



December 2011

Whakatāne Kiwi Project goes wild

Move over Operation Nest Egg, kiwi chicks are making it on their own! The Whakatāne Kiwi Project has begun in-situ management of kiwi chicks in the area. This means that kiwi chicks are incubated and hatched in their natural environment, rather than the eggs being removed from the female and incubated and hatched at the Kiwi Encounter. The move to in-situ breeding has been met with slight trepidation by the Kiwi Project Partners, but Bridget Evans, Kiwi Project manager, feels that this is an exciting step. Bridget says, "It will ultimately show how successful pest and predator control has been within the controlled area. In-situ management has made monitoring kiwi chicks so much more intensive and the process has been a steep learning curve."



Tūini (Ngāti Awa farmhand) says, "I was humbled to have the opportunity to hold a kiwi chick, it will probably be the one and only time"

Traditionally, Operation Nest Egg allowed the kiwi chicks to hatch in a predator-free environment and then fattened them up to a 'stoat-proof' weight of 1000 grams, which was usually after four or five months. The in-situ breeding project involves monitoring chicks in the wild every two days to ensure they are still alive. Chicks that have died are quickly retrieved and sent to Massey University for post-mortem analysis. A team of dedicated volunteers walk the 'chick loop' each week to carry out the monitoring. Every three to four weeks, each chick is 'pinged' and undergoes a health check and

transmitter-band change until it has reached the 'stoat-proof' weight.

The in-situ management success target is 60 percent survival rate, compared to the 90 percent survival rate of Operation Nest Egg. Bridget says this is a realistic target as it allows for natural deaths and hopefully only occasional predation. "Of course, no predation would be the preference, but we need to keep it real and remember that survival rate in unmanaged areas is only five per cent," she says. Any deaths that do occur as a result of predation will allow the pest management team to adjust the trapping intensity and layout.

So, why reintroduce in-situ management if the success rate is lower and the workload is increased? Bridget explains, "The Whakatāne Kiwi Project has managed kiwi for over ten years now. Thanks to the dedication of our partners, past kiwi managers, and countless volunteers, the project has gone from strength to strength. We started with four pairs of kiwi and now have released over 150 kiwi (including in-situ chicks). We are at a point where the project can comfortably move to the next step and know that it won't be detrimental to the kiwi population in Whakatāne. I think the people involved with the project can be proud that we can take that step.

True kiwi experience for young exchange student

A trip to the other side of the world is adventure-filled for a young German exchange student at Whakatāne High School. Maresa Duber is thrilled with her close encounters with kiwi in their natural habitat. Teaming up with Whakatāne Kiwi Project Manager, Bridget Evans, Maresa visited the Kiwi Encounter in Rotorua, and took part in a kiwi release in Ōhope. "I even had a kiwi chick in my arms, which was a very great and special experience!" she says.

Maresa said that the highlight of her time with the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust was a two-night trip to Motuhora (Whale Island) where she searched for a kiwi nest, saw tuatara, penguins, weta, petrels, skinks and seals, and even had her first swim in New Zealand. All in all, a very memorable experience that highlights the uniqueness of the Whakatāne area!



Profile - Pete McLaren Pest control manager

With over ten years' experience in biodiversity and reserves management for both the district and regional councils, Pete McLaren is the ideal person to take up the reins managing pest control for the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust. Pete is managing the ground-based possum and rat control programmes in the Whakatāne reserves, an area of just over 1000 hectares.



While employed by the Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Pete was instrumental in refining a similar low-land native forest pest control system for the Manawahe Ecological Corridor Project. During the project, Pete worked out how to create an accurate bait station layout on contour maps and then transfer it to the physical bush. By walking contour lines, and by using recent information from research on bait station spacings, time and energy was saved and a high percentage of pests were killed early. The increased efficiency means labour costs are reduced by half. The system is so successful that it can be difficult to find a live possum during the monitoring audit done at the end of each season!

One of Pete's main activities is to ensure the poison is applied legally and safely. There is widespread advertising to the general public and special at-risk groups, such as schools and early childhood centres. Neighbours of the reserves each get a one-on-one visit so they can ask any questions or raise any concerns they might have.

Cyanide pellets and pindone pellets, which smell delicious to possums and rats, are placed in bait stations attached to trees near ground level. While possums could eat a large number of pindone pellets before they had any effect, the tiny encapsulated cyanide pellets, which activate when crushed by a possum's teeth, will kill the possum immediately. This leaves more rat poison available for a longer period of time, making control more effective. The cyanide toxin in the paste quickly dissipates into the air once it has contact with moisture and so there is only a very small risk of contact with humans or

domestic animals. Pete is passionate about improving the overall biodiversity in native forest surrounding the Whakatāne area and is excited about the opportunity to keep working in native bush protection. He says, "Over the next ten years, you can expect to encounter more visits from native birds such as kiwi, tui, korimako (bellbird), and toutouwai (robin) on Whakatāne's most popular walking tracks."

Did you know?

Kiwi are the only bird in the world with nostrils at the end of their beak.

A wild time with Wuru

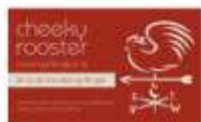
A local family is buzzing after an opportunity to be part of a kiwi release. 'Wuru' was released into the wild to be with his brother, Puke, while the Stokes family of Ōhope looked on. Lachie (10) and Abigail (8) could think of nothing else in the days following their experience, with Abigail even creating a poster for her bedroom to capture all the excitement.



Lachie said he would love to be part of another release and was thrilled to be able to touch Wuru. The wellbeing of Wuru was more of a concern for Abigail, who said, "I was a bit worried about the kiwi the next day when it was raining and I hoped they were safe in their burrow".

It is hoped that, with the continued efforts of the Whakatāne Kiwi Project, many more families, like the Stokes, will have the chance to encounter kiwi in the reserves around Whakatāne.

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Kiwi at the breakfast table

While we hope that, in the future, it may be a common occurrence, Barbara and Terry Cass have had the unique experience of 'pinging' a kiwi chick from their breakfast table. Using a transmitting device from inside their house, the couple can monitor the "ping" given off by the transmitter of a young kiwi, Jaffa, who lives in the bush below the Cass's garden.

During a recent health check, Barbara (pictured right) had the pleasure of holding Jaffa while he was examined. It wasn't quite so pleasurable when he decided to relieve himself all over Barbara, but she decided it might be a lucky omen and went out to purchase a lotto ticket that week!



Terry and Barbara have been involved with the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust for a number of years and say, "It is made enjoyable by the feeling of sharing in a worthwhile community effort with some very committed fellow citizens."

Did you know?
The kiwi lays the largest egg in the world, relative to its size. The egg also has the largest yolk, which will sustain the chick for the first few days after it has hatched.

Never too old for kiwi commitment

The Whakatāne community holds a special place in the heart of one senior citizen. Bob Childress became involved in the Whakatāne Kiwi Project after meeting staff on his regular cycle journeys up and down Burma Road. As a result of his contribution to the project, he feels more firmly connected to the New Zealand environment.

"I truly have a personal commitment to help protect these beautiful creatures and the environment that sustains them," he says. Bob also pays tribute to the dedicated conservation professionals who invest so much time and energy into saving our iconic bird, saying, "I have great respect for the Whakatāne Kiwi Project staff and volunteers who are willing to do whatever it takes to sustain our national heritage."



Did you know?
A kiwi can cover his or her territory – possibly the size of 60 football fields – in a single night.

Encounter kiwi in their natural habitat

Volunteers are needed for kiwi listening from April to June next year. You will be required for approximately three hours for three nights and will be buddied up with an experienced volunteer to listen for kiwi sounds. You will be given any necessary training. All you need to volunteer is a medium level of fitness, a headlight, suitable shoes, and patience! Each session is weather dependent. What an opportunity to experience the sights and sounds of our local native bush! For more information or to sign up contact admin@whakatanekiwi.org.nz

Whakatāne kiwi go global

A reporter roaming New Zealand during the Rugby World Cup got more than he bargained for when he visited Whakatāne. Henry Morton, France 24 correspondent, was lunching at a café in Ōhope with Laura Morgan, Whakatāne Kiwi Trust Administrator, when they bumped into Bridget Evans who had just picked up two kiwi from Wainui. Henry jumped at the chance to help Bridget put transmitters on the kiwi before they were released into the Ōhope reserve. Henry said of his experience, "It was pretty damned amazing getting so close to the kiwis, and holding one and actually getting to release it was just awesome - everyone I told (and I told everyone!) was extremely jealous!"

Did you know?
Kiwi can live for more than fifty years if there are no predators



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Local forestry supports local kiwi

Significant populations of kiwi have been found in plantation forests in the Whakatāne area, particularly where native bush is adjoining forest plantings. Kiwi are known to survive and successfully breed in managed plantation forests and, because of this, it is important to promote kiwi awareness with both forest owners and crews working in areas where kiwi could be present. Approximately 12 presentations have been given this year to forestry crews by Whakatāne Kiwi manager, Bridget Evans. Armed with her stuffed kiwi, feathers, photos and a sample of poo, she teaches the workers what to look for and what to do if they encounter a kiwi or nest. Some of the most important information is regarding kiwi first aid, in the event that the worst happens and a kiwi is injured.



PF Olsen Ltd and Wood Marketing Services Ltd have been very proactive and employed contractors to both survey and attach transmitters to the male kiwis of pairs found within forestry compartments before harvesting begins. Two such areas are Rust Forest on Stanley Road and Fairview Orchard on State Highway 2.

‘Rusty’ and ‘McCaw’, named by the crews, are currently incubating their first clutches of the season. Fortunately, the crews have been very supportive and halted operations near the nest burrows once it was found that the males were incubating. “You can’t help but feel intrusive by asking the boss of a large felling operation to change his plans, but the guys have been awesome and have even made the comment that ‘they were here before us, we will work around them’,” said Bridget.

Rusty may be left to hatch his chicks in-situ and then the chicks will be transferred to the core managed area in Ōhope Scenic Reserve. McCaw’s eggs will be removed and taken to Kiwi Encounter for incubation to allow the forestry operation to continue, and the chicks will also be released into Ōhope Scenic Reserve. Both options may be reconsidered if there is a risk to the chicks.

It has been proven that kiwi are more hesitant to move if they are incubating and are more likely to move from day roosts if under threat. The forestry crews will endeavour to leave escape routes (unlogged corridors) for kiwi living within the block and the kiwi team will keep monitoring the kiwi throughout the operation.

Books-a-plenty help save kiwi

Inspired by a BNZ Save the Kiwi advertisement, Alice Blakeway (7), from Whakatāne, decided to embark on a read-a-thon, with proceeds going to the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust. Storming through 34 books during the month of June, Alice raised \$110 to help the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust protect local kiwi.

Alice was rewarded for her efforts at a kiwi release held her school, Ōhope Beach Primary, where she was able to have a cuddle with ‘Pickle’ the kiwi before he was let loose in the reserves. Well done Alice!



Find us on Facebook

We would love to hear your stories! Find us on Facebook (search Whakatāne Kiwi Trust) and tell our kiwi community all about your experiences.

PROJECT PARTNERS



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