



# Newsletter

Issue: 77

Jan/Feb 2013

## Chair's Report

*Peter Adams*

Everything is under way for our second translocation of great spotted kiwi into the Flora over the next two months.

Robin and Sandy have done a sterling job in leading the surveys of the potential catch sites. In addition, they have put together the very complex plans to make the translocation happen – organising people, helicopters, gear and all the other hundreds of other bits and pieces. Thanks guys – we know we are in your debt!

In addition, thanks for the many other volunteers who have put in their time on the surveys, digging burrows and who will help out with the kiwi capture and release.

We are planning two translocations, one in March and one in April, with a welcome ceremony for the first kiwi at the Marae in Motueka on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March.

Later this year, the Animal Health Board (AHB) are planning a 1080 drop over a large area from Barrons Flat into part of the Flora trapping area. In partnership with DOC, we have agreed to support the AHB to extend the 1080 drop to cover the whole of the Flora trapping area below the treeline.

We see this as an opportunity to significantly reduce the number of mice, rats and possum in the Flora, as our regular trapping program has a minimal impact on these species. This will benefit smaller birds such as robins and kakariki, Powelliphanta snails and flora such as rata and mistletoes.

## High Stoat Kills

*Bill Rooke*

Stoat kills over the past few months have been at record levels and there are some interesting statistics. When FOF extended its lines to include areas above the bushline there was some concern that it may not be warranted, as stoats don't travel that high. What we are in fact finding is that these lines are delivering our highest trapping percentages. Last month over 50 stoats were caught above the bushline on FOF's western flank (35 on the Tablelands). In contrast our Eastern side is catching about the average for this time of year, which is way below the number in the higher areas. It appears that these outer lines are holding back an invasion from the interior of the Park where there is no pest control. The good news is that so far the Flora Valley is not recording high catch numbers, which goes well for our Kiwi Chick, the Whio and all the other birds. We are hoping we have weathered the storm. This coming months trap check will show if we have.

The results of recent foot print tracking tunnels in the Flora area showed 3.3% tracking for rats, 19% for mice and nil for stoats. In contrast, Doc have recorded 60% rat tracking in the Leslie/Karamea area which may account for the high stoat kills in the Tablelands area. Stoats feed on rats

and multiply.

FoFers recently carried out a Whio Survey in the Flora Stream area from Flora Hut to Aitkin's crossing. Eighteen birds were observed (6 pairs, 5 juveniles, 1 single male).

This is great news as most surveys never pick up all the birds and there have been others observed in recent times in side streams.

Many thanks to all the FoFers who took part in the Whio survey, FTTs, and Kiwi burrow dig last month. Great organising by Pete, Pam, and Paul.

### **Aerial 1080 Operation**

The Animal Health Board (AHB) and Department of Conservation (DOC), with support from Friends of Flora (FoF), are carrying out an aerial 1080 operation later this year. The area of operation is approximately 13.5 thousand hectares and extends from Barron Flat in the north, to the northern flanks of Gordon's Pyramid in the south. The area excludes the open area of the Tableland.

Most of the area is included in the AHB's TB Free eradication programme of over 12 thousand hectares. DOC decided this is a chance to clear the remainder of area (1,500 hectares) of possums, rats and mice. FoF supports this action as our current trapping program is aimed mainly at stoats and we know that rats and possum are significant predators of smaller birds, eggs and the rare Powelliphanta snails. In addition, possum do ongoing damage to the ecosystem through destruction of flora such as mistletoes and rata.

In addition, the drop will kill any stoats in the area who feed on the poisoned rats and mice.

The timing of the operation will depend on whether or not our 2013 FTT's suggest we are having a beech mast this year. Our February results show low numbers, but we will do another FTT check in May and, if necessary, early August. If we deem there is a possibility of a mast, the optimum time for the operation will be the end of October. Otherwise, the operation will go ahead about August/September, when there are less members of the public around and the weather is more stable. There will be a pre-feed dropped two weeks before the toxin bait.

