

CHAIR'S REPORT

Kia ora and greetings!

I'm just back from another trip to Kiwi Encounter at Rainbow Springs in Rotorua. I helped deliver 6 kiwi eggs taken from the wild at Aotuhia in eastern Taranaki. Hardly an onerous task, but one that involves a lot of careful driving to avoid potholes, slumps, judderbars, rumble strips and sudden stops. Once again, I've been blown away with the number of people who helped get these eggs into incubation. It keeps reminding me that this is a real team effort, with new volunteers coming in to help, and our two contractors Sid and Kris keeping track of all the people and kiwi egg movements. With the help of Nancy & Erin M and Jenny K who are also volunteers at Rotokare, we completed a successful BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust Operation Nest Egg (ONE) event (part of the Egmont National Park Kiwi Conservation Programme).

Two eggs were lifted from each of 3 nests – Kingi's, Hartley's and Cees' (the kiwi not the trustee!). It was such a relief to have the Kiwi Encounter workers declare that the eggs are all beautiful, viable and not cracked. Kiwi Encounter is filling up with kiwi eggs and two of our earlier eggs have hatched already. More about that story later in this newsletter – but if you are ever heading to Rotorua, do go on the tour at Kiwi Encounter. Claire Travers and her kiwi husbandry team are doing an amazing job.

The eggs were uplifted from nests incubated by the male kiwi. A big team went to stake out the nests at night, waiting in the dark for the radio transmitter on each kiwi's leg to indicate the male kiwi had left the nest. We now have a number of people trained to lead egg lifts (Kara, Kris and Sid this time), with young people, like 13 year old Sam, getting quite experienced with egg lifts now. It's good to be able to help people build up their conservation skills. This is something we are able to give back to the community, as well as a more secure kiwi population in Taranaki.

Some of the egg lift team had to wait until after 2am for their kiwi to leave the nest. It's a long time waiting out in the bush. Kris of TKT, Emily of DOC and Jane, a keen new TKT volunteer didn't get back to town until 9.30 in the morning, but did they look proud of their effort – they looked a bit worn out too. Thanks everyone (including BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust and New Plymouth District Council).

Field Officer Kris, with help from landowners already in our Community Kiwi Protection (CKP) Programme, and TRC field staff, has been so good at encouraging farmers to take action on farm-based trapping plans that we had had to put the brakes on for a while. We've got a funding application under review. If that's successful, we will be able to get a whole lot more traps out onto private land. We hope we will be busy setting out traps before Christmas, anywhere from Waitotara to Mokau. Thanks to TSB Community Trust for great support of our CKP Programme.

Our other programmes in rural kiwi conservation advocacy (with farmers not kiwi) supported by the Government's Biodiversity Advice Fund, kiwi education (of people not kiwi) supported by Taranaki Electricity Trust, and kiwi aversion training (of dogs not kiwi) are keeping us all busy, but especially Kris. Our partnerships with DOC, Ngati Maru and also with Maungatautari are continuing and are in good shape. It's all part of the team effort. Thanks for being part of it. Now, I'd better get back to the fundraising and sponsorship work to help ensure Taranaki Kiwi Trust has the funds to keep saving kiwi!

Best wishes, Jenny

In July we released 4 Kiwi chicks into the Egmont National Park. This photo is of Roy Tito of Te Atiawa, Jenny of TKT, Edith Tito, Te Atiawa and Joy McLean of DOC holding the chicks prior to their release.



Contents

Sid's O.N.E Diary	2
Our most recent mission to get eggs safely to Kiwi Encounter	3
Field Officer's Report	3
Large release of kiwi into Egmont National Park	4

SID'S O.N.E DIARY

The day before yesterday I was out looking for Rusty. Rusty is the sub-adult male released mid-winter at Aotuhia. It looks like he is doing the 'Big Walk' as not once have I been able to pick him up with the telemetry gear. I climbed a couple of hundred metres to get onto the tops, and once up there the going was reasonably good, following the main ridge system and stopping every 100m or so to 'beep' both sides of the ridge. If a signal is obtained I take a compass bearing and usually go directly to where the strongest signal is coming from. However, there were no signals. The bush on the tops is unlogged podocarp/hardwood [with clusters of beech on the higher knolls], very beautiful with some large trees. After about 2km the ridge I was on intersected with the main ridge heading up towards the main Matemateonga Range. The junction is marked by an enormous northern rata [2m diameter]. This is an ancient tree lucky to still be alive as 99% of the ratas [not to be confused with the climbing ratas] have long been killed by the possums, and have since collapsed, now lying rotting on the forest floor. At this point there was still no signal from Rusty so I continued on.

