



Newsletter

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Chair's Report

Peter Adams

It has been yet another busy year for Friends of Flora. We completed the laying out of two new trap lines and gained three additional lines donated from Bush and Beyond. This has completed our trap network – we now have some 1125 stoat traps protecting over 8000ha. The organising and ongoing checking of all these traps has become a major job; and we must give enormous thanks to everyone involved. The effectiveness of the stoat control has been shown via our annual whio survey – 5 pairs, 13 ducklings and a lone male.

In May, 8 kiwis were translocated from the Upper Roaring Lion. A total of 32 kiwis have been translocated into the area since May 2010. Five pairs initiated breeding attempts and cameras suggest four of the nests successfully hatched a chick. None of the chicks have been sighted since they left the nest. DoC's Kiwi Recovery Group recently endorsed the work we have done and recommended we look to translocate another 8-10 birds over the next two years.

Many thanks to everyone involved in the kiwi monitoring and translocations and for the financial support we get from NZ Lotteries, World Wildlife Fund, Kiwi for Kiwis, Canterbury Environmental Trust and Birdlife International.

The Friends of Flora Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 6 May. All current office bearers were re-elected and two new members are welcomed onto the committee – Lesley Hadley and Nettie Stow. The two members standing down are Maryann Ewers and Pamela Jenkins. We extend a big thank you to Maryann for her many years hard work on the committee in various positions. We also thank Pamela for all her hard work with the operations team and on the committee, over the last 4 years

Operations Report

Bill Rooke

As many of you will know, the Graham Valley Road is again closed, this time due to a major wash out of the road at the same place as the slip. So, once again it is proving very difficult to gain access to our trap lines, involving a day's walk from the Cobb Valley side. It should be noted that in March, 12 of the 19 lines were checked, but in April only 7 lines were checked due mainly to the Flora road closure. The results available for March and April show a gradual increase in rat catches, which is to be expected in this masting year, but is not yet at a worrying level. Stoat numbers are however way down on last year. There has been some talk that this may be due to the baits we are using, but last month eggs were used on a section of R line that often has stoat catches and nothing was caught. Friends of Cobb have also reported low stoat kills this summer, but a steady increase in rat kills. In the last two months 5 stoats, 40 rats, 7 mice and 2 possums were caught.



Having volunteered to check T and Little D lines, two people, including a new volunteer Chris (pictured), set out for the Tablelands early last Tuesday morning. Quite a heavy snowfall the night before demonstrated that the summer was over, and made for some crispy walking.

We had been told that T line was catching quite a few stoats, however we had no catches at all on this trip. These lines need to be tracked via GPS, and Chris had done a great job getting all the way points prepared, so we were able to find the traps hidden among the tussock and alpine scrub reasonably easily. We enjoyed our adventure very much, with lovely views of Mt Arthur, the Twins and all the mountain panorama around us. The setting sun light on Mt Arthur was especially beautiful. We were even happier when we found that the gas heater in Balloon Hut was working! (pictures below by Chris Ecroyd)



Kiwi Update

Sandy Toy

The kiwi continue to surprise us. We're well into the annual transmitter change programme with some interesting results. Pikipiko and Pakawau were holed up in a massive cave of a burrow (see photo below). Robin disappeared completely inside, followed by Lesley. Sandra & I wandered where they'd gone for a while, but then they started passing kiwi back down the human chain!



The bottom end of Ghost Creek is the place to be if you're a kiwi. It's also a great place to camp – we had a male who keeping us awake all night! There are currently 7 or 8 kiwi hanging out in a relatively small area. Whitu (a male brought in from New Creek last year) appears to have ousted Rakopi and paired up with Aorere (both from Clark River).

A second New Creek/ Clark River pairing is Anatori and Korowhiti. Korowhiti was brought back to the Flora from Mt. McMahon in the spring so it was a very pleasant surprise to find her with Anatori. It was great to learn that all the kiwi translocated from New Creek last March have put on weight over the last year despite the dry summer. We're hopeful that they will finally settle into home ranges over the coming months.

