

WHAKATANE KIWI PROJECT

NEWSLETTER

5

January 2009



Kerry holds "Motu" on Moutohora Island during an early health check.

FAREWELL AND WELCOME

A touching farewell tribute took place at local café "White House" on Friday 21 November, as Tansy Bliss prepared to head for distant shores in Papua New Guinea, after successfully toiling to raise the Whakatane kiwi population more than three fold in the past four years.

But as one person goes another arrives, and Tansy introduced our new Kiwi Project manager, Kerry Oates, who has come to our community from the Ruapehu district.

Kerry has spent the past 12 years building an environmental consultancy business that has had a strong focus on kiwi research and restoration within exotic forestry and Nga Whenua Rahui situations. He has also been chairman of both Wellington and Volcanic Plateau branches of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, and has reported that he is keen to further the needs of the Whakatane Kiwi Project.



Moutohora/Whale Island

Predator-free Moutohora island is managed to safeguarded the local kiwi gene pool. Twenty four kiwi are currently on the island. Ten birds are monitored for survival and breeding, including 3 breeding males, one of which has just begun second clutch incubation. "Motu" (pictured above) is the first chick to hatch on the Island that has survived its first month of life, and when last checked on 1 December was alive and well-having increased in-weight to 425gm.

Moutohora is a wildlife refuge, with restricted access and is jointly managed by Department of Conservation and Te Runanga o Ngati Awa.



Wainui (McCoy -Stanley Road and surrounds)

This small concentration of kiwi live in remnant patches of bush on private and Maori land. The adult population is in decline due to predation by dogs and road kills. Eight birds are currently under BNZ Operation Nest Egg™ management. Most offspring will be released into nearby Ohope Scenic Reserve. Community is involved and generally supportive of this project which largely occurs on private land.



Dog killed kiwi in Wainui area.



Ohope Scenic Reserve

Our core area for kiwi protection is Ohope Scenic Reserve. We currently monitor 16 birds through radio telemetry, including 9 breeding males. Four males are now incubating second clutch nests, and nest interceptions are scheduled from December to February 2009.

Ohope Scenic Reserve is under joint management by Department of Conservation and Te Runanga o Ngati Awa.



Kiwi eggs being carefully placed into a transport incubator box.

Omataroa Forest

Omataroa Forest has a significant kiwi population in native bush surrounded by commercial plantation forest and on Maori land. Kiwi are monitored for breeding and survival. BNZ Operation Nest Egg™ is being carried out. Young birds will be returned to site, which has predator control being put into place. Two nests were intercepted at night on 21 November. One of the nests unfortunately did not have viable eggs, while the other did. Eggs are currently at Kiwi Encounter in Rotorua for final incubation and hatching. Chicks will be returned once they reach a safe weight in around 4 months time.

This is a particularly important project managed and funded by Nga Whenua Rahui and by Ngati Awa with work done by Ian Tarei and Richard Ngamare from Te Teko.



Kiwi nest in Omataroa

Waiotahi

Waiotahi has an outlying kiwi population in pine forest. The investigation into the potential impacts of exotic forest harvest has reached a natural end culminating in the publication of "Forestry Guidelines", a joint project sponsored by P.F. Olsen Forestry Ltd. and supported by Environment Bay of Plenty, Department of Conservation & Bank of New Zealand Save the Kiwi Trust.

The publication provides useful guides for forest managers on best practices that minimize impacts to resident kiwi.

During November transmitters were removed from one pair that had failed to produce viable young in the past three years.

Now only one productive breeding male remains under management. The resulting chicks are released into Ohope Scenic Reserve and Moutohora to strengthen genetic diversity. No chicks are currently returned directly to the source site as the pine forest is being actively logged.



Pine/Native habitat in Waiotahi Forest.

Whakatane Kiwi Trust

At the November meeting we welcomed three new Trustees to the Trust and were delighted to receive a self nomination from Lorraine Brill to the position of Treasurer. The new Trustees are Phil van Dusschoten, Lorraine Brill, Helen McDougall and Ron Russell.

“Have legs – will wander” ...

This was the comment of incoming Project Manager Kerry Oates as he and Tansy Bliss discovered that one young male, who had been missing for a while from the Ohope Scenic Reserve area, had relocated close to Asset Forest land some 4km from his original release site.

It seems that some do and some don't, wander that is, and there is no real pattern as to why this happens. The most outstanding thing is that kiwi are extraordinary birds, extremely adaptable, and versatile, and are always presenting scientists with new information. Yes we still have so much to learn about these iconic creatures.

