



Newsletter

Issue: 62
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Welcome to our first issue of 2011

And again... dogs

Thanks to one of our very vigilant volunteers, Department of Conservation warranted officers have spoken to a group of people who had an unauthorised dog in the Flora area.

Our volunteer SB saw a group of young guys walking into the park from the Flora Car Park, with a dog. The dog wasn't even on a leash. She kindly, but firmly, told them that dogs were not allowed in the park and explained that there were kiwi in the area. She also pointed out the sign on the gate, to reinforce her point. After some discussion, the group decided to put the dog in the car and returned into the park. SB got a photo of the car with the dog in it, and a photo of the car registration. She rang DOC to report the incident. The following morning, a team of DOC staff (amongst which, were two warrant officers) went up there for a days work, and found the car still there.. but empty. The group was found at the Flora Hut, along with the dog. An investigation is now in progress.

Scarlet Surprise! – Chris Potter

One of the highlights for the A line team this month was noticing tiny points of colour on 'our' mistletoe. It's a small scarlet mistletoe hanging from a silver beech near A22 – that's half way to Mt Arthur hut – and it was only spotted a couple of years ago. Since then it has looked increasingly healthy, no doubt thanks to the absence of possums, but this is the first time we have seen it flowering. There were no fewer than 3 scarlet buds waiting for a bellbird (with a long memory!) to pop them and get at the nectar.

On the one hand it's tragic to think that even 50 years ago we would have seen splashes of mistletoe colour throughout this forest – but we chose to see these 3 buds as another tiny sign that FoF's pest control is making a difference, not only for the birds.

If you have spotted any other mistletoe in the Flora area please let us know via the FoF

website www.fof.org.nz (Scarlet mistletoe, *Peraxilla colensoi*, prefers silver beech as a host).

Bikes on Flora road

The Department of Conservation has authorised a 3 year trial for mountain bikes on the Flora road. It is very important for both cyclists and volunteers driving vehicles on this road that all safety precautions are adhered to for the safety of all.

Important: All FoF volunteers driving a 4 wheel drive vehicle on the Flora road must have their lights on at all times.

Kiwi Update — Sandy & Robin Toy

There have been several dog incidents in the Flora over the last month, so it seems timely to share a few thoughts on dogs and kiwi.

- Kiwis are smelly and dogs find the smell irresistible;
- As the kiwi's chest structure is very fragile with no wing muscles to protect it, it can be crushed easily. A dog can kill a kiwi by just picking it up in its mouth;
- All dogs, regardless of size, breeding or training, are potential kiwi killers. Kiwi aversion training reduces the chance a dog will go for a kiwi, it doesn't mean it won't;
- Even dogs trained and certified to help kiwi workers are muzzled when working – just in case;
- In August-September 1987, a single dog running wild in the Waitangi State Forest killed an estimated 500 kiwi.



With few exceptions (SAR dogs, DOC dogs, guide dogs), dogs are not allowed in the National Park. So, if you encounter a dog in the park, talk to the owner. Tell them about the threat dogs pose to kiwi. Ask them to take their dog out of the park. Plead with them to put it on a lead. Try to get:



- The owner's name;
- The dog's licence number;
- The number plate of the owner's car (if you don't know which car, record the plates of all cars in the car park);
- A description of the owner and dog.

Write all this down, if you can take photos- great. Don't antagonise the owner, but the more information you get the better the chance of a good outcome for kiwi. Under the National Parks

Act, anyone in charge of a dog in a National Park may be fined up to \$10,000 and face 12 months imprisonment.

As soon as you get coverage phone the Doc hotline: **0800 362 468**. Put this number in your mobile.

Fortunately all our kiwi appear to be OK, but if dogs are in the park, it can only be a matter of time. Keep vigilant – **Report all dogs!**

Kiwi call counts in the Cobb Valley

Friends of Cobb, in association with Friends of Flora, are organising kiwi call counts in the Cobb Valley. The hope is to get a better feel for numbers and sex of kiwi in that area. This information will be of value to FoF, because we may learn that natural immigration from the Cobb will boost our translocated population in the Flora, which would affect our future planning.

On selected nights, we will station up to 10 groups, each of 2 people, at specific points along the Cobb Valley. For 2 hours, starting 45 minutes after sunset, we will record all kiwi heard. Then

If you would like to be involved, please contact Sandy & Robin at twotoys@xtra.co.nz or 03 528 8843

depending on which station we'll either walk out, camp or stay in a hut (or the Cobb hydro houses).

We hope the first count will be on 12th February. This is, of course, subject to good weather. Training in the count technique will be provided on the afternoon preceding the count, but it is really important that all counters are familiar with calls of great spotted kiwi and birds with which their calls may be confused. Check out: <http://www.fof.org.nz/rorea%20project.html>

Thank you Ewing's! – Chris Potter

A great partnership came to an end late last year when FoF used its last white egg in a stoat trap and switched to Erayz8 baits. Since 2002, the first year of trapping beside the Flora track, the folk at Ewings Poultry have provided all of the fresh eggs so carefully placed in the traps – and they have all been donated! Ewings decided to support the fledgling Friends of Flora back when we only needed 7 dozen eggs a month and stayed with us as the number grew to over 40 dozen a month. This clearly amounts to an extremely generous donation for which we are very grateful. It has been a fine example of the ideal of local business and volunteers combining in support of conservation.

December's catch results:

We are very pleased to be able to report that the expected influx of stoats didn't eventuate, with very low catches - some lines having no kills at all. 8 stoats, 10 rats, 4 possums and 1 goat

YES – a goat! This is our first goat kill in our ten years! This is how it happened;

Ed Te Groen and Michael Douglas were setting and baiting our new D line near Balloon Hut when they saw 5 goats. One of the goats was in quite a mangy condition. Ed reports; 'Michael responded swiftly, chased down the goat and despatched it with his trusty knife' – to add another pest to the FoF kills.

What's that plant?

Astelia nervosa



The Astelia belongs to the Lilly Family: **Liliaceae**. The Genus Astelia has 25 species throughout the Pacific Ocean, and 13 of them are in New Zealand – 7 of which reach the alpine zone. One of these, *Astelia nervosa* can be seen on most of our trap line areas above the bushline. It is very distinctive with its silver/grey tomentose (fluffy) leaves standing out amongst the red tussock. When encountering a hillside of these beautiful alpine plants, they look as if they are covered in frost. Flower heads are usually small and hidden among the leaves but in female plants fruiting heads become prominent in autumn.

Until next time...

Maryann and Bill
On behalf of the Friends of Flora Team