I passed three quite large lowland totara - all dead - possums again. The Hall's totara seems to withstand possum browse much better than Podocarpus totara. There are magnificent emergent rimu, possibly up to 5-600 years old along this part as well. I continued on, skirting Caskey's territory and several old nest sites. Caskey was one of our original males caught in March 2005. He was named after the DOC Ranger Dean Caskey. Caskey, however, only hatched one chick over many different clutches of eggs lifted, so he was subsequently dropped from the project (kiwis named after DOC personnel seem to have an exceedingly poor reproductive rate!!).

Back to the story: 500m along the ridge I heard one kakariki call. I immediately thought 'nest'. This is due to the time of year but, also, because I have heard kakariki within 150m of the location twice before in 2007. Since 2005 I have heard kakariki in Taranaki only 3-4 times despite having worked

mature forest in the Whangamomona, Aotuhia, Poiuatoa, Matau and Purangi surrounds since that date. Kakariki used to be so common they were once considered a pest species and in some areas poisoned en masse on some farms and croplands.

Anyway, I eventually honed in on the call and obtained lovely views of a pair of yellow-crowned kakariki in good light. I watched/followed them for ten minutes and then one flew into a NEST hole. It was 7-8m up a senescent kamahi, which sloped at an angle of about fifty-five degrees, the entrance being on the underside of the tree. It looks as if the nest may be stoat- and rat-proof. Of course I was pretty excited by this [corny I know!]. I continued watching the parakeets for another ten minutes and in that time the female flew out of the nest, and then back into it again. All around were korimako and flocks of popokatea, and more than one toutouwai in the distance. It is worth noting too that in the five years I have worked the Taranaki bush, not once have I seen or heard a kaka. Kaka, the big bush parrot, used to be exceedingly common. To the point where a good Maori fowler could snare up to a hundred in one day [at that rate they'd clean out today's kaka - nationwide - in only twenty days]. I suspect the kaka, being cavity nesters, have gone [with a slight lag of 20-30years] with the collapse of the northern rata component [with totara, kotukutuku etc] of the forest, rata being the perfect kaka nest trees.

I continued on along the lovely ridgeline, moving through 200-year-old kanuka/manuka forest, glades of monster beech trees, and leaf sprays draped with clematis. Still no sign of Rusty. Eventually I turned hard left onto a well-defined spur and followed this down through Kingi's territory. Where this spur flattens out there are glades of tall tawa forest - epiphyte city, perfect kokako habitat, but alas the kokako are long gone [rats, stoats, possums]. By the time I was on the road again I had walked about five kilometres and had another 1.5km to go to get back to vehicle. It had taken three hours, and of Rusty, there was no sign. "Good luck Bro!"

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

OUR MOST RECENT MISSION TO GET KIWI EGGS SAFELY TO KIWI ENCOUNTER

Behind the scenes: Pre-egglift preparation (Sid)

Preparation starts weeks before the egglift. For each respective breeding male kiwi I 'read' the code provided by the transmitter, plus, as a double-check, obtain telemetry triangulation fixes, to make sure the bird isn't moving about [in case the transmitter is malfunctioning, and is indicating 'incubation' even if this is not the case].

From day-25 to day-65 of incubation I sneak close to the nest. This is the only time I go in close pre-lift. I move slowly to avoid 'over-running' the nest. When within 20m I try to get below nest and, from there, approach it, scanning for the entrance. About 85% of the time the nest will be fully camouflaged, and it can be very hard to locate even when just 50cm away.

Once the nest entrance has been identified I slowly and quietly back out marking the way with pink cruise tape and tiny reflector markers. This enables us to find the nest easily at lift time. If I think the area is used by people, no pink tape is used. This is to minimise the chance of any-one finding the kiwi nest. Also, I try to keep my scent trail to a minimum, to minimise the chance of dogs following it, or kiwi following the scent trail out, on to the road, or a well-used track.



Night in the bush: Lifting eggs ready for transport (Kara)

Tonight we have three teams aiming for four kiwi nests. We meet at 5pm for the drive out to Aotuhia. Once parked up, Sid briefs us on the plan: who is in which team; who is going for which nest; "be careful, but oh by the way, I mean careful with the egg - if you slip, you break your leg before you break an egg"! We split in to our teams, and with me tonight are John and Sam. We head up on to a ridge towards the Matemateonga Track. We move out on to a close spur where "Kingi's" transmitter signal is nice and clear. We set up, get warm, comfy, and wait.

Every 10 - 20 minutes we flick on the transceiver, listening for a change in signal volume. When the male kiwi is sitting still on the nest we get a constant volume from the transmitter. If he is moving, the volume will change and is the signal for us to go in.

By 10pm our ears strain, was that a slight change we heard?nah, we are just imagining things.... Back to

watching the stars, listening to morepork and the odd snore from Sam. By 10:30pm we note a definite change - time to get ready.

