



Newsletter

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Kiwi update

Foxholes and foxgloves with Robin and Sandy

Transmitter change season has started. Most kiwi burrows are small enough that we can reach in and catch the bird, but sometimes we have to dig a 'window' to extract them through. Occasionally a burrow is so big we have to go in and capture the bird as the series of photo attests – not for the claustrophobic!



All chicks hatched to transmitter-ed birds this season are still alive. The oldest is now 15 weeks, the youngest only 6 weeks. Check out the latest video of Whakangangahu and Te Kau's chick being 'guarded' by Whakangangahu and eight days later pushing its mum around

<https://www.facebook.com/friendsofflora/videos/1524066417603460/>.

Whilst changing transmitters we checked out one of the very special wetlands in the Greater Flora area and were delighted to find the shy foxglove, *Ourisia modesta*. It's a very discrete little foxglove, definitely a botanist's plant, so it was especially

gratifying to find a single flower. The shy foxglove is critically endangered, and the Flora area is a national stronghold. Unfortunately the wetland this wee plant was growing in is severely pugged by deer and pigs –within a few metres of the plants.



Modest indeed : *Ourisia modesta* pics by Sandy Toy

FOF new directions

Vollies shape future for FOF

Friends of Flora hosted a well-attended "Future Directions" hui at the Ngatimoti Community Rooms on 3 December last year. Aply facilitated by Sandy Toy, the hui drew together the thinking of volunteers to decide what, if any, new activities the group had the ability and enthusiasm to pursue. The need for the hui arose from the Ecological Management Unit status afforded the Salisbury EMU (essentially the "greater" Flora) and the findings of the week of intensive flora and fauna survey last February leading to the Flora Treasures document. By the end of the day a way forward had emerged, the key points being:

- Expansion of FOF activities into the alpine zone
- Expansion of our trap network into the Grecian to protect kiwi and whio
- Itemising all our projects, along with those of DOC, nominating a lead person and costing, which may lead to:
- Looking at a contracted or employed co-ordinator for the group

DOC Alpine Research Project

Lesley Hadley joins an alpine expedition

Stoat predation is not only implicated in the decline of many native species in forest, coastal, wetland and riverine habitat, but also in the alpine tussock grasslands. Alpine ecosystems comprise more than 18% of mainland NZ and the DOC Terrestrial Ecosystems Unit are in the process of developing tools with which to understand the impacts of introduced predators in the alpine zone.

For a week in January Jamie McAulay was based at Balloon hut with a field team of 3 volunteers (from FOF, Friends Of Cobb and a traveller) collecting data for his MSc at

Otago University as part of this DOC alpine research project. The work involved mist-netting alpine passerines, trapping mice, rats and possums, and collecting samples of invertebrates, fruit, seeds etc.

Jamie's project uses a "stable isotope analysis" technique to explore how stoat diet varies individually, regionally and seasonally across the alpine zone. He has 3 study sites (Nelson Lakes, Kahurangi, Haast range, Murchison mountains) and the work involves collecting tissue from *anything* that a stoat may consume. Different tissue types (blood, muscle, hair etc) take up isotopes at different speed and later in the lab, the diet of one individual stoat over varying time periods can be determined by analysing the stored isotopes. Previously the actual stomach contents were the only indication of the stoat diet.

The week was really enjoyable and interesting. The night hunting for invertebrates was pretty exciting specially as the beautiful black and gold "tree weta" we found, were later identified as juvenile *Deinacrida Tibiospina*, the Nelson alpine giant weta. Last year FOF had an FTT line to confirm a small DT presence on the Arthur Range. FOC had regularly been night hunting at Lake Henderson and never found DT (until later in January this year when they also found juvenile DT). FOF has decided to repeat the FTT line this year to see if there is a change in DT presence density.

Many FOF trappers have collected stoat carcasses during their trap checks and left them in the FOF shed freezer These carcasses have been invaluable to the research and Jamie is extremely appreciative of FOFer's help. He has left some labels in our shed for more stoat carcass collection as he's especially interested in *where* the stoat is caught.