Generally it is the young females that wander considerable distances before settling into a pair, bond and territory, however males can also travel great distances before establishing a territory at around two years of age. This may be influenced by the presence of other older dominant territorial males that do not tolerate young interlopers, or it may simply reflect the individuality of kiwi, where some enjoy travel and others don't.

“Hupai”

(1000th chick raised through BNZ Operation Nest Egg™)

Kerry's last official duty from the Ruapehu region was assisting with and attending the release of “Hupai”, the 1000th O.N.E. chick to be raised from all projects throughout the country. Hupai was taken as an egg from Waimarino Forest in January 2008 and hatched on 17 February at Kiwi Encounter, then crèched at Bushy Park near Wanganui, before being returned to Waimarino Forest on 30 November. It was a very special occasion marking a huge milestone for kiwi recovery on a national scale.



Don Robinson holds Hupai prior to release.



Mayor Colin Holmes holds Whiuwhiu and assists kiwi manager Kerry Oates to fit a transmitter.

Kohi Point and Mokorua Scenic Reserves

The first release of Operation Nest Egg chicks into Kohi Point Reserve occurred on Friday 19 December 2008. The blessing was delivered by Kaumatua Richard Ransfield.

This was a special release, being the first into Kohi Point Scenic Reserve and the support of the Whakatane District Council was acknowledged.

Future releases into the Reserve will aid the expansion of the kiwi restoration project within the immediate Whakatane region, two further 'firsts' have occurred by releases in Mokorua Scenic Reserve this summer. These have been well received by locals and visitors.



Pest animal control Feb 2009

This year a massive effort has gone into pest control within the greater kiwi management core area. All of Ohope Scenic Reserve (SR) and contiguous bush on Ngati Awa Farm and private land along Pohutukawa Avenue and Mokorua SR have received very intensive initial control targeting possums and rats. A total of 1900 bait stations across 940 ha were filled in September with a mix of Pindone rat poison and Feratox cyanide capsules. Roughly 2.5 tonnes of bait was required to achieve this. We expect this amount to reduce next year. All uneaten bait was removed prior to Christmas school holidays as required by the Medical Officer of Health's consent.

In Ohope SR and Ngati Awa farm possums were reduced from an average of 9.2 percent Residual Trap Catch Index (RTCI) to undetectable 0 percent RTCI and rats were reduced from 55 percent Tracking index (TI) to 1 percent TI.

This is an outstanding result and a tribute to the hard work during the past year that it has taken contractors Bruce Bancroft and Doug Kennedy to lay out the stations on an intense track system. Feeding was carried out by Bruce, Doug with help from Anthony Te Kurapa, Steve McCann and Jamie Rhodes.

The same crew carried out the fifth annual operation in Mokorua SR on behalf of Whakatane District Council.

REMEMBER, EVERYONE CAN HELP

If you see a dog in a NO DOG zone, please take action.

Ring the District Council on **306-0500** or **307-0729 (after hours)** with details of the sighting.

- Description of the dog and location where you encountered the dog;
- Details about the dog (on lead, running free, accompanied by adult/child, on its own. If the dog is on its own and can be safely approached, tie it to fence and note location. The dog can then be collected by Animal Control;
- Name or description of the person with the dog but avoid direct confrontation if possible;
- Approximate time and date of the encounter;
- Direction dog was going; and
- Registration of vehicle linked to person with the dog

Immediate reports are most effective, but all sightings should be reported regardless of when they occurred. When you ring the District Council, Customer Service staff will log your name, address, phone and details about the dog sighting. **This information is confidential and will not be provided to the dog owner.** You may receive a follow up call to clarify details.

A Whakatane Dog Control Officer is notified of all reports of dogs in NO DOGS zones. The Dog Control Officer investigates reported sightings and levies fines against dog owners in violation of the Council's Policy on Dogs.

Results were similarly outstanding with a reduction in Rats from 54 percent TI to 0 percent undetectable.

We are planning some similar control work in Kohi Point SR (25 ha) this summer around Otarawairere. This work, kindly funded by an anonymous donor, was delayed due to the commitments of the Ohope project taking us to the school holidays. This work will now go ahead after school holidays and be the first rat control

in Kohi Point. We are now looking for ways to fund the bait station establishment across the rest of Kohi Point SR (120 ha)

Annual results of stoat control are coming in as well. Our very early analysis of this data suggests that stoat captures are trending downwards in the core area as the new traps on Ngati Awa take effect.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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A joint project supported by:

