

CHAIR'S REPORT

Greetings

It's been an autumn of ups and downs for kiwi in Taranaki and across the country. Here in Taranaki, we have completed another season of Operation Nest Egg, funded by the BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust, with help from New Plymouth District Council. This project is done in partnership with DOC, with a parallel project happening with Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust in the Waikato. Sid Marsh finished the season with some kiwi catching to replace transmitters. Transmitter batteries last about a year, so if we want to keep monitoring the male kiwi that do the incubation work, we have to replace the transmitters each year.

Egg lifts have been successful but major logistical exercises. Some eggs in the last uplift were cracked (maybe the kiwi fought off a possum or stoat), but the eggs have all survived. We uplift eggs from several nests in one night, to save money and time. Several volunteers now well trained as "primary egg lifters". They have quite a responsibility but they seem to get a huge thrill out of these expeditions.

We have supplied chicks to build Maungatautari's founder kiwi population. It is great to be able to announce that several kiwi are likely to come back to Taranaki from Maungatautari this year. This is much earlier than we originally expected. In the long run, there will be a steady flow of kiwi back from Maungatautari's protected population.

I'd also like to announce new funding for Taranaki Kiwi Trust from TSB Community Trust, for our work with private land owners under the Community Kiwi Protection (CPK) Programme (a trap loan scheme), and from Taranaki Electricity Trust for kiwi education and Trust operations. Thank you to these great local supporters.

There have been a number of negatives for kiwi, from drought causing starvation in Northland kiwi, predation in a Waikato sanctuary, to accidental deaths and injury to three Taranaki kiwi. A possum hunter caught a kiwi in a trap set on the ground. He felt very bad about what happened and learnt a big lesson ("set traps off the ground!"). We are grateful he brought the bird in for help. The kiwi has a badly broken leg but is doing well at Massey's Wildlife Health clinic. Young chicks had to be removed under urgency from Bushy Park crèche when a culvert hatch was found ajar. There was a chance that a pest had got in. Unfortunately, one chick died while in care at Massey (maybe stress-related), and another was found dead in the crèche, though it had no sign of predation. The losses have to be considered in light of the gains from active kiwi management: many more chicks would die if we weren't doing Operation Nest Egg and extensive pest control, as done on Taranaki/ Mt Egmont.

Trustee, Cees has been busy getting a new trapline established up Mangorei Track, so the trapping network is still expanding. We will need some volunteer trap checkers this year, for Mangorei Track throughout the year, and for several rounds in spring for the whole mountain network. Please contact Kris at info@taranakikiwi.org.nz if you are keen to be trained up as a volunteer trap checker.

New trustees

The Trust welcomes two new trustees – Kara Prankerd and Jane Swann. Jane has also taken on the secretary position. Thank you both. I'll get Kara and Jane to talk about their motivations for working with kiwi in the next newsletter. They join me, Cees Bevers, Barry Hartley and Sue Hardwick-Smith on the Trust.



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CRACKED EGGS

On Sunday February 28th the egg-lift team assembled at 7.00pm at Aotuhia for a briefing. We had three egg clutches to uplift: Billdozer's; Uncle Sandy's; and Cees'. A-Team egg-lifters [Billdozer] comprised Kara Pranker [leader] & Sue Hardwick-Smith; B-Team [Uncle Sandy] was led by John Coe with Steve Knudsen & Kris Grabow along to video an egg lift from start-to-finish; C-Team [Cees' nest] with primary-lifter Simon Collins and cronies, Gordon Hope [stills photographer], Sam Stevens [getting fitter by the lift] & Sid Marsh.

