



Newsletter

Issue 90

October 2015

New TK Line established

FoF chairperson Peter Adams reports on our newest trap line:

You won't find Tahi's Knoll (TK) on any map. It is the name of the Friends of Flora's (FOF) new stoat trap line, deep in the Kahurangi National Park. Last month, ten FOF volunteers met up at Pokororo hall in the Motueka Valley at 7.30 on a crisp spring morning for the long drive down the 4WD track up Grahams Valley and down into the Flora stream. Leaving the cars at Horseshoe Creek we then had a 90 minute tramp along the old Barrons Flat track to find the traps, dropped previously by helicopter. Our job was to carry the boxes to the marked trap stations, position them on a level surface and set and bait the traps. Sounds easy? Each box was about a metre long and heavy, so carrying two on your back and one in your arms whilst fighting through deep bush, across un-bridged rivers and over muddy gullies was a good challenge. And before we could even start laying out the traps, other volunteers had made several other trips into Tahi's Knoll, marking out where the trap line should go, cutting a route and attaching tags to trees. Plus organising the helicopters, getting all the boxes into fadges (large canvas bags which are suspended from the helicopter - these are needed as the bush is too dense for the helicopter to land) and being on the ground to unhitch the fadges and stack the boxes ready for today.

But it is all needed as we know there are nesting whio (blue duck) and great spotted kiwi (roroa) in this area, and stoats are their worst enemy, killing the nesting females and chicks. Each box has 2 DOC 150 kill traps baited with Erayz, a sort of rabbit jerky, which is irresistible to stoats. There are now almost 1200 stoat traps protecting 8000 hectares of native bush and tablelands in the Flora and Salisbury area and FOF has a hardcore team of volunteers checking trap lines and monitoring kiwi every month. We also have great support from DOC Motueka and local funding agencies - the Genesis Whioforever fund paid for the traps for Tahi's Knoll. After a long walk back to the cars we got home at 6.30, so a long but very worthwhile day.

