



Our Kiwi Trust Night Walks are back in action!

We are thrilled to announce that our public night walks are back up and running! After two months in lockdown, the Kiwi Trust's team of volunteer guides are itching to get back out there, and can't wait to share this special experience with both local families and domestic visitors.

The night walks season usually runs from April to June each year, as this coincides with the kiwi mating season and provides the best opportunity to hear kiwi calling to each other. However, as two months of the season were lost due to the lockdown, the Kiwi Trust will be extending the night walks season until Friday the 10th of July 2020. But don't worry, there's still plenty to see and hear at this time of year with morepork and creepy crawlies like cave weta, giant centipedes, glow worms and glow in the dark fungi!

Another exciting development is that a second night walks route will be opened

up in Mokorua Scenic Reserve from Thursday the 11th of June. The Mokorua night walks will run on Thursday nights at the same time of 7.00pm, and will offer regular night walks fans the chance to explore some new territory.

Whakatāne Kiwi Trust Operations Manager, Wayne O'Keefe says "This is a fantastic family-friendly activity. So few of us get to experience the bush at night these days, and it's amazing what you can see and hear after dark. You can also rest assured that we will be taking extra precautions to ensure that people are kept safe by ensuring small group sizes and physical distancing".

Night walks will take place on Friday evenings at 7.00pm in Ōhope Scenic Reserve, and on Thursday evenings at 7.00pm in Mokorua Scenic Reserve. Tickets are now available through Eventfinda at: www.eventfinda.co.nz.



Wrapping up the Stoat Season

BY GAYE PAYZE

A big thanks to those who reported stoat sightings over the summer season. Most reports came in December 2019, when several groups of stoats were seen around Kōhī Point and Mokorua Scenic Reserve's public walking tracks! This enabled us to quickly deploy extra traps into these areas, and in Mokorua Reserve we were able to capture a female stoat and a weasel that may not have been captured otherwise. We also caught some rats and hedgehogs in some of the other extra traps, so it was a worthwhile exercise overall.

Stoat captures over the summer period (December 2019 to February 2020) peaked at 13 stoats per month in December 2019. Mokorua Scenic Reserve had the highest number of captures, keeping our Mokorua trappers busy – particularly as new trap lines had also been deployed in this reserve in late 2019.



A project with five partners: Whakatāne Kiwi Trust, Bay of Plenty Regional Council, the Department of Conservation, Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Awa and Whakatāne District Council.

Reflections on the 2019 / 2020 Kiwi Season

BY BRIDGET PALMER

The Whakatāne region is a haven for wildlife. It is now common to hear kiwi and more recently weka, calling from people's backyards. However, the outcome of the last breeding season has once again reminded us that there is a need to extend the project area beyond its current boundaries.



From nine nests, a total of eight chicks successfully hatched and were monitored this breeding season. Sadly, only one chick reached the stoat proof weight of 1000 grams. Six chicks were predated (killed by predators) and one died due to natural causes, giving a 12.5% breeding success rate.

Kiwi are territorial and depending on the habitat and kiwi population density, they can have home ranges of around 10 hectares. What this means is that when the population increases, kiwi will wander to find their own territory. Often this includes venturing into areas without predator control, or even somebody's backyard.

Having a small, fragmented project area also makes it harder to stop the invasion of predators into this area. Currently, the Whakatāne Kiwi Project's Environmental Programme covers 1297 hectares, but the goal is to increase this area to 20,000 hectares in order to create a sustainable habitat for our kiwi population. This may seem a big stretch, however by partnering with HALO Whakatāne, other local care groups and neighbouring landowners, this can be achieved.

Amid our despair also comes hope. As we take youngsters on the Kiwi Tracker walk, we can now feed the North Island robin hopping around our feet; whilst weka – another protected and vulnerable native bird – are now a common sight around Whakatāne reserves. What's more, if you managed to walk up Gorge Road during the 'lockdown' period, you may have noticed that the road noise and exhaust fumes were replaced by fighting tūī, duetting bellbirds and giant cave wētā wandering on the footpath!

