



# Newsletter

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**Issue: 71**  
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## **Chair's Report**

*Peter Adams*

Welcome all FoFers to 2012. I hope you all had a happy and safe new year, hopefully enjoying the great outdoors somewhere. This year will be a busy one for FoF not only with maintaining our trap lines but also with any potential beech mast. The Ops report below indicates that stoats are on the move up into the Flora, so we might have a busy summer.

The successful prosecution of the man who brought his dog up to Mt Arthur hut (see below for the full story) demonstrates how seriously DOC and FoF take this issue. Dogs may be man's best friend but they just do not mix with kiwis; even the best trained and well behaved dog will be led astray by the distinctive kiwi smell and can undo years of hard work in seconds.

DOC rangers can't be everywhere so if anyone sees a dog in the National Park then please let the owner know that he is both breaking the law and endangering our national bird. If necessary contact DOC on their hotline - **0800 DOCHOTline (0800 362 468) or DOC Motueka on 03 528 1810.**

## **Operations Report**

*Pamela Jenkins*

The New Year is starting off on a busy note. We have completed the Whio survey which is covered by a separate article in this newsletter, plus, two new Foot Print Tracking Tunnel (FTT) lines have been marked, and last month a small team put the tunnels in place in the lower Balloon and Deep Creek catchments, bringing the total number of FTT lines to twelve. These two recent additions are at a lower altitude than other lines with the object of getting an idea of rat numbers there.

All this has been done in readiness for one of our most important jobs of the year - the putting out and retrieval of the footprint tracking cards, a job which this year will be happening on Saturday 25th, Sunday 26th and Wednesday 29th February. It is an onerous task, needing lots of willing volunteer power!! So all volunteers who are able to give their time to help with this are asked to contact Bill or Pamela on the Operations Team.

As if that wasn't enough work to be going on with, on the same Saturday we shall be putting out seed funnel lines with the objective of 'pre-empting' a beech mast. Finally, in December we caught 8 stoats; 7 rats; 9 possums and 1 mouse, whilst in January we caught a grand total of 17 stoats; 3 rats; 5 possums and 2 mice. It is not unusual when we look back through the records to see an increase in stoat kills, and we can expect to see them rise even further in February. The good news is that most were caught on the outer lines. Our core line (I line) didn't catch any stoats and so we are probably catching most of them before they get into the Flora - which is of course good news for our increasing Whio population.

We hope to see you at the end of the month!!!

Radio-tracking kiwi during the day, as we normally do, tells us where they roost and over time we gain an impression of their territories. But unless we know where they go at night, we have very limited insight into how they use their habitat. So we've started a programme of dusk to dawn tracking. We're focusing our effort on Parapara and Totaranui, but collect information on any birds we can hear.

Keen volunteers are positioned at key locations and take bearings on the birds every 20 minutes all through the night (many thanks to team – you're great!) We've had some magical experiences with kiwi calling all around and very close to us.

So far we've had some surprises; for example, Pakawau and Pikopiko seem to spend a large part of the night just across the saddle from Parapara and Totaranui, but they don't roost up there. The saddle looks to be a territory boundary. Interestingly, Parapara calls all through the night but Pikopiko hardly calls at all.



The kiwi transmitter change season is upon us. The Ghost Creek birds have been done and here's a picture of Aorere in Lesley's arms. The photo right shows Sandy at the FoF display at the Waitangi Day festival at the Te Awhina Marae.



## Who's that FoFer?

Titch Klements

Titch is an inaugural member of FoF. He is also well known as the "Keeper of the Shed", situated on his property in Lower Moutere. Titch brings 12 years of experience with the NZ Forest Service to FoF, and has done a lot of tramping in the Kahurangi. He has also travelled extensively in Australia, Europe, Scandanavia, South and North America. He originally came to Motueka because of the job opportunities here. Titch says it s hard in the early days, both because FoF was a new and unknown organisation, so it was difficult to get accepted by the conservation movement, and because all the lines had to be set up and different forms of traps and baits tested.



Stoat numbers were very high. In order to get a picture of the stoats and their behaviour each stoat was brought out of the bush, weighed and dissected to find out what it had been eating. Titch reckons that the bird life has definitely improved over the last 10 years, particularly rifleman numbers (*titipounamu*). These are now frequently seen on the track up to Mt Arthur Hut.

Because the number of FoFers was small in the beginning there was a great sense of camaraderie, as everyone did all the work together. In the early days, a group of students and their teacher from Motueka HS helped out a lot – making rat tunnels and stoat traps, helping put in new lines etc. Titch thinks FoF needs more young people joining who are aware of conservation issues, enjoy being out in the bush, and have "stickability". Titch thinks that FoF has expanded as far as it can, as now our resources are very stretched covering the distances of the trap lines. Titch has hit the newspaper headlines a few times in his career; both as "Forester of the Year", and also demonstrating how to set a stoat trap to the attending media (fortunately an earlier attempt where his jersey got caught was not recorded!)