Friends of Flora have offered both our financial and moral support for this project. We will pay for half of the costs for the additional southern section of the operation. We have some funding which has been donated specifically for this.

The Animal Health Board is holding an information day where the public is welcome to discuss the TBfree New Zealand 2013 Tasman bovine tuberculosis (TB) control programme.

Speak with staff and contractors about how the control of TB will benefit the wider community and protect the region's pastoral agricultural sector.

A series of short presentations about the programme will start at 6pm. Display material on the upcoming control operations will be available. Admission free.

### **Golden Bay information day:**

**Where:** Upper Takaka Hall, Upper Takaka

**When:** Wednesday 13 March 2013 anytime from 5.30pm – 7.30pm

### **Motueka information day:**

**Where:** Motueka Community House, Decks Reserve, Motueka

**When:** Thursday 14 March 2013 anytime from 5.30pm – 7.30pm

**For further information**, please contact the Animal Health Board on **03 769 9098**

**Kiwi Update**

*Sandy and Robin Toy*

What an eventful couple of months it has been!

The last of the kiwi call-count surveys of potential source sites for the forthcoming kiwi translocations was completed on Christmas Eve. A huge thank you to Wayne Pratt of Karamea Helicopters for generously sponsoring the survey and for getting us safely out of the hills in time for Christmas. The good news is that there are high kiwi densities at Gunner Downs. At one spot Robin recorded an astounding 13.3 kiwi calls an hour. However, it's very difficult country to operate in with impenetrable sub-alpine scrub surrounding beautiful tussock bowls. The kiwi feed in the tussock at night but retreat into the scrub to roost during the day, making taking kiwi from this a logistical nightmare. Thanks to Paul for sitting up late, fighting through tight scrub and for some great video footage.

Having recovered from the rigours of Gunner Downs we headed up to the Flora just after Christmas to check on the incubating kiwi. Great excitement: Anatori had stayed at home on the night of 16 December indicating that the egg had hatched. We removed the infrared camera and when we analysed the footage there was a video clip of a chick bumbling around outside the nest on Christmas day! After more than 11 years of trapping stoats in the Flora, a kiwi chick is a great reward for all the FOF volunteers.

Unfortunately the other incubations were less successful. Waiharakeke abandoned his nest a few days before we expected the egg to hatch. Investigation showed the egg was inviable. Pikopiko and Pakawau had another attempt at incubating but gave up after only a few weeks. The other sad news is that Patoto, the male without a mate died shortly before Christmas. The post-mortem results are inconclusive but neither disease nor predation were the cause of death.

We are now in the final stages of planning to move up to 20 more kiwi into the Flora area. This will involve expeditions at New Creek, Upper Roaring Lion and Discovery Creek. Amongst the huge list of preparatory tasks we've had some entertaining moments such as preparing burrows to temporarily house the new arrivals. It's surprisingly difficult to find a nice dry, spacious hole in the ground! We've had a team practice transferring birds between transport boxes and bags– not using kiwi but very obliging substitutes - Coralie Grooby's beautiful chooks.

Many thanks to Rowan Boot and Monique Patterson at Custom Canvas for discounting the cost of making special kiwi carry bags 'to contribute in a small way to your project and to show our appreciation for the work you do in our local national park'. It's great to receive this support.

### **Kiwi powhiri at Te Awhina Marae**

All Friends of Flora volunteers and supporters are welcome to attend the welcoming ceremony for the first kiwi captured, at the Te Awhina Marae on March 22, starting at 1 pm. Anyone who has not been on the Marae before will need to be welcomed on (with the kiwi).

For those of you looking to attend this event, can you please let Maryann know by March 17, for catering purposes. Email: [maryann@bushandbeyond.co.nz](mailto:maryann@bushandbeyond.co.nz)

There is also an opportunity for someone from FoF to speak during the powhiri about the project and the translocation (about 5 – 10 mins). If anyone is interested in doing so, can you please also let Maryann know.

