

To promote and facilitate the protection of sustainable populations of kiwi in Taranaki



CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENT—JAN 2008



Tena koe and greetings to you from Taranaki Kiwi Trust. Happy summer.

Like those two kayakers crossing the Tasman, we start the year with a focus on "our mountain", Taranaki/Mt Egmont. In this newsletter TKT trustee, Cees Bevers, discusses the predator control programme we run on the mountain in partnership with the Department of Conservation. (See "A mountain of pests" on page 3.) This programme now covers 7500ha of Egmont National Park, with 1164 double-set trap boxes. That's 2328 traps in total. Special thanks to the Friends of Taranaki Kiwi who have paid for traps and trap checking costs.

With summer comes an increase in stoat numbers – just at a time when young kiwi chicks are still vulnerable to attack. At this time of year, the trapping contractors are checking the traps every two weeks. If you look at a new website, www.taranakivista.co.nz, set up by one of our supporters, you'll be able to see what the weather's like for the trappers today. When I see the mountain, or even just a photo, I'm proud to know that we doing something active to protect and replenish the kiwi population right across the northern flanks.

For the next six months, the Trustees will be focusing on fundraising and sponsorship to ensure the predator control programme is securely funded for the long term, and expanded if possible. It's going to be a challenging time as we have a lot to learn about sponsorship. Kiwi chick releases into the Park will also start up again soon. If you want to be involved, see a kiwi up close, or have skills that might help us reach our goals for kiwi, do get in touch either by email or the mobile number listed above.

The Trust is proud to be caring for an iconic species in an iconic place. We want to be able to look at Taranaki/Mt Egmont and know that kiwi are thriving there. We've made a great start and progress is sure to continue. Best wishes for 2008. *Jenny Steven, TKT Chair*

A gentle reminder: For those who sponsor trap boxes and trap checking as part of the Egmont National Park Kiwi Conservation Programme, we encourage you to make an annual contribution so we can meet the target of 18 trap checks each year across the 7500ha Egmont National Park trapping network.



One more rat to add to the tally

The form is on page 3—thank you for your generosity.

Newsflash

22 January 2008—BillDozer's chick, Solstice, hatched out unassisted and is doing well.

Our work beyond the mountain is now well funded. Taranaki Kiwi Trust has been granted \$105,000 over three years from the Government's Biodiversity Advice Fund. This will enable extension of our field officer's work in education, and advocacy for kiwi protection on private land. We will be working with various audiences throughout Taranaki. These new funds complement our highly-valued administrative support grant from **Taranaki Electricity Trust** and funds from **TSB Community Trust** for stoat traps on private land.

Some of our kiwi projects feature in **Wilderness Magazine**—see January and February issues. Many thanks to Ross Nolly and Wilderness for these articles.



The Taranaki Electricity Trust generously supports the Taranaki Kiwi Trust



COMMUNITY KIWI PROGRAMME

The Taranaki Kiwi Trust assists landowners in protecting kiwi present on their property by providing a trapping plan to suit the property and the long term loan of stoat traps.

November saw an additional stoat trapping project on the ground, at the Knudsen property, Matau, East Taranaki. The property is a hill country farm which includes areas of hardwood/podocarp forest and lies adjacent to the Matirangi Forest. Steve and his family are keen to actively protect the kiwi on their property and now have 140 traps set out along 14km following farm tracks and valleys. The trapped area encompasses a bush area under QEII covenant.

A great day was spent by Steve, Sheryl and Luke Knudsen, Kara Pranker, Barry Hartley and Kris Grabow getting the initial load of traps in place and set up. Thanks to everyone for making this happen, especially to the Knudsen family—we're looking forward to heaps of stoat catches!

Right: Steve Knudsen setting a stoat trap watched by son, Luke



Below: Steve with a load of stoat traps





EDUCATION REPORT



In Term 4 a class at St Joseph's School in Stratford invited us along at the beginning of their study of kiwi and Operation Nest Egg. The students were then set the task of designing an egg carrying box which would meet the requirements for field work and we were invited to return and judge the results. All had made outstanding efforts and Sid Marsh, the judge, thoroughly enjoyed discussing them with the students. Prizes were supplied and presented by Karen Goldsworthy, Manager of BNZ Stratford. The winners made quite a feature on our

stand at the Stratford Show and the rest of the egg-carrying boxes were displayed at the Stratford BNZ so it was a great community education effort all round.