The Importance of Data

BY JOHN BLACK, IT GEEK

Just recently the Bio App has had a major upgrade to its trapping data entry interface. It was the first major change to that area of the app since its inception in 2013. The new interface allows trappers to personalise settings within the app to suit their needs. For example, trappers who are keen enough to handle a couple of trap lines can separate their traps into 'groups' to be managed separately. It also allows for multiple baits or lures to be entered, allowing the trapping team to analyse their effectiveness and try out new options - vital analysis in our constant battle against pests and predators. Soon to follow will be a much needed upgrade to the Smartphone App which will include all the features of the new trapping interface as well as some GPS 'smarts' to help you collect trap results during your trap run.

So, why do we provide the WKT volunteers with so many different ways of entering data, whether it be trapping results, volunteer hours or kiwi tracking information? Well, without it, the Whakatāne Kiwi Project would truly grind to a halt! We would have no way of carrying out coordinated responses to pest incursion, no way of ensuring the continued care of the kiwi we monitor, nor an ability to provide accurate information for funding applications. To an extent, the accurate recording of your data into the Bio App is just as important as doing the actual work itself.

Volunteer resilience in the face of challenging times

BY BRIDGET PALMER

We know that the Whakatāne Kiwi Project would not be as successful as it is without the continued support of our volunteers. The skills, knowledge and passion of our volunteers is what gives this project its heart.

Whilst there are many joys to be had in catching a stoat or seeing the look of delight on kid's face when they see kiwi footprints; there is also sadness such as hearing the dreaded 'quick pulse' or mortality signal which indicates that the kiwi you are monitoring has likely died. It is a sound that makes your heart sink and unfortunately it is a sound that our 'chick pingers' have heard too often during the last three kiwi breeding seasons.

The title 'Chick Pinger' refers to volunteers who monitor kiwi chicks and adult males using an aerial and receiver. (Of course, you know that it is the dads who sit on the eggs don't you?!). A small transmitter is attached to the kiwi's leg and this sends out signals that the 'chick pinger' can hear with a receiver aerial. It is this device that detects when the kiwi is no longer moving and sends out the dreaded 'quick pulse'.

Whilst we know that we must monitor kiwi survival to determine the effectiveness of our trapping network, it doesn't make it any easier to digest the fact another kiwi chick you've been monitoring (or even held) has succumbed to stoat predation. Each loss hits the team extremely hard. However, it is their love for kiwi and dedication to the cause that makes our chick pingers keep going - walking many miles every week to find that elusive chick, and hopefully watch its transmitter being removed when it has reached the stoat proof weight of 1000 grams.

So, it is with much gratitude, that the Trust recognises the strength and resilience of our volunteers who continue to give their time, knowledge and skills despite the challenges ... thus allowing the pulse of the project to continue beating.

Searching for Lost Souls

BY SUE LAURENT

An offshoot of our successful 'Chick Pingers' or kiwi monitoring team is the 'Lost Souls' Team. Sometimes one of our kiwi gets the urge to find new territory and disappears. We do not know why this happens – it may be that they got kicked out by another territorial male, or they were looking for a mate, or perhaps there was not enough food in the existing territory.

If the chick pingers cannot locate the kiwi, then we activate the Lost Souls Team. Their task is to search for this kiwi in the area surrounding the bird's home reserve and further afield. Many hours are spent searching - often with mixed results. But... we do have some success stories and that keeps us looking.

Footrot Flats – One of our success stories is 'Footrot Flats', whose transmitter was sponsored by Apanui School. This kiwi went missing from Kohi Point in June 2019 and was found a couple of months later – halfway to Taneatua on a farm! This was a great outcome for the team searching. On locating Footrot, they gave him a final health check and found that he was healthy and weighed in at a solid 1750 grams. As kiwi chicks are generally big enough to fight off a stoat at 1000 grams, the team said a karakia (blessing), and released him with lots of love.

Kereki – This precious little kiwi chick is sponsored by our good friends at Craigs Investment Partners and belongs to our amazing kiwi dad 'Marie'. The chick hatched in October 2019 in Mokorua Scenic Reserve and weighed 260 grams at its first monthly health check. At his third check (see photo with volunteer Chris Gibson) Kereki doubled his weight to 550 grams.

The little chick then got very cunning and decided to hide in a swampy area thick with blackberry! Finally, after three attempts Sue got lucky and caught him in January 2020. Another health check was completed with the chick weighing in at 1100 grams.

At this point, the team would normally have released him but as we'd had a challenging season with chick predations, they decided to leave the transmitter on so that they could keep an eye on him. Unfortunately, this was our last sighting of our precious Kereki. For some reason, he just decided to take off and has disappeared.

The Lost Souls Team have searched for hours and walked many kilometres trying to pick up a signal from his transmitter; but unfortunately, they have had no luck to date. We will keep looking though!



Sue Laurent holding Footrot Flats



Chris Gibson holding 'Kereki'. Status... still missing!



Bridget Palmer holding Kereki

Whakatāne Kiwi Trust welcomes a new Education Coordinator!

My name is Helen Dobbin and I have recently been appointed to the Education Coordinator position with the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust. This is an exciting position for me as I see Environmental Education (or Education for Sustainability) as an important part of our education system. It teaches us that the environment and people are not separate. We need to act now more than ever to protect it. Living in Whakatāne we are surrounded by amazing places and to have the Kiwi Project in our backyard is an incredible resource.

I will be continuing with the Trust's current education programme for schools and the popular Kiwi Tracker walks – this programme had more than 600 students participate in 2019!

Over the next few months, I will also be looking at ways to develop the programme further and create opportunities for more students to engage in the kiwi programme in our area.

2020 is going to be an interesting year! To contact me please email: education@whakatanekiwi.org.nz.



Team Profile – Bridget Palmer

Bridget Palmer is a well-known figure in kiwi conservation circles, and many Whakatāne students will recognise her as the 'kiwi lady' from her years of leading 'Kiwi Tracker' education walks.

Bridget originally joined the Whakatāne Kiwi Project back in 2008 as the Kiwi Project Manager, having been seconded from the Department of Conservation (DOC) in Rotorua. Over the years, she has also filled several volunteer roles, including working as our Educator and as the Volunteer and Events Coordinator. Bridget now leads our Kiwi Management Team as a contractor.



Bridget says that the best part of her role is sharing the experience with others. When out conducting kiwi health checks, Bridget will often stop someone walking on a nearby public track and quietly ask if they would like to see a kiwi. She says that seeing their eyes light up when they realise she has a real kiwi in her arms is priceless!

However, Bridget says that her most memorable experience with the Kiwi Trust was the evening she brought her DOC manager along on the Ōhope kiwi call survey in 2010. Bridget recalls "We got more than we bargained for as we not only heard kiwi calls... we heard kiwi grunts too! Needless to say, we didn't keep our headlamps on that 'breeding pair' for long. I am glad it was dark so my manager couldn't see me blush!"

Bridget finished up with DOC last year after 17 years' service, as she wanted to focus on community-led conservation. This passion is keeping her busy, as when she's not working for the Kiwi Trust, Bridget works with HALO Whakatāne as their 'Lead Community Igniter' (which is a fancy way of saying 'Project Manager'!).

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FARMit Rural Accounting Specialists - Going above and beyond for the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust!

FARMit Accountants' roots began in the Waikato some years ago, with Brett and Kerry being partners in a firm of six partners and 60 staff. Their growing family and a love for the outdoors brought them back to Brett's old stomping grounds in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. Since then Colin, Katie and Gina have come on board as partners in their Whakatāne office.

Colin and Katie have been instrumental in setting goals and plans for the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust's administration team. The use of software such as 'Xero' for invoicing and monitoring the Trust's financial position, and 'Figured' for setting budgets and forecasting ensures that the Board of Trustees have up-to-date information to make informed decisions about the Trust's direction.

As well as providing behind the scenes advice, members of the FARMit team also regularly attend Board meetings so that they keep in touch and provide support and ideas. The Whakatāne Kiwi Trust would like to thank FARMit for going 'above and beyond' in supporting the Whakatāne Kiwi Trust as it works towards a successful and sustainable future.



PROJECT PARTNERS



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