

## 2019 Night Walks – bigger and more popular than ever

The Whakatāne Kiwi Trust's guided Night Walks are more popular than ever, with over 310 people braving the cold to hear kiwi calling this year. The Night Walks also reached another milestone in 2019; with over 2,000 people completing a walk since the programme's inception 10 years ago.

By Russell Ingram-Seal

Many clear territorial kiwi calls were heard on this year's walks, and a couple of groups were even lucky enough to hear a female kiwi calling. There have been many weka calls and lots of raucous ruru conversations adding to the night time din.

Many nocturnal creepy-crawly invertebrates like spiders and wētā were also seen most nights. We now have a huge male cave wētā (*Pachyrhamma longipes*) on the same tree every night. He is affectionately known as 'Wally', people are blown away by his size and the bush resonates with children asking "Where's Wally?" We have an equally large female cave wētā of the same species on another tree; named Wilma, but she is shy and seldom seen.

A couple of walks also saw large forest geckos out on the main track. This is great indicator of forest health, as previously we didn't see many at all. Volunteer guide Mike Collings got the terrific photo (top right). Other popular features of the walks include the trap demonstration by Norman the stoat, the kiwi burrow experience and the use of black light (ultra violet) to reveal and highlight glowing fungi, lichen and invertebrates.

All walks were booked out in advance this year and from the feedback received, it seems that public demand far exceeded the number of walks available. So, next year there will be changes in the number of walks run during the season and we will be utilising some exciting new tracks!



Vance K Walker had this to say about the night walks "We have participated in night walks for last three years. It is a valued experience and the tamariki learn and engage more with each walk. Ka rawe."

Whakatāne Kiwi Trust would like to express their appreciation to everybody who came on a night walk for their time and support of the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust. And of course, many thanks to all of our wonderful volunteer guides (you know who you are!) who do such an amazing job of showing off the Ōhope nightlife scene!

*If you would like to get involved with the night walks programme in 2020, please email Dani our Volunteer and Events Coordinator at: [volunteer@whakatanekiwi.org.nz](mailto:volunteer@whakatanekiwi.org.nz).*

## It's Kiwi Month!

October is National Kiwi Month and the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust has a number of community events planned to raise awareness about our national icon and the amazing work that Whakatāne Kiwi Trust volunteers do in our local reserves.

### Guided Kiwi Tracker Walks - Not Just for Kids!

9.30am and 10.30am, Saturday 26 October. BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL  
[www.eventfinda.co.nz/2019/guided-kiwi-tracker-walk/whakatane](http://www.eventfinda.co.nz/2019/guided-kiwi-tracker-walk/whakatane)

### Kiwi Wandering Trail Day

10am - 4pm, Thursday 10 October

### Trappers Training Morning

9.30am - 12.30pm, Saturday 12 October

### Kiwi Month Book Readings at the Whakatāne Library

10am - 10.30am Tuesday 15 and Tuesday 22 October

For more details about these events visit [facebook.com/whakatanekiwi/events](https://facebook.com/whakatanekiwi/events)



'Like' Whakatāne Kiwi Trust on Facebook and keep up to date with the latest news from the project





## Chick pingers

By Sue Laurent

The Whakatāne Kiwi Trust has a team of dedicated volunteers known as “chick pingers” who go out most days to monitor our kiwi. They monitor approximately 20 kiwi of different ages - some are kiwi chicks, some are sub adults and some are kiwi dads.

The kiwi are monitored using an aerial and a receiver. The monitored kiwi have a radio transmitter attached to their upper leg, and each radio transmitter has a unique number. Each monitored kiwi also has a name of course! For example, ‘Tahi’, has the radio transmitter ‘85’ on his leg.

The signal from the transmitter can travel a great distance and gives a lot of useful information to the chick pingers. It tells us where the kiwi is located and if he is alive. The radio transmitters on the adult birds also tell us if the kiwi is where he ‘should’ be, whether he is incubating, what time he left the nest, and how long he was away for.

*Photo: Kerrie Parkinson, a chick pinger from the Tuesday team, and Rick Boon who goes out on a Friday. On this day, Kerrie and Rick were searching for Tahi the kiwi.*

# Kiwi Management Team Highlights from the 2018-2019 Season

The Whakatāne Kiwi Project achieved a chick survival rate of 58% in the core area for the 2018-2019 season. Whilst this may seem low at first glance, a chick survival rate of over 20% indicates a population increase. Furthermore, other kiwi projects that use a predator-proof fenced sanctuary to creche their chicks often only achieve 50 to 60% survival rates. For these projects, chick losses are mainly due to misadventure or illness, although avian predation also plays a part. In comparison, the main cause of death for chicks in the Whakatāne - Ōhope project area was stoat predation.