We are looking for every opportunity to provide education in the interest of kiwi so if you know of a group, school or class who might like us to provide a talk or study resources, please let us know or encourage the leader/teacher to contact us at schools@taranakikiwi.org.nz. *Carolyn*

Community Education

The Taranaki Kiwi Trust, along with other organisations, took part in the South Taranaki Enviro-Schools day held at Opunake High School in October. The aim of this day was to get pupils actively involved in environmental projects. TKT worked with pupils to identify pests present on the school grounds, by setting up tracking tunnels around the perimeter of the grounds. In this exercise, peanut butter was used as a lure in the tunnels. An ink pad in the middle of the base plate with absorbent paper on either side records the print of any overnight visitors. The following day students identified the paw prints. These included mice and hedgehogs. *Kris*



Tracking tunnel with mice prints



Children identifying prints



TKT FIELD OFFICER'S REPORT



Kris Grabow

Happy New Year! I hope you all had a relaxing festive season. This New Year has some interesting projects on the way. With Operation Nest Egg, the kiwi are currently incubating their second clutch of eggs, so more egg lifts are expected later in January. Two eggs are being incubated at Kiwi Encounter at Rainbow Springs, Rotorua, which were lifted from BillDozer's nest mid-December. Six juvenile chicks of various weights are currently being crèched at Bushy Park, Wanganui. They will be released over the next few months. Thanks to those who have responded to the volunteer ad in the last newsletter to transport kiwi and eggs to and from Taranaki. These opportunities are coming up.

In November we had a stand at the Stratford A & P show. This generated great public interest. Pupils of St Joseph's school had carried out a recent school project to design kiwi egg carry boxes – some of these excellent works were on display at the stand. We're looking forward to further projects with schools this year. Congratulations to Coen Frost of Stratford who entered a kiwi competition held at the show and won a double pass to Kiwi Encounter at Rainbow Springs, Rotorua. Coen and family are also invited to come to a kiwi release ceremony in Egmont National Park.

A new TKT predator trapping plan kicked off just before Christmas (article earlier in this newsletter). An additional plan is being prepared for an Ahititi property where a kiwi call survey was carried out and a number of kiwi were heard.

The Trust organised another weekend of kiwi aversion training for dogs. There was a good turnout of dogs including great support from the Tainui Pig Hunting Club. A two day kiwi field training course was held in December at Bushy Park, Wanganui, sponsored by BNZ STK. This gave the opportunity for kiwi crew to upskill themselves on tasks including tracking kiwi and changing transmitters. *Kris Grabow, TKT Field Officer*



KIWI AVERSION TRAINING FOR DOGS



Dog sniffing lure at kiwi aversion training—photo by Ross Nolly

At the beginning of December TKT hosted a kiwi aversion dog training weekend. This is the fourth training weekend held in the past year, with over 90 dogs having completed training. Although the kiwi aversion training is targeted to any dog that goes into the bush, the majority of dogs attending this training have been pig hunting dogs. It was awesome to have 30 dogs from the Tainui Pig Hunting Club complete the training held at Ahititi – a great turnout. With a stronghold of kiwi in the area, the club was keen to be proactive in aiding their protection.

The following day's training was held at Lake Mangamahoe. Most of the dogs were going through refresher training after their initial training 12 months previously. It was great to see these dogs showing positive signs of avoiding the kiwi scent from the onset, as many of them may not have come across a kiwi or the scent since their initial training. Training takes approximately 15 minutes per dog and costs \$20, a minimal cost to add an extra line of defence in kiwi protection. Training is supported by the Biodiversity Fund.

Kiwi aversion dog training was initiated in the mid 1990s in response to some major events of dogs attacking kiwi. In 1987 at Waitangi State Forest, Northland, a dog named Bingo killed up to 500 of a population of 900 kiwi in just 6 weeks before it was caught! Even the loss of a

relatively small number of kiwi will have a detrimental effect on an already small population, such as at Te Urewera National Park in 2003 where 9 out of a population of 16 kiwi were killed in 10 months.

Refresher training is also offered 12 months after initial training to remind and retest dogs. So roll on up...

TSB Community Trust



The TSB Community Trust generously supports the Taranaki Kiwi Trust



A MOUNTAIN OF PESTS

Our joint trapping programme with the Department of Conservation (DOC) in Egmont National Park (ENP) started in August 2002 and since that time a total of 8,300 pests have been caught. This total is both impressive and scary. When we started planning this project we never envisaged a total like that. As we expand the trapping network to nearly one quarter of ENP, the monthly pest tallies have steadily grown with the number of traps we now have out there; sitting, waiting, ready to catch a wary and unwanted kiwi predator.

Watching the tallies increase is, at times, a little frightening. Introduced kiwi predators like stoats and ferrets are simply everywhere; wherever you put out traps you will catch them. From farmland to the highest traps in the tussock on the mountain, we are catching pests all the time, without fail. Sure, there are quiet times of the year when few predators are caught, but this is more than made up for by the big summer peaks in our stoat catches.

