



Newsletter

Issue: 59

October 2010

Kiwi Update: Sandy Toy

The spring weather was a bit of a shock for both the kiwi and the trackers. There have been 3 good dumps of snow in the last month and our high altitude pair (Parapara and Totaranui) has been right there in it. The radio transmitters give us a 'message' which tells us how long each bird was active for the preceding 14 days. This means we've been able to find out how our snow pair were faring. The data shows they sensibly hunkered down during the biggest storm – they seem very settled now.

Collecting the data is a chilly business when you're standing in the snow with an icy wind blowing – so many thanks to all the tracking team.

Some of the other kiwis are a bit more challenging to find. The limestone country around Gridiron makes tracking tricky, with so many deep gullies for the birds to hide in. We still haven't located our missing bird – Rototai, and Aorere disappeared for awhile. She was eventually located (within the area she was last found), but there are only two very tight areas - on Gordon's Pyramid and 'E' trap line, in which she can be picked up. She seems to be hanging out with Rakopi, the juvenile male!

P Line sorted for summer: Ivan Rogers

Faithful FoF-ers Kim Turner, Ivan Rogers, Andy Woodall and his son Robin, took advantage of a glorious spring day to do the first check of P Line since autumn. Running from Mt Arthur, over Gordon's Pyramid and ending in the bush to join up to D Line, P line is our outer line of defence and exposed to the elements. The team replaced five trap boxes "missing in action", and corrected some numbering anomalies arising from the numbers written on the boxes fading in the extreme UV, rain and snow. As a simple solution, they are now numbered on the inside. The haul was two stoats and a rat, but almost every trap was sprung empty, probably by the elements. The trap check regime is different for P Line – the line is checked every 2 months and not at all in winter.

As team leader, Snow Rooke observes "We have learned from bitter experience not to bother going up there unless the weather is perfect – too often we've been nearly blown off the ridge or only able to check a few traps at each end of the line. The next trap check is December, but we'll take any opportunity the weather offers over weekends in November."



Volunteers not forgotten:

Since the re introduction of the kiwi into the Flora, we have had an influx of volunteers coming forward to help us. This is fabulous, as we always need a good rolling list to cover times over the busy summer months when many of us are busy with work etc. We just wanted to say, if you haven't been called out recently, it is due to either the weather delaying or cancelling trap monitoring, or that we had enough for that particular day. You haven't been forgotten, but may not be called every month. Thank you all so much for your keenness and dedication to saving our native birds.

Friends of Flora Patron:

In this day and age of fighting for every dollar to keep an Incorporation or Trust afloat, it was decided a Patron for FoF could be of a huge benefit, in both raising our profile, and as a help to raise funds, to ensure the continued success of our conservation work.

We felt the best Patron would be someone everyone recognizes, with a high profile, and someone who has a passion for conservation of New Zealand's natural biota. With this in mind, we have asked Helen Clark – and she has very kindly agreed. So...

THANK YOU HELEN!

We will have an overview of Helen on our FoF website soon.

Beech seed; Another Good News – Bad News Story: Chris Potter

The good news is that 2010 was NOT a heavy seeding year for beech trees in the Flora area of Kahurangi. Seedfall was collected at 8 sites on the slopes of Lodestone between March and May – as it was last year – and the results are just back from the counters in Christchurch. This is really good news because a heavy seedfall would probably trigger a plague of rodents, followed inevitably by stoats.

How could this be bad news? The irregular cycle of heavy seeding or masting has been going on here for a very long time, way before the arrival of the furry pests, and it is important for the breeding of some threatened birds. In our case, the kaka and kakariki are affected. They would love a good beech mast – if it wasn't for those blasted rats and mice! Incidentally the seeds of red and hard beech are much larger than those of mountain, black and silver beech and therefore provide much more food for both birds and mice. Hence vermin plagues are more likely to follow red beech masts. Although our seedfall collecting funnels cover the full range, most of the seed we collected this year was from mountain beech.

What's that plant?

Hebe albicans:

This very local Hebe can be found in areas throughout our trapping area. It is endemic to the North West Nelson area, and is commonly called the 'Mt Arthur' Hebe.

H albicans is an extremely variable species, depending on habitat, i.e. lowland, or sub alpine. It includes plants previously placed in H. recurva and H. glaucophylla NW Nelson. It also hybridises with H. calciola and probably

with H. salicifolia, as has been observed in the Cobb Valley.



Hebe albicans

Until next time...

Maryann and Bill

On behalf of the Friends of Flora Team

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