The night was a cracker: mild, still, with a full moon. The C-Team heard weta, possums and ruru call, but no kiwi. Billdozer was first off and one viable egg about 55-days old [with hair-line cracks] was lifted quite early in the night. Two viable eggs [one with pronounced crack above the air cell] were lifted from Uncle Sandy about 02.30hrs. Cees came off at 01.30hrs but the team only located the nest entrance at 03.50hrs [found by Simon], and one egg was lifted. This had a talon nick on top with a tiny bit of dried blood around it, indicating a penetrated membrane. The C-Team had three watercourses to cross each way and had to negotiate steep country about one-and-a-half hours out to road. By the time we got to our vehicles, the two other teams were long gone.

From that point, it was a one-and-a-half hour drive back to Eltham along an extremely rough and corrugated road. Back at Eltham I had a 30-minute doze and then was up to drive eggs to Inglewood where they were picked up by Brian Law to transport to Kiwi Encounter, Roto-Vegas. This is the fourth long ferrying trip Brian has done for TKT and the Trust thanks him for once again stepping into the breach.

I later heard three of the four eggs were extensively cracked and, of course, worried that the damage was caused by me driving along the rough, loose metal road. Thankfully though, Claire Travers of Kiwi encounter assured me there was no transportation damage, that it had all occurred in the nest during incubation. Phew.

There could be a number of reasons why eggs are cracked in situ.

- human interference. This is unlikely as we make no daytime visits to Taranaki kiwi nests, except for one "visual" of the entrance from afar.

- kiwi incompetence. This has happened before, but there is no better incubator of a kiwi egg than a kiwi itself, so the

chance of a kiwi cracking its own eggs without disturbance is quite low.

- possum, goat, pig, hedgehog, mustelid, rat disturbance. This is quite possible, especially in the case of a determined stoat, with perhaps lower risk from other species.

- dog sniffing at entrance and scaring the kiwi - always possible.

All of the 4 eggs that came in were cracked and 3 of the 4 were seriously cracked, two needing patches. The worst was Cees' egg that had a puncture wound below the air cell line that had fresh blood on it (visible in the photo below) and collapsed membranes as a direct result of the puncture. When the membranes are compromised like that it changes the pressure inside the egg causing the membranes to drop away from the shell. The good news is that all of the eggs remained viable.

Sid Marsh, Kiwi Ranger



Top: One of the cracked eggs.

Bottom: Repairs made to one of the eggs by Kiwi Encounter staff - using tape to form a patch.

YES! I'D LOVE TO HELP! BY... VOLUNTEERING SOME TIME DONATING SOME MONEY

Name/s: _____ Email: _____

Postal Address: _____ Phone Number: () _____

Town: _____ Please call me about volunteer work

Yes! I/we would like to help pay for checking traps in Egmont National Park (one year \$55, two years \$110, or other) \$ _____

Yes! I/we would like to donate a trap-box for predator control to protect kiwi in Taranaki (trap-box/es at \$95 each) \$ _____

Yes! I/we would like to donate money to be used where it's most needed to save kiwi in Taranaki \$ _____

Total amount enclosed: \$ _____ Donations over \$5 are tax-deductible (we will send you a receipt).

All donors become members of '**Friends of Taranaki Kiwi**' and will receive our regular newsletters

Please send to: Taranaki Kiwi Trust, P.O Box 867, New Plymouth 4340

THE STATE OF OUR KIWI

The Department of Conservation has recently put out a booklet "Kiwi (*Apteryx* spp.) Recovery Plan 2008 - 2018", which covers the status of kiwi populations now, where they are heading in the future, genetic diversity, managing populations, recovery goals, community relations and research. Some information from this booklet is summarised in this article.

INTRODUCTION

The decline in abundance and distribution of kiwi went largely unnoticed until less than 2 decades ago. Populations have declined since the arrival of humans more than 700 years ago, resulting in all kiwi species currently being at risk, and some even precariously close to extinction. Today, few New Zealanders ever see a kiwi in the wild.

Now, about 70 community groups throughout NZ actively protect kiwi over a combined area of 50,000ha, while 70,000ha is DOC-protected.

SPECIES

Currently there are five formally described species of kiwi; and within both the brown kiwi and the tokoeka there are four geographically and genetically distinct forms.

Brown kiwi are classified as being in "serious decline", with the eastern and western brown kiwi still in decline because, although some actively managed populations are flourishing, most birds still remain in sites with little or no management.

DISTRIBUTION

For the North Island: prehistorically Rowi were present in the Southern North Island as far as Hawkes Bay, Little spotted kiwi occurred throughout the North Island as a distinct form, but this became extinct in the late 1800s.

The present distribution of kiwi (Fig.1) is a mix of largely unchanged distributions (eg Stewart Is tokoeka), remnant populations, and new, translocated populations on islands or mainland islands that were not naturally inhabited by kiwi.



Figure 1. Present distributions of kiwi (*Apteryx* spp.) in New Zealand and location of five kiwi sanctuaries (note: symbol does not reflect the extent of these sanctuaries).



FIELD OFFICER'S REPORT

With summer behind us, we are at the tail-end of yet another busy breeding season for kiwi within the Taranaki Operation Nest Egg Project. The last egg lift was carried out in late February. Three of the four eggs from this egg lift have now hatched at Kiwi Encounter, with the chicks progressing well. The 4th egg was younger and is still under artificial incubation.



Kris Grabow

Some of the chicks hatched earlier this season are nearing their release weight of 1kg. It is planned for many of these chicks to be returned to their source area. This provides a boost to the population in the area the eggs came from. The majority of chicks released over the past five years are now in Egmont National Park. We will continue to repopulate the National park with kiwi.

Trap-catch tallies continue to roll in from predator control projects taking place on private properties through the TKT Community Kiwi Protection Programmes. We admire the long term commitment these landowners are undertaking to maintain an area of protection for kiwi in their 'back yards'. This action benefits other native wildlife too. Thank you also to our volunteers who have linked up with some landowners to lend a hand, and to those who assist with trap checking within the Egmont National Park network. A further pool of stoat traps is being built which will enable additional predator control projects to begin in Taranaki.

During term one this year I worked with Pembroke Road School who undertook kiwi studies with the TKT. The children proved to be a very keen bunch, and became experts in identifying predators to kiwi. Plans are underway for Egmont Village School to brush up their kiwi knowledge at the start of term two, with a further three schools booked in for terms two and three. It's certainly wonderful to be working with the young and future caretakers of our environment.

MANGOREI TRACK TRAP LINE

The laying of a trap line along the Mangorei Track received a very welcome helping hand a couple of weeks ago, with traps being flown in to Pouakai Hut and Graylings Clearing. Precision Helicopters were able to fly 13 traps to the hut, and a further 13 to Graylings Clearing on backloads during their work for the Department of Conservation on the Pouakai Circuit. This will mean that only a few trap boxes will need to be carried up from the bottom of the track - no doubt a relief for our volunteers! With assistance from DoC, the New Plymouth Tramping Club and TKT volunteers, it is planned to lay the traps before spring. Many thanks also to Origin Energy and Mr Derek Andrews for donations to support the Mangorei track trapline.



Up, up and away! Thanks to Matt Newton from Precision Helicopters and the Department of Conservation, the traps for Mangorei Track are well on their way to being set!

NOTICES

Free Public Talk

Innovative research into the lifestyles of little blue penguins

Date: 13th July (Tuesday)
Venue: New Plymouth, Puke Ariki Museum, Level 2 Grey space (next to the big shark, upstairs from the NP i-SITE visitor information centre)
Time: 7 – 8pm
Speaker: Philippa Agnew (Marine Biologist)

Description:

The Oamaru blue penguin quarry site is one of the most visited (over 75,000 people each year) colonies in New Zealand. Marine biologist Philippa Agnew will share her extensive knowledge of the colony and give an insight into her potentially ground breaking three-year research project she hopes will reveal where penguins go at sea and how deep they dive.

Taranaki Kiwi Trust encourages you to support conservation of all species!

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TSB Community Trust



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