### **Who's that FoFer?**

*Lesley Hadley*



Lesley is another hardworking member of FoF. She joined in 2006 and now co-ordinates the Lodestone trapping line, and also helps with kiwi monitoring and translocations. She has also done her time on the FoF committee and enjoys working as part of a group and being part of a bigger operating organisation.

Lesley helps with general community liaison events such as any school groups who might want to do a special school project on pest control for example, or learn about the bush in general. She has also helped with fund raising and other events trying to raise community awareness.

Lesley is an experienced trumper, and a longstanding member of Forest and Bird, and brings all her outdoor knowledge and skills to FoFing. One of her favourite activities is bivvying out all night surrounded by her picnic, lots of warm clothes, and the telemetry device, and listening for kiwi every 20 mins (set the alarm clock!). Here you can watch the light change over the mountains and see the dawn come, and hear weka, morepork as well as kiwi. There is also the regular kiwi monitoring during the day, which also involves taking a bearing to find out where the kiwi have moved to. Apparently kiwi do not sleep in the same burrow each night (except when nesting), and move about so we need to be able to follow them on their travels. Anaweka has a reputation as being a kiwi with attitude, as she may gently wander off, and keep moving, when she hears a human armed with a fresh transmitter battery coming, for example.

Lesley has also helped with special surveys including with rock wrens, Powelliphanta, kea and stitchbirds on Little Barrier Island. On these surveys there seem to be quite a lot of young people getting involved in this type of conservation work, which is great news. These young people are often doing post-graduate study.

FoF plans to carry out another kiwi translocation in March/April. Lesley will be involved with this big event. In order to practice holding kiwi properly and putting a transmitter on their leg, and putting them into a bag, Lesley and other helpers practice on her neighbour's finest chooks. Above is a photo of Lesley (on the left, with Sandy on the right) with one of her neighbour's quite friendly chickens. The chooks behaved admirably, and hopefully were well rewarded for their patience and forbearance.

Chicken poo isn't as bad as kiwi poo, as apparently this smells utterly disgusting, and is very strong and acidic. Also, any tools or clothes that come into contact with the chooks must either be changed or sterilized because of the likelihood of any bird disease being transferred to kiwi.

## **DOC Courses**

You may or may not know this, but DOC offers a number of training courses to the public to encourage community participation in conservation. These include online courses that can be done by anyone, anytime, free of charge; and field courses for anyone that works or wants to work or volunteer in conservation (this includes DOC staff). Many of the field courses are also free.

During 2013 the following field courses are scheduled to be held in Nelson:

- Plant Identification 7-8 May
- First Aid in the Outdoors 11-12 June
- Five Minute Bird Counts 23-24 July
- Animal Pest Control Methods 10-13 September
- 20 x 20 Plots and Reconnaissance Descriptions 17-19 September

Further information on all of the courses can be found on the DOC website

at [www.doc.govt.nz/getting-involved/get-trained/](http://www.doc.govt.nz/getting-involved/get-trained/); and anyone who's interested can register online at [www.doc.govt.nz/getting-involved/get-trained/field-based-courses/registration-form/](http://www.doc.govt.nz/getting-involved/get-trained/field-based-courses/registration-form/)

### ***Letter from Margaret Besier***

We have received a lovely letter (and donation) from Margaret Besier which, with Margaret's permission, we have reproduced here:

*"Dear Friends of Flora,*

*Last week I tramped onto the Tablelands with friends & I was excited & overwhelmed by the birdlife we heard & saw. The beech forest was alive with birdsong throughout the day. It has been about 5 years since I last tramped there so I was so happy to observe the fruits of your hard work & passion for re-establishing birds into our backyard national park. Thank you. Regards, Margaret Besier."*

Thank you very much Margaret for your support.

We would also like to thank the Motueka Lionesses and Lions, and the Motueka Valley Assn. for their recent donations and support.

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