The predators are relentless; they simply keep on coming. Were we to stop clearing and re-baiting our traps tomorrow, within a few short months we would be back to where we were before we began trapping. Stoats' dispersal capacity, as a small mammal, is simply amazing. They have been recorded going 65km in one direction. And so is the rate they can breed; litters of nine kits are the norm, and up to 13 have been recorded.



NZ Lottery Grants Board is a major funder of this programme

Roaming males mate with immature female kits before their eyes open and before they leave the den. Embryos go into suspended animation, but not for long. Between 3 to 5 weeks of age, before the female kits are weaned, they become sexually mature and the embryos of the next generation begin to develop. Stoats have evolved in extreme parts of the world where opportunities quickly come and go, and their whole life-strategy is geared towards making the most of things.

Here in our more stable paradise, they run amok. The wild yearly variation in the number of stoats and rats we catch are a result of a few simple things; the amount of food out there (which directly influences the number of pests in the population); how hungry they are, and how many traps are set. Usually we get a lot of rats building up over winter, after plentiful food supplies over spring and summer. Being well fed, they breed successfully. At some point the number of mouths vs the amount of food available tips the balance and rats begin to starve and die. Meantime, stoats have feasted on the abundance of rats during the preceding months, (on average 80% of their diet is rat), and they too have been able to produce more and more kits. The increased number of stoats now impact on the dwindling rat population. At some point stoats too feel the pinch and they relentlessly hunt other prey such as birds. These food sources also come and go annually, and when food is in short supply, stoat populations drop as well.

Another thing that affects the number of stoats caught is the timing of when the kits come out of their dens and roam for territories of their own; they are more naïve and easier to catch than adults, so tend to stray into traps more easily. This happens over the summer period; the season we catch most of our stoats.

This boom-bust scenario plays year in and year out in our forests. Our native wildlife is entangled in this rollercoaster ride and many of them fall victim to it. Trapping can be

effective at taking these pests out, but we have to match the intensity of our attack to the pests' biology; we have to cover the ground well and we must keep up the effort. The kilometres trudded by our trappers number many thousand, but without these dedicated people our kiwi simply wouldn't survive. The trappers are out in all weathers, 18 times a year at each and every one of our 1,164 trap-boxes, on the 120km of trap-lines in the 7,500 hectare trapped area that protect kiwi and blue duck (whio). There are many others involved in the efforts that keep these traps ticking along. There's you, our supporters, giving your time and financial support; the Department of Conservation, especially the Stratford Area Office who contribute both funds and staff time; the Central North Island Blue Duck Charitable Trust who fund part of the zone to protect whio; the Pacific Development & Conservation Trust, NZ Lottery Grants Board and New Plymouth District Council that enable the Trust to carry out vital pest control work to protect kiwi on "our mountain". Without you all, none of this would happen. Together we can stem this relentless onslaught of pests and save the birds.

...continued on page 4

A Numbers Game

Traps	1,164 double-set targeting stoats
Trap-lines	120km (traps every 100m)
Checks	18 per year (fortnightly Oct-Mar, monthly Apr-Sep)

Trap Catch Aug02 to end Dec07

Stoats	1476	Feral cats	26
Ferrets	55	Rats	6495
Weasels	121	Hedgehogs	121
Rabbits	6	TOTAL	8300



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

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 \$65 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

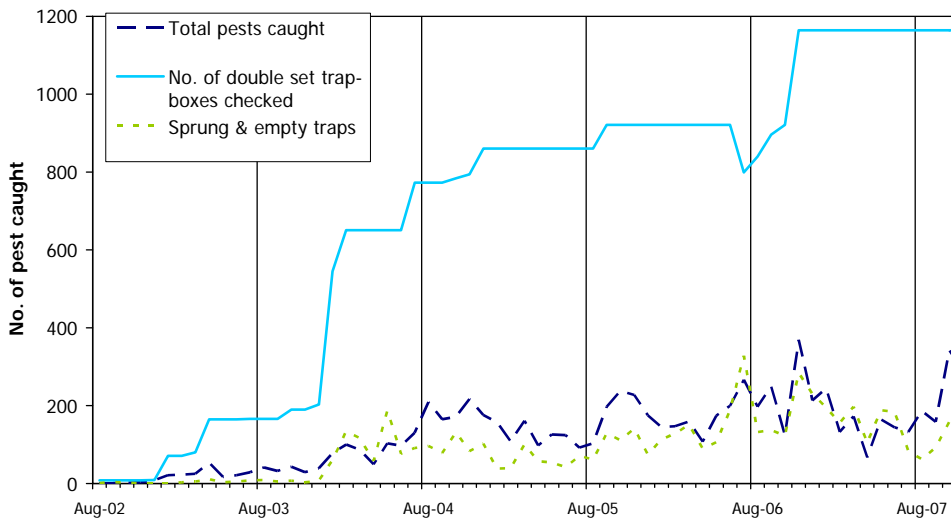
All donors become members of Friends of Taranaki Kiwi and will receive regular newsletters

