

Update on Operation Nest Egg chicks



Sid Marsh, Wildlife Officer monitoring kiwi with telemetry equipment.

Breeding cycle of the North Island Brown Kiwi

The breeding season for the kiwi is from approximately August to April. A female often lays 2 eggs per clutch, and two clutches per season. Some of our Taranaki kiwi have laid up to four clutches of eggs in one season! This is not common though - more often kiwi lay two or three clutches. Naturally, not all eggs are viable, with some being infertile or die of natural causes before hatching. Kiwi eggs take approximately 75 days of incubation before hatching.

By October egg rescues (commonly called egg lifts) are starting. Eggs are usually not lifted until they are mid-range in age - after 30 days old. All kiwi monitored through the ONE project in Taranaki now have 'egg timers' on their transmitters. This tells the kiwi field worker how long the male has been incubating the eggs, and therefore how old the eggs are. Occasionally we find one of the two eggs in the burrow has already hatched! In this instance we are very lucky to catch the newly hatched chick once it has left the burrow. Two chicks from this season were rescued by the Wildlife Officer outside of their burrow, one is pictured below.



Koiterangi, a wild chick approximately 1 week old, rescued from outside her burrow

The rescued eggs are taken to Kiwi Encounter, Rotorua where they continue to be incubated (artificially) until hatching. Once a kiwi chick has hatched it takes approximately four to five months to grow on to release weight of 1kg. At this weight they are considered to be past the vulnerable stage of being at risk to predation. After hatching, and at approximately 3 weeks to 1 month old the chicks of the new season (2007 / 2008) will be taken to Bushy Park Reserve, which is an ideal, predator-free creching area for chicks to grow on and become very 'bush savvy' in preparation for their release back to Taranaki.



*29th January 2007 Koiterangi, pictured with the release team,
just prior to release into her burrow at Egmont National Park, 9th June 2007
(release team from left Andrew McElroy, Inver McElroy, Mike Brown, Kris Grabow)*