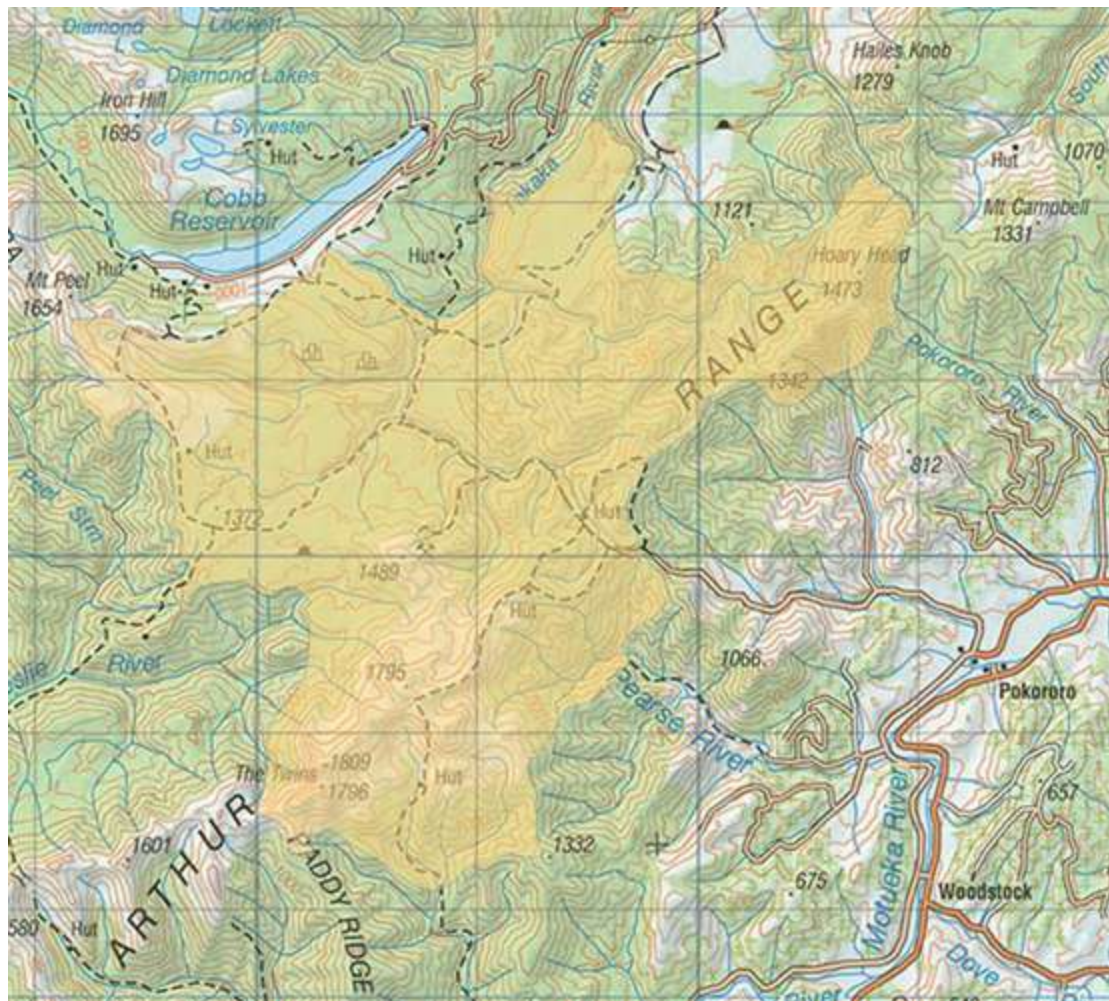


Look at all those uniforms: Safety briefing prior to the TK expedition.

Salisbury block Ecological Management Unit fascinating facts

Sandy Toy uncovers some surprises:

FOF's project area forms a large part of DOC's 14,500 ha Salisbury Ecological Management Unit (EMU – see yellow area on the map below) and is a priority for ecosystem restoration. With funding from the Jasmine Charitable Trust (see below) Friends of Flora has compiled information from published and unpublished sources on the ecological values of the Salisbury EMU. What makes the EMU really special is the range of communities that reflect the geological diversity of the site, and the associated extraordinarily high number (69) of threatened and at risk species. With FOF's ecological values document in hand, DOC can now produce a comprehensive long term management plan for the EMU



In future newsletters we will feature some of the specialities of the EMU. This time we focus on the giant carnivorous snails. You will probably have seen the shells of *Powelliphanta hochsteteri hochsteteri* in the bush, sadly usually empty having been predated. However, you may not know that the Flora hosts another type of giant snail that is even more rare and only known from the EMU, *Powelliphanta* “Lodestone”. This snail occurs only around the bush line on marble substrates. It is a much smaller snail (maximum diameter 41 mm; height 18 mm compared with 75 mm diameter and 35 mm height for the bush snail) with a very low spire and rather flattened appearance.

The background colour of the shell is a khaki-yellow, but this is overlain with numerous dark purplish brown axial stripes, whereas the stripes on the bush snail spiral around the shell. The photos below show the two different snails. Keep an eye open for “Lodestone” if you’re near the bush line and take a photo of any snail that you find and if possible GPS the location. Do not remove any shells from the bush and please make sure that any snails found are placed safely back under cover – they are very vulnerable to predation and drying out.



Above: *Powelliphanta hochsteteri hochsteteri* Below: *Powelliphanta* “Lodestone”

Who is the Jasmine Trust?