Please send to: Taranaki Kiwi Trust, PO Box 867, New Plymouth 4340

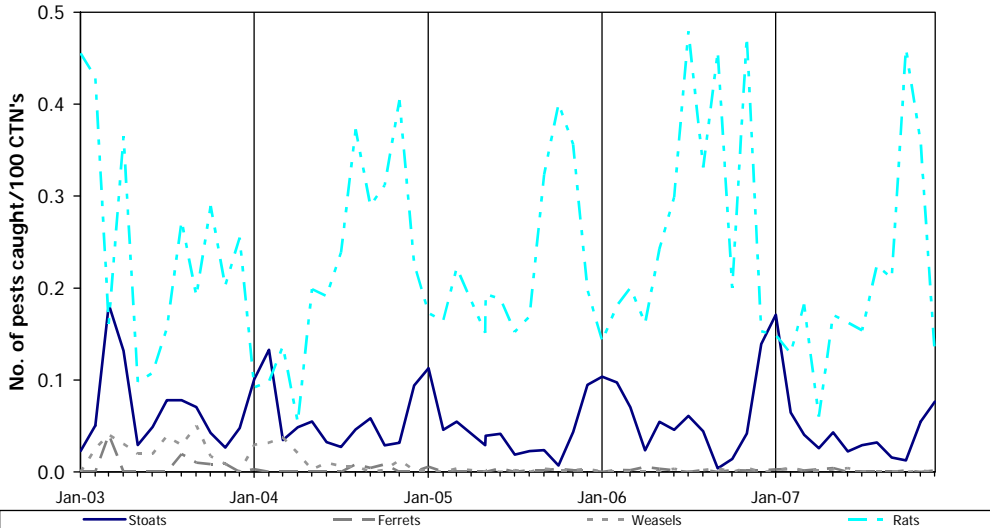
A MOUNTAIN OF PESTS—CONTINUED

The following graphs show the rolling results of the trapping programme in Egmont National Park. Note the significant increase in the number of traps in place last year. The second graph takes account of the changing numbers of traps. Trapping rates shown in graph 2 also take account of whether a trap is set and available to catch an animal, ie not sprung or already full. *Cees Bevers*

Graph 1: Total pests caught and traps in the ENP trapping network



Graph 2: ENP Kiwi & Blue Duck predator trapping catches per 100 corrected trap-nights



TKT stand at Stratford A&P show



Kara Pranker at Bushy Park

Donations are always welcome!

Sponsor an existing trap in ENP (annual donation \$55)
—or make a donation for a new trap box (\$65 each)
(see form on page 3)

BNZ OPERATION NEST EGG UPDATE



On 19 December two eggs were lifted from BillDozer's burrow. BillDozer is an adult male monitored at the ONE source site at Aotuhia. He gave a clear call from his burrow entrance about 3am before going off to feed. Sid, Bob, Jack and Kris then went in to his nest to collect the eggs. The eggs were tucked well back in the burrow, which took some reaching!

Since the date was very close to the summer solstice, the eggs were named Solstice and Ra (Sun god). Later that morning the two eggs were transported to Kiwi Encounter at Rainbow Springs, Rotorua, by Evelyn Mills, Win Kerr and Ray Willy.

Solstice hatched 22 Jan and Ra is not far away. Kiwi Encounter advises that both are doing well. Two other adult males (TaKT and Kingi) are currently incubating their second clutch of eggs in the field. These are expected to be lifted later in January.



BUSHY PARK CRECHE UPDATE

Six Taranaki chicks are growing on at Bushy Park, Wanganui and will be ready for release in the coming months. Chicks at Bushy Park have a transmitter attached to their leg, so they can be located when it is time for release at Taranaki. The bands holding the transmitters must be changed every month to allow for leg growth. 'Snow', the first Taranaki chick hatched this season, has proved to have true survival skills. During the December kiwi field training course held at Bushy Park she evaded two attempts of being caught for her transmitter change! Kiwi releases in Egmont National Park will be commencing in the near future. All kiwi at Bushy Park are healthy with one kiwi already at 1kg.



Bushy Park training course

Check out our website www.taranakikiwi.org.nz for the latest information