



Newsletter

Issue: 67

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With the onset of winter, things have gone quiet for the Friends of Flora volunteers on the mountain. During June and July, the only monitoring done is our central 'I' line through the Flora Valley, due to snow. The most important thing for this line is our monthly bird monitoring. It is important we have this regular data.

And snow it surely has. It snowed in Motueka this week! What an extraordinary sight – something very seldom seen.

Kiwi report – Sandy Toy



Bill collecting a kiwi message last week

Our hardy team of kiwi monitors tackled heavy snow to get last week's kiwi messages.

It was a stunning day – bright and sunny and no wind. There was a heap of snow at Mt Arthur hut, but as it was frozen, it made for relatively easy walking.

All the birds were found. Thanks to Paul and Andy for trekking down to Clouston's ridge from the car park. As expected there's been reduced foraging times on the snowy nights. Parapara and Totaranui (the pair in the basin below Mt Arthur hut) really don't like the cold – they were only out for half an hour on 12 and 15 July!

Kiwi Snippets – did you know that...

There are currently 5 species of kiwi: great spotted; little spotted; north island brown; rowi; tokoeka and there are distinct geographical forms of the north island brown and tokoeka. Although all in the same genus, *Apteryx*, they differ widely in appearance and biology.

Kiwi feathers are more hair like than feather like. Both the great and little spotted kiwi have softer, more fluffy feathers than the other kiwis. This makes it much more difficult to change transmitters for monitoring their movements – the fluffy feathers tend to stick to the electrical insulation tape that we wrap around the harness holding the transmitter to their legs!

All kiwi have a very well developed sense of smell and are unique in having nostrils located at the end of their beak. They eat invertebrates such as worms (and in NZ there are nearly 200 species of worm) that they find in the soil, but also creatures in the leaf litter, berried seeds and even snails and fresh water crayfish. Their food supplies sufficient water and they rarely need to drink. The super-sensitive whiskers around their faces may help them feel their way around in the dark.



Andy on the Clouston's Ridge

Kiwis are more like mammals than birds in some respects: their body temperature is lower (37-38°C) than that of most birds (39-42°C). Unlike most birds which have hollow bones to reduce weight for flying they can also lay enormous eggs. An egg can weigh up to a quarter of the weight of the female. This means that the chick emerges as a mini adult – fully feathered and able to feed itself. This is unusual in birds.



FoF's 10th anniversary party

Things are progressing well. The invitations have gone out and from the r.s.v.p.'s; it's going to be a great night! If anyone hasn't received an invitation, and would like to attend, please feel free to contact us – we have limited space still available.

We will be sending out another email, with all the finer details. As you would have learnt thus far, the evening is being held at **The Mudcastle**. This is a fabulous place to be holding our party. It is in Upper Moutere, and **The Mudcastle** owners; Glenys and Kevin Johnston, have very kindly allowed us to use their venue free of charge. This is a wonderful gesture, and we thank them very much. As you can see by the photo on the right, it really is a castle! Please do check out their website: www.themudcastle.co.nz



Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment – Jan Wright

As was reported in our last issue of the FoF newsletter, FoF members unanimously passed this motion at our May AGM: *“FOF publicly supports DOC and AHB on the strategic and responsible use of poisons, including aerial 1080, for pest control in the area of, and immediately surrounding the Upper Takaka catchment, provided that the benefits can be clearly demonstrated”*

In light of this, it was very pleasing to have Jan Wright, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, put out her report: ‘Evaluating the use of 1080: predators, poisons and silent forests’, in June. Within her overview, she stated “It is my view based on careful analysis of the evidence that not only should the use of 1080 continue (including in aerial operations) to protect our forests, but that we should use more of it.”

If anyone is interested in reading this report in its entirety, it can be found by clicking this link into the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environments website: www.pce.parliament.nz

How did our snail get its name? –

Powelliphanta hochstetteri hochstetteri
Introducing our new ‘cub reporter’ - Marie Firth

Powelliphanta have been described as the “**sumo wrestlers**” of the snail world, as the largest species can be up to 9 cm across (DOC, 2006