Rua, one of the New Creek wandering females was finally brought back from Baron's Flat where she was at risk from pig dogs and has now joined the Ghost Creek party. A huge thanks to DOC staff from Rotoiti as well as Andy, Lesley and Alan for helping with the successful rescue expedition. Thanks to Jenny and Piers McLaren for access to Barons Flat. Thanks also to Don Grant and Dan Oakley whose flying has enabled us to keep tabs on Rua over recent months while she was miles away.



Five FoFers attended the recent national kiwi hui in Queenstown. The hui is organised by Kiwis for Kiwi in partnership with DOC and is a fantastic opportunity to share experience with other kiwi practitioners and learn from their experience. There was a great presentation about the problems faced by a population of little spotted kiwi which have undergone a major genetic 'bottle neck'.

Genetic considerations are clearly important when trying to re-establish kiwi populations, including that in the Flora. The Alan Wilson Centre at Victoria University is currently extracting genetic material from feathers contributed from kiwi in the Flora as well as kiwi elsewhere in their range which should give us a much better understanding of the genetic diversity within great spotted kiwi as a whole and how that of the kiwi in the Flora compares. There were also some fascinating talks about kiwi advocacy. Apparently, kiwi are the second most sought-out creature in the Smithsonian zoo after the giant panda!

Graham Valley Road

Pamela Jenkins

Unfortunately the Graham Valley Road slip has slipped again in its usual place, as well as substantial damage further down at the North / South Branch (*see pictures below by Peter Olorenshaw*). This has come a little earlier than previous years and again we all have to face the challenge of how to continue our work in the Flora as best possible. If previous years are anything to go by the hardy FoFer won't be put off! It makes for an incredibly long day, or even weekend, but a drive over to the Cobb Valley is one way of getting round it. There is only one more line check left for most of us this season, so let's hope by August that the road becomes passable again.

We are still short of a line leader for two of our lines on the Tablelands. Various volunteers have been filling in each month for the last few months, but this takes quite a bit of time for us to organise every month. So please, if you or anyone you know are interested in taking on this role please contact us.



Flora Whio continue to thrive.

Ivan Rogers



FoF observers conducted the annual walk through whio survey on February 1 this year. The survey covers the Flora Stream from the Flora Hut down to Upper Junction (Balloon confluence). Whio seem to have firmly established themselves in the Flora after reintroductions in 2006 of birds from the nearby Pearse River. Although a healthy resident population was present in the 1990s, pressure from predators meant whio had become locally extinct by 2004. Due to our expanding trapping efforts, for the last three years multiple breeding pairs with juveniles have been encountered during the annual survey. This year no less than 4

pairs and 1 single male were encountered. Better still, 2 of the pairs had broods of 4 and 5

juveniles respectively (*see Paul Ewers photo above*). A further pair with 4 juveniles known to observers did not reveal themselves to the observers, no doubt feeding or roosting up a sidestream. Thanks to Paul, Becky, John, Tobias, Andy and Ivan for conducting this year's survey.

Letter from Lynne Callister

I walked over Mt Lodestone yesterday along with 18 other members of the 50+ Walking Group and felt the need to make contact with you to say how much we appreciate the efforts that you have gone to in restoring the birdlife in this area. I (personally) have never heard such a joyous chorus of birdsong in all my years of tramping. The New Zealand bush has been just too quiet for my liking and this has totally dismayed me. Yesterday's loud chorus of birdsong totally blew my socks off and filled my heart with joy!!! It was so noticeable particularly in two areas on both our climb up (from the car park) and down (to Flora Hut) that many of us were literally falling over ourselves to record the chorus on our cameras. Although it was mainly bellbirds we also sighted tomtits, robins, fantail and wood pigeon.

On our walk out to the car park from Flora Hut (where we stopped for afternoon tea) a vehicle passed us with volunteers heading into the area to set/check traps. Although we didn't get a chance to speak to these people we would like to pass on our heartfelt thanks to them and everyone else involved in this worthwhile conservation effort. Your hard work is paying off and we certainly were on the receiving end and reaping the rewards yesterday!!! I can't thank you enough.

I have forwarded a donation this morning and although just a token offering I know that every dollar helps.

My thanks and warmest regards, Lynn Callister

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