We sneak to the nest following the pink tape and reflectors, carefully we peer into the burrow slotted in to a steep bank. Sam sets up with the gear while John carefully reaches an arm in to the burrow to lightly mark the top of the egg with pencil before ever-so-gently removing an egg. I take the egg and candle it to get an estimate of age. It's alive and looks to be about 60 days old. Now we pass the egg over to Sam who wraps it in a slip-proof material and places it in to the incubator and snugs it in with what looks like Sid's old socks and hand towels! The same process is repeated with the second egg, which also appears healthy.



Now we walk out - with extreme care - taking turns to pass the incubator in steep and slippery spots. Before we know it, we are back to the car - and before midnight too! what a good mission. The other two teams don't get back to Stratford until 8am the next day (but I'll let them tell their adventure another day).

3) Kiwi on board: Delivering kiwi eggs to Kiwi Encounter, Rainbow Springs, Rotorua (Erin)

Bumps in the road suddenly seem dangerous as we worry that any one of them might kill our precious cargo. We drive slowly and steadily, probably annoying other drivers when they can't pass us on Mount Messenger. I thought we should have one of those signs saying, "Kiwi on Board". I drew one in the dust on the back window anyway.

The kiwi eggs were always on our minds. Were they warm enough? I checked the temperature often, though I didn't know what it should be. As we wound our way along the roads, I was glad not to be the driver. Somehow, I still felt responsible. It's a long way to Rotorua, but we couldn't stop. Just in case. Arriving at Kiwi Encounter, we all feel relieved. We all try to walk as smoothly as possible, and slide the bins on to the bench - it would be terrible to drop them now. It's exciting squeezing into the "Check-up" room to watch 'our' eggs being unpacked. The procedures are so precise - wash for 30 seconds, in water that's just the right temperature, every detail recorded. We stand in the dark while the eggs are candled, ages determined according to documented criteria, and checked for damage. It's a relief when they say

the eggs are all OK. When they take them away to be incubated, we get the guided tour of the centre - to see what will happen to 'our' eggs. There's a baby kiwi curled up in one enclosure, and the older captive birds are foraging for bugs, just like ours will be one day. As we leave I feel glad. Our chilly bins are empty now, and the return trip to New Plymouth is relaxed and tedious, but I'm thinking about six more kiwi being released into the bush one day.

Photos: The Team before we set off for the night, Sid Marsh with the radio receiver and one of the kiwi burrows we lifted eggs from. A huge thank-you to Gordon Hope who took the photographs on the night.



FIELD OFFICER'S REPORT

I have been working to extend the kiwi aversion dog training which to date has reached predominantly hunting dogs.

It is intended for this training to reach further into rural areas of Taranaki, particularly the hill country where kiwi are present today, to teach dogs to avoid not only kiwi but other ground-dwelling birds as well such as hens, ducks, pukekos and the like. Thanks to recent work carried out by Ngamatapouri school we will be launching this training in the Waitotara valley very shortly. The Taranaki Regional Council have indicated their interest in supporting this, which may lead to the availability of funding in order to have a number of trainers underway within Taranaki - and for this training to be free to dog owners. I'll keep you posted!



Kris Grabow

LARGE RELEASE OF KIWI INTO EGMONT NATIONAL PARK

In July we were privileged to have the opportunity to release four young kiwi into ENP all in one go, rather than the usual one or two at a time.

The four North Island brown kiwi had been crèched at Bushy Park, Wanganui and at the end of each season Bushy Park likes to spell the area to allow the insects, invertebrae etc to multiply in numbers before the new seasons chicks begin to arrive in October.

The chicks, named AWOL, Mokau, Kaimata and Tarata were the last of the Taranaki kiwi in Bushy Park. They were all over 1 kg, big enough to fend off predators such as stoats and all males. All were offspring from new adult kiwi which had been tracked last year. They bring the total number of kiwi released into Egmont National Park to 42 with 50:50 ratio males to females.

About 70 people gathered at North Egmont squeezing into the visitor Centre, away from the inclement weather outside to watch as the kiwi were welcomed and blessed by elders from Te Atiawa.

After the blessing there was time for people to get up close to the kiwi before the kiwi were carried into the lower slopes of ENP to be released. With the recent rain there was a worry that the kiwi may not be able to be taken to their destined release area because a large stream had to be

crossed – but with 12 people taking turns carrying the boxes and passing them amongst each other where the terrain was tricky, it was no problem.

The four kiwi were each released into separate natural burrows (tunnels in the ground) usually under the base of large trees. They may stay there for a few days before exploring much further afield and finding new burrows to use.

Many thanks to our volunteers, DOC, NPDC and to BNZ who all contribute to predator control and replenishing the remnant population in Egmont National Park.



Photo: Julia Hardwick-Smith releasing Kaimata. There was a worry at one point that the bird might decide to turn around and come out again, but with a firm pat on his butt he retreated safely into the depths of his burrow!

CONTACT US: email: info@taranakikiwi.org.nz Phone: 06 754 6288



TSB Community Trust



P. O Box 867

NEW PLYMOUTH 4340