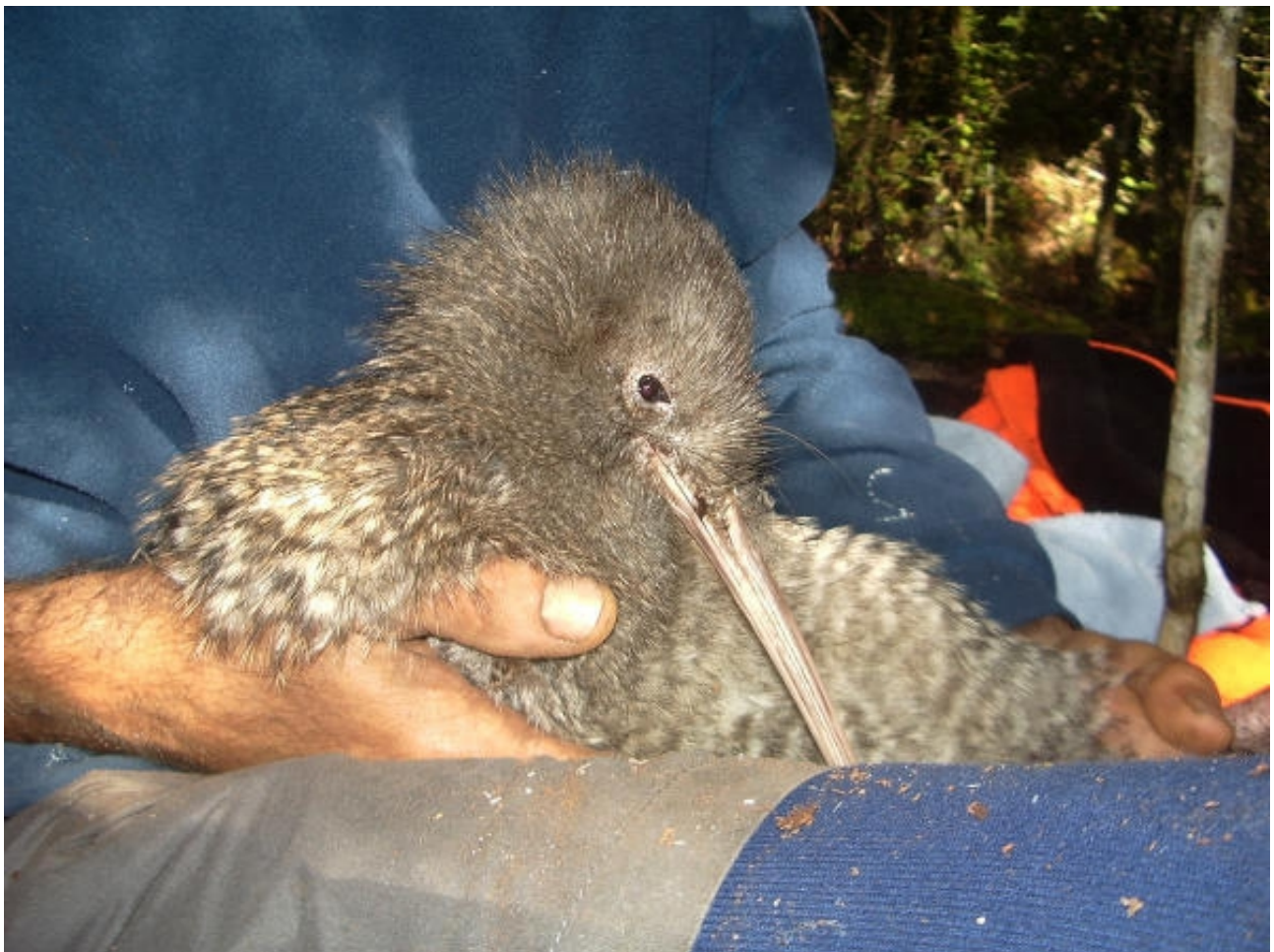
The Jasmine Charitable Trust (Jasmine Social Investments) is a New Zealand registered charitable foundation established by Sam Morgan following the sale of Trade Me to Fairfax Media in 2006. Their stated goal is to "*have a portfolio of high impact social organizations and to help other high net wealth individuals and foundations to give effectively*". The Jasmine Charitable Trust supports the work of Friends of Flora. For more information see <http://www.jasmine.org.nz>

Kiwi update October 2015

More on our kiwi from Robin and Sandy Toy:

It's all go with the kiwi in the Flora. There are already seven pairs incubating. We are again monitoring breeding success using trail cameras and interesting videos are rolling in, including deer posing on top of a nest. Interestingly, one incubating pair is a new partnership. The map below tells the story. The female, Torongangara has lived at the bottom of Deep Creek for the last couple of years and has hatched two chicks with her mate, Whakangangahu. Then, last winter, Whakangangahu took off and very rapidly hooked up with Te Kau, a female on the other side of the valley. Torongangara hung around for a bit and then disappeared, until found by Sandra apparently on the east side of the Takaka River. Crossing the Takaka in this gorge-like stretch in the middle of winter is an impressive undertaking for a human let alone a kiwi! But sure enough we've now tracked her down to the lower Grecian paired up with a tiny male called Tahi. After only a few

weeks together they are now incubating – that new TK trap line went in just in time! Tahi (pictured below at his last transmitter change) is the smallest kiwi in the Flora weighing just 2150 g compared with Torongangara's 3300 g.



Little Tahi of Tahi's Knoll fame

Whio nesting now

FoF Secretary Ivan Rogers on his beloved whio:

October is right in the middle of the whio nesting season of August through to December. Nests are made near to the water in tussocks, under beech roots and in natural caves and hollows. Up to six, and rarely seven, creamy white eggs are laid and incubated by the female for 35 days. The male does his bit by standing guard on the water adjacent to the nest. The nesting female and her eggs are hugely vulnerable to predation from stoats and weka. After hatching the ducklings are led down to the water and start to feed themselves under the close supervision of their parents. The ducklings are vulnerable to drowning in high water as the parents seem to lead them down no matter what the river is doing. The Flora Stream and the nearby Grecian Stream are now home to at least 12 pairs of whio. Friends of Flora will be monitoring this season's breeding success by conducting walk-through surveys in December and February.



Mother whio with week-old ducklings. Photo: Department of Conservation