



Media release

6th April 2016

Kiwi Project needs help to ensure Whakatāne remains The Kiwi Capital of the World™

Whakatāne has been trademarked as “The Kiwi Capital of the World™”, a title that Kiwi Trust volunteers, supporters and the wider community are proud promote.

Nowhere else in the world do kiwi live in people’s backyards; in an urban environment.

However our title is under threat. Yet another kiwi has been killed by a dog, only metres from a Whitehorse Drive resident’s home last week.

What makes this death even more devastating is that this young chick, Mackie, was the focus of the New Year kiwi celebration at Ohope Beach School on 9th January this year. Almost 200 people attended the celebration and sent Mackie into wild with well wishes. To prove how close kiwi live to us in Whakatāne, Mackie’s last health check was undertaken on Mr John Baker’s property and witnessed by neighbours, including German exchange student Emmelie Weiß.

“The post-mortem report has confirmed a dog attack. The graphic description of Mackie’s injuries takes your breath away”, said Mrs Palmer.

“This bird had severe crush and shaking injuries over the lumbar and thoracic region- typical of a dog attack. Basically this poor bird had been broken in half, with only the skin holding the bird together”.

Mrs Palmer said, “The response from some Whitehorse Drive locals has been incredible. It’s almost like an informal Neighbourhood Watch team has been initiated to support the protection of their nocturnal neighbours.”

People are still increasing the risk to kiwi by walking their dogs in Kiwi Zones.

On Monday Whakatane police and Search and Rescue volunteers were stunned when they responded to a call from a woman who had reportedly broken her ankle on ‘the bird walk’, Mokorua Scenic Reserve, only to find that she had a dog with her.

Dale Walker, SAR Coordinator, was disappointed that someone would ignore the “Kiwi Zone” signs at each end of the walking track, let alone a local resident.

Dale has had firsthand experience with the upset caused by the death of a kiwi. A monitored male kiwi who had made regular visits to her vegetable garden was killed by a visiting friends dog, but it was kiwi trust volunteers that discovered the body in her back yard. She couldn't help feeling guilty and responsible for the death.

Lynda Walter, Whakatāne Kiwi Trust Executive Officer says, "Most dog owners would never expect a kiwi to be anywhere other than in a forest or that their dog would be capable of killing one, but the reality is kiwi scent is irresistible to dogs and kiwi cannot escape. Because kiwi don't have a breastbone, even a playful nudge can kill them."

“Dog owners need to know where their dogs are at all times and keep them contained on their property, she said.

Mrs Palmer said, “Kiwi are a living treasure, they are not found anywhere else in the world. It's The Department of Conservation's role to protect these taonga. Any dog can kill a kiwi, and it's well documented that the main cause of death to adult kiwi is dogs. This is about responsible pet ownership. If you live in a kiwi zone, and you own a dog, tie it up.”

“Whakatāne residents are fortunate to have kiwi right on our doorstep. We are The Kiwi Capital of the World™. We have passionate individuals who really care about these birds and strive to protect the environment around Whakatane, but we can only do so much. Your dog is your responsibility. Simple”, say Mrs Palmer

The Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Whakatāne District Council (WDC) are working with the local community to identify any uncontrolled dogs in the area. Kiwi are absolutely protected under the Wildlife Act 1953. Dog owners could face prosecution under the Act of up to \$50,000 or a prison sentence if it is proven that their dog has harmed kiwi or any other native wildlife.

Please report dogs seen in Kiwi Zones or uncontrolled dogs to WDC (07) 3060500 or 0800 DOC HOT

–Ends

Background information

There are several examples around the country that show how devastating dogs can be on kiwi populations:

- In the Northern Te Urewera National Park over 50% of a monitored kiwi population was killed by stray dogs.
- Northland has the highest population of kiwis in the country.

www.doc.govt.nz

Despite that, the average lifespan of kiwi in the area is about 15 years, compared to 40 to 60 years in other parts of New Zealand. This is due to dog predation.

- Our national icon – the kiwi – is under siege from stoats, dogs, cats, rats and loss of habitat. Just one hundred years ago, there were more than a million kiwi roaming throughout New Zealand. Today there are less than 70,000. Without urgent action, kiwi numbers will continue to fall with the risk that they will disappear in the wild.
- Whakatane Kiwi Project website: www.whakatanekiwi.org.nz

Contacts

Bridget Palmer, DOC Partnership Ranger. Ph: (07) 307 0611 or (021) 166 4558 bpalmer@doc.govt.nz

Lynda Walter, Executive Officer, Whakatāne Kiwi Trust. Ph: (07) 304 6127 admin@whakatanekiwi.org.nz

Photos

Mackie's last health check undertaken on Whitehorse Drive resident, John Bakers, property.
Bridget Palmer and German Exchange Student Emmelie Weiß.

A broken Mackie, held by Trident High School student and Kiwi Trust volunteer, Emma Paine. Supported by Awanuiarangi student Rakau David Kira & Te Kei Merito, Ngati Awa Kaumatua
Photo credit: Neil Hutton