## Merry molluscs

Ivan Rogers

Spring is in the air, and on the forest floor as well. FoFer and DOC who ranger Ivan Rogers encountered these two amorous *Powelliphanta* snails on D Line on the (official) last day of winter while doing trap checks in his DOC capacity. He couldn't resist taking a few photos and forwarded them to DOC's snail expert Kath Walker who provided a technical explanation of what is happening here: "The two snails mate by first front-on tentacle touching, then they use their tentacles to touch the soft body of the other, then one or both in turn mount the shell of the other and crawl right over it.



Then they evert their long penis so it comes outside their body through a genital pore on the right side of the head/foot and enters the same pore on their mate's head /foot. As they are hermaphrodites, both partners have a penis and evert it at much the same time. That's why you can see 2 grey strands joining the 2 snails. That's called "reciprocal intromission", ie both receive sperm as a result of the mating. The sperm seems to pass to the other via a foamy "sperm mass". You often see a conspicuous pile of ejaculate where two snails have copulated. Its a lengthy slow process, taking ~6-8 hours.

When they lay their fertilized eggs, about 3 weeks later (or longer - they probably can store sperm) the egg comes out of the same genital pore through which the penis was earlier everted, which looks even stranger. There's a great photo of an egg being laid by *P. hochstetteri hochstetteri* (yellow-based) at Canaan in the old NZ Geographic issue 7."

## What's that plant?

Putaputaweta/Marble Leaf/*Carpodetus serratus*

Marie Firth

The beautiful, lilting name of the putaputaweta is because in the North Island, weta commonly make their homes in holes in the tree left by the puriri moth caterpillar. In the South Island mistletoe is often found on putaputaweta. It is found throughout coastal to montane forest (up to 1050m above sea-level) and beside streams. One species is endemic to NZ. The tree can grow up to 10m high with branches spreading outwards in flattened tiers. The leaves are small with serrated edges with yellowish blotches between the veins. The flowers appear in early summer and are white and small. They appear in clusters and have a sweet scent.



The fruit is a small, round, black capsule and appears in early autumn. Young trees form a tangled shrub with much smaller leaves on zigzag branches.

## A Success Story - Whio Survey, 27 January 2012.

Chris Potter

Once a year - for the last 2 years - the Flora Stream has been surveyed to find out how the resident whio population is getting on. In the last 2 years this has been done in December, but it was felt that January would be a better time for the duck families. So this third survey was done on a cool January afternoon, with most of the team having completed checking I line earlier in the day. The survey follows the stream "up close and personal", so there's plenty of wading, rock-hopping and scrambling involved.

We split the stream up into 3 stretches to cover the distance from the Flora Hut to Upper Junction - where Balloon Creek joins it - in reasonable time. You can't help being impressed by the feeling of wilderness down at stream level; the Flora track and anyone on it is completely out of sight, out of mind.

So - did we see any whio? Yes indeed, there was plenty of action, especially in the lower reaches. Altogether we saw 14 birds, including 3 pairs on the water, one with a duckling, 2 single females and 5 birds flying. *Most were unbanded*, but Rain and old Bill were there as well as a female from "out of town". They all looked healthy and alert. The photo right was taken by Denise Raymond just above the bridge at Upper Junction, with the male whistling in defiance.



It's really good to remember that 10 years ago when FoF started trapping I line, only a very occasional male whio was ever seen on the Flora Stream.

*Stop press!*

*Maryann Ewers*

A week after our annual blue duck (whio) survey in the Flora (above), we had an exciting find on our way out of the valley. 600 metres upstream from the Flora Hut, we found an unbanded whio pair, with two young, still with a little down remaining on their neck. The exciting thing about this is the whio survey begins at the Flora Hut - we've never thought to start higher up the stream, as it becomes just a trickle!

## **Other News**

### ***Dog owner fined***

FoFers will be pleased to hear that the man who took his dog into the Flora Hut for a night on January 12, 2011 has been fined \$1,250. The man and his party were spotted by a FoFer and reported to DOC. Despite being shown the signs saying dogs were not allowed in the Kahurangi National Park without a permit, and there were kiwi in the area, the man still persisted in taking in his dog. International visitors staying in the hut as well also told him dogs were not allowed. It is FoF's hope that FoFers and other members of the general public will put pressure on anyone seen in the Flora area with a dog, and hopefully will take heed. If you see a dog in a park, record all the details you can, especially the owner's vehicle registration number, and report to DoC as soon as possible. Use your mobile phone if possible.

*To re-iterate:*

**DOC's emergency number is 0800 36 24 68**

**Motueka Area Office = 03 528 1810**

### **Friends of Flora contact details:**

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