Mist netting at Balloon hut

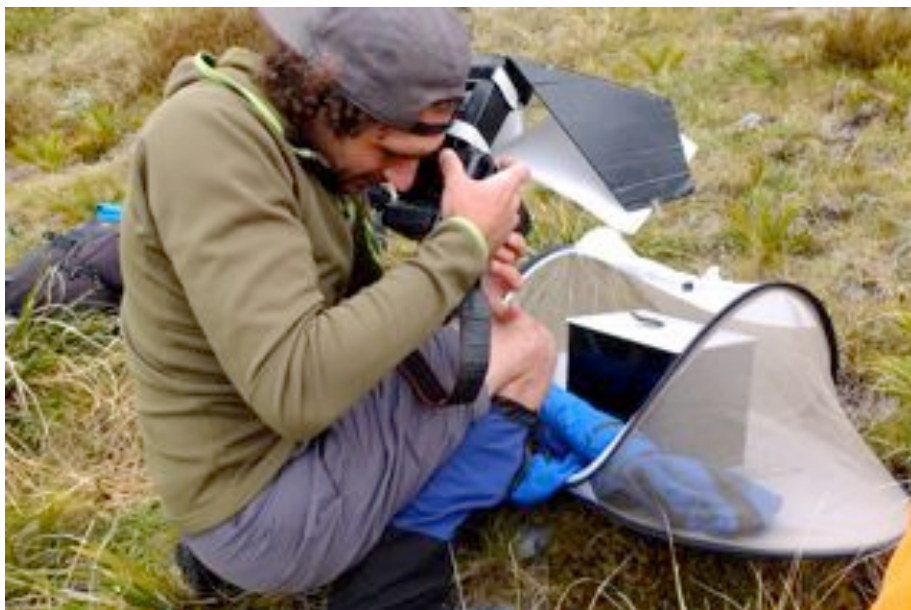


Redpoll ready for blood sampling. Pics: Lesley Hadley

FOF-ers lend their hands for new field guide

Continuing the alpine theme, Ivan writes:

New Years Day saw FOF's Ivan Rogers and Lesley Hadley assisting Dylan van Winkel to catch alpine lizards to photograph for a new field guide to New Zealand's reptiles. It turned out to be a productive day with several examples of both a skink - *Oligosoma* "Mt Arthur" and a gecko - *Woodworthia* "Kahurangi" captured and (briefly) detained for photography in Dylan's portable studio. There is uncertainty as to what species the skinks, robust and rather gorgeous with turquoise eyes and daintily striped toes, actually are. The new book, to be published later this year, is different from previous guides in that along with pictures of the animals in natural poses further pictures will be included of the lizards in all aspects against a plain white background to aid identification. Hence, Dylan's studio. The animals are placed on a translucent perspex box with a slave flash unit inside.



The photographer: Dylan at work (pic by Ivan)



The subject: Oligosoma "Mt Arthur" (pic by Dylan)

Better breeding for Flora whio

Relief after disappointment for FOF's whio folk

This summer's walk-through whio surveys took place in the Grecian Stream (mid December) and Flora Stream (Christmas Eve and late January). The Grecian survey, again led by Paul Ewers, revealed six pairs but regrettably no ducklings. The first Flora survey raised concerns when only 2 pairs (one with a Class 3 duckling) and a single bird were encountered. The sighting of the duckling, however, prompted a further survey a few weeks later, with better results. This time 4 pairs (two of which had one duckling and one pair with two Class 4s) and a single adult revealed themselves. This recruitment, although modest, is an improvement on last year's result of no ducklings at all. Thanks to all those who took part: Paul, Shaun, Deane, Pamela, Sam, Birgit, the Bridges, Andy, the Wildlands students and apologies to anyone I've omitted.



Class 3 whio duckling - 1st feathers appear on shoulder and flank



Class 4 whio duckling - down recedes from face and the body is mostly feathered