On a positive note, the Kiwi Management Team (KMT) have expanded their number of trained Kiwi Practitioners to six personnel, with new volunteer Keturah Bouchard being trained during the season and Hannah Flatman joining the team. In training are Nikki and Sophie Slade-Robinson and Nicola Wichtel. The KMT had a busy season, carrying out 112 health checks and monitoring 25 nests.

Our KMT Leader, Bridget Palmer, also coordinates the annual Kiwi Call Survey, which rotates around the main Whakatāne reserves. This year’s survey was in the Ōhope Scenic Reserve (OSR) and an index of 3.1 kiwi calls per hour was recorded. Historical indices for the OSR were 3.4 in 2010, and 3.5 in both 2013 and 2016. Whilst a slight drop on previous seasons, the index still indicates a good population of birds in the OSR.

Finally, the KMT would like to honour the achievement of Bridget Palmer, who was awarded the ‘Kiwi Kaiako (teacher or trainer) of the Year’ at the National Kiwi Hui in June 2019. This award recognised Bridget’s passion and enthusiasm for kiwi conservation, and her many hours of hard work in putting together the Kiwi Management Team.



Top: Whiu Whiu's chick - June 2019

Bottom: Kiwi Awards - Bridget Palmer at far right



Above: Toru's Release - March 2019

## Kiwi Wandering

**Many people of all ages enjoy our Kiwi Wandering Trail; a self-guided scavenger hunt through our beautiful town to find ten life-sized bronze kiwi.**

We have a regular enthusiast, three year old Edgar who has done the trail MANY times with Granny Lynda. His favourite is Big Al, outside the Whakatāne iSITE, where you can also grab a trail map.

"We have had an incredible response to the walk and our international visitors are loving it also", Rangitahi Wharepapa, Senior Visitor Information Officer at Whakatāne iSITE.

This fun activity suits all ages and fitness levels, and is able to be completed in all weather. Take the family and finish up at the Heads with a picnic and a swim!



Edgar and Granny Lynda

# Education

So far this year we have had close to 500 school students participate in our Environmental Education Programme. These children ranged from pre-school to secondary school, and were both local schools and schools from out of the district on camp in Ōhope.

Leah, our Education Coordinator takes the kiwi trailer to the schools and teaches students all about kiwi. Students get to see a kiwi skeleton and taxidermy kiwi, stoats, weasels and other predators. They can also hold a kiwi egg, touch kiwi feathers, hear male and female kiwi calls, as well as learning lots of facts about our unique national icon.

The students then participate in a Kiwi Tracker Walk, which gets them out in the bush, learning about the kiwi's habitat. They will look for burrows, footprints and even kiwi poo! The students learn how we track kiwi using telemetry gear, and see just how close they live to our town. Another important part of taking the students into the bush is to teach them about native plants and birds, insects, trapping, bush safety, as well as showing them a historic Pa.

Our volunteer education guides love showing the children what is right on our doorstep, and hope to install a life-long passion for conservation.



## Guus Knopers – Kiwi Aversion Dog Trainer

Guus Knopers is the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust's Kiwi Aversion Dog Trainer.

**Guus, I understand that you have been involved with training dogs for over 20 years! What's the best thing about working with dogs?** Dogs are the only animal that wants to please you more than they want to please themselves.

**What is the hardest part of your job?** To make the dog's owners understand their responsibilities as good dog owners.

**What services and training does your business 'K9 Detection Services' provide?**

We provide detection dogs to search for drugs in workplaces and schools, and dogs to search for explosives on cruise ships and at concerts. We also have biosecurity and conservation dogs that look for unwanted organisms and pest animals, and we train dogs for overseas government agencies as required.

**How did you get involved with the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust and Kiwi aversion training?** I had worked with Bridget Palmer when she was working for DOC in Rotorua. Bridget asked me to help with the Trust's aversion training in Whakatāne, and look I'm still here doing it!

**What does aversion training involve?** It involves a lot! I want to provide the best possible training using the most effective methods available, to ensure that our kiwi survive. This means setting up the training course to be as realistic as possible, so that when the dogs are out hunting

and encounter a kiwi they still want to avoid the bird.

You also have to understand dogs. You must be able to 'read' the dog so that your timing when correcting the dog is perfect. Finally, you must be able to talk to the owners and explain why it is so important that we do this training.

**What would you say to owners who are concerned about their dogs receiving an electric shock?** The way we correct the dog is like a human touching an electric fence. It is unpleasant and it gives the dog a fright, but it is only for a VERY short time and if the timing is right, then generally I only need to give the dog one correction. And of course, by doing this training we are protecting kiwi, and in some cases, preventing a dog from having to be put down.

**How often do dogs require refresher training? Why is this required?** Most dogs require refresher training every year. Research has shown that if a dog is not exposed to kiwi scent every year for three consecutive years, it is unlikely to remember the aversion training and will still show an interest in kiwi scent. After three consecutive years, research suggests that a two-yearly training interval could be used.



**I understand that you have been involved with several conservation projects in New Zealand and Australia. Which project was the most interesting or memorable for you?** Most of them were interesting! However, some conservation highlights have been: locating an evasive ferret at Mount Bruce after it had killed several kiwi, rabbit eradication on Macquarie Island, and pest eradication at Maungatautari Sanctuary and on Rangitoto and Motutapu Islands. All the projects were interesting and memorable because we met great people, worked with fantastic dogs and attained great outcomes that would not have been achieved without the dogs.

**What's your proudest moment as a dog trainer?** We often use rescue dogs that are 'too much' for the owners and then turn them in to amazing detection dogs. It is such a privilege to work with these dogs, and to have that special bond of trust between dog and handler. We humans learn so much from our dogs, and that's what makes us better as handlers.

# Volunteer profile

## Rick Boon



**When did you start volunteering with the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust?** I got involved in late 2016, firstly working with live trap checking, then moving on to 'Chick Pinging' (monitoring kiwi via a radio transmitter on their leg).

**What is your role within the Trust?** I do chick pinging every Friday and I am also the Team Leader for live trapping, mainly concentrating on feral cats. At times, I also spend many hours searching for any 'Lost Soul' or kiwi that has decided to travel outside of its normal range. I have also sponsored a kiwi called Te Kooti for three years now. He is a breeding male and he really knows how to dig! His son is called Digger and now roams free in the Ōhope Scenic Reserve.

**What's a typical day/outing like for you as a volunteer?** A typical day on a Friday would be tracking adult male kiwi and chicks in Ōhope, Kōhī Point and Mokorua Scenic Reserves. On receiving their radio signals, I record data such as the kiwi's movements over the last few nights, what time they left their nest to feed, if the kiwi was incubating an egg, and even the condition of the battery.

A Wednesday for me is going into the same three reserves to check and re-bait the live cat traps. Between these two days, I am usually in the bush for around six hours per week.

**What originally motivated you to volunteer for the Kiwi Trust?** I wanted to get involved with what I thought was a very worthwhile project.

**What now motivates you to stay involved?** After seeing and holding my first kiwi in the bush, I am now even more motivated to protect our beautiful birds. The people that I have met volunteering for the Trust may not all see eye-to-eye on subjects like politics and fishing, but when it comes to kiwi we are all alike - very dedicated!

**In your opinion, what is the most important work that the Kiwi Trust does?** It's hard to say because no matter how big or small the project, it all contributes to the protection of our kiwi.

**What is your most memorable experience as a volunteer?** My most memorable experience has to be holding my first ever wild kiwi.

**What would you tell someone who is thinking about volunteering with the Trust?** I would tell them to come and have a cup of coffee with us, because you will meet a great bunch of people. You will soon realise that we are all dedicated to our beautiful feathered friends, and no matter how many hours you wish to put in, we would love to have you on board!

## Corporate Sponsors

The Whakatāne Kiwi Trust is thrilled to have Eastpack and Craigs Investments Partners on board as our sponsors for their second year. Over the past year, both sponsors have also involved their employees by adopting and naming kiwi chicks, bringing staff on the Trust's Night Walks, and having educational presentations at their workplace. We are so grateful for their support, and look forward to working with them for another year.

Our sincere thanks also to Electric Kiwi, Waiotahi Contractors Ltd and the William's Family Foundation for their continued support.

Thanks to all our corporate sponsors, we are able to work towards our vision of seeing kiwi thrive in our local reserves.

## PROJECT PARTNERS



Phone 0800 884 880  
[www.boprc.govt.nz](http://www.boprc.govt.nz)



Phone 027 WHK KIWI (027 945 5494 )  
[www.whakatanekiwi.org.nz](http://www.whakatanekiwi.org.nz)



Phone 07 307 0760  
[www.ngatiawa.iwi.nz](http://www.ngatiawa.iwi.nz)



Phone 07 307 0611  
[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)



Phone 07 306 0500  
[whakatane.govt.nz](http://whakatane.govt.nz)

## CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

**EastPack**  
[www.eastpack.co.nz](http://www.eastpack.co.nz)

**Kiwis for Kiwi**  
[www.kiwisforkiwi.org](http://www.kiwisforkiwi.org)

**Electric Kiwi**  
[www.electrickiwi.co.nz](http://www.electrickiwi.co.nz)

**Waiotahi**  
[www.waiotahi.co.nz](http://www.waiotahi.co.nz)

**BayTrust**  
[www.baytrust.org.nz](http://www.baytrust.org.nz)

**Air Chathams**  
[www.airchathams.co.nz](http://www.airchathams.co.nz)

**Craigs Investment Partners**  
[craigsp.com](http://craigsp.com)

**The Williams Family Trust**