



Media release

14th March 2016

Kiwi deaths preventable tragedy

Kiwi project staff and volunteers are devastated after another two dead kiwi were found on McCoy Road, Wainui last week.

Both birds have distinctive puncture wounds indicating a dog attack. Both were adult females, found in an area where volunteers are monitoring breeding pairs.

“Unfortunately we won’t know if these birds were part of a monitored pair until next season, when we monitor the nests, because they weren’t micro chipped”, said Department of Conservation Ranger, Bridget Palmer. “Obviously a lack of nesting activity will confirm the absence of the mate”.

These deaths follow a series of reports of uncontrolled dogs in Kiwi Zones around the entire Whakatane Area which has disheartened those involved with the kiwi project.

“It is frustrating when you think of the time, money and emotion spent to control pests and predators that kill kiwi chicks; an uncontrolled dog undoes all the good work in a matter a seconds. The solution is in our hands, dog owners have to control their dogs in areas where kiwi live. Even better, keep their dogs out of kiwi zones,” said Mrs Palmer.

Sadly this isn’t an isolated event. Approximately fifteen kiwi have been killed by dogs in the Wainui area since the presence of this small remnant population was discovered 10 years ago, ironically after a residents dog bought a dead kiwi home. Four kiwi have been killed in Wainui in the last six months.

Pathology reports have confirmed dogs have been responsible for past kiwi deaths and DNA tests undertaken concluded several dogs have been involved in the attacks. DNA samples will also be taken from the latest victims.

Lynda Walter, Whakatane 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 at night’, she said.

“Kiwi are a living treasure, they are not found anywhere else in the world. It’s DOC’s role to protect these taonga and we are doing everything we can to identify the dog or dogs responsible. Any dog can kill a kiwi, and it’s well documented 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.” says Mrs Palmer

“Whakatane 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.”

The Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Whakatane District Council (WDC) are working with the local community to identify any uncontrolled dogs in the area. Kiwi are protected under the Wildlife Act 1953. Dog owners could face prosecution under the Act and fines of up to \$50,000 or a prison sentence if it is proven 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 showing 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.

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

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