems arising from a population explosion of pukeko and a series of severe frosts.

The first public planting on 23 May by Forest and Bird and the Howick Tramping Club, on a newly marked-out level area below and south of Archie's Lookout, was almost washed out by heavy rain. A small, determined group, however, managed to get in a few hundred manuka and 95 potted kahikatea. Howick College came to the rescue the following day, a fine one, to plant the balance totalling about 1300, mostly manuka. It looked like a good start, until during the week following a flock of pukeko uprooted more than 90% of the new plants, of which only a few could be salvaged. Subsequent efforts to replace them have succeeded only where a protector has been fixed in place.

All subsequent plantings were luckier with the weather and took place on sites where pukeko were less active. The second public planting, organised by Jim Duckworth on 6 June for the Friends of Mangemangeroa along with the Howick and Somerville Rotary Clubs, involved groups from two Chinese Associations. They also worked on a new site, north of Archie's Lookout, and put in about 2000 plants. At the same time a small group took 70 potted trees including more than 50 kowhai, to plant along the Rotary Loop and the Kowhai Walk.

Besides Howick College as already mentioned, school groups from Buckland's Beach Intermediate, Somerville Intermediate (two groups), Pakuranga College and Cockle Bay Primary gave great help, much of it with Warwick Kitchen in efforts to replace plants demolished by pukeko. School groups usually numbered up to 30, with staff and parent helpers, but Somerville's second group numbered 95. Between them they put in more than 1000 plants, mainly karamu and cabbage trees.

A piece of track maintenance by Council's contractors produced a large number of uprooted flaxes, planted many years ago by Manukau Parks. Allan and Warwick were the unlucky volunteers who tried to trim these up for replanting, as a result of which in mid-September about thirty have been used to fill gaps near Archie's Lookout.

Our target was to put in 5000 plants. Losses from pukeko and frost-kill have brought that down to somewhere short of 4000. Many thanks to the growers and planters, to Mark Read of Auckland Council for his support, and to Biosecurity NZ staff for their willing help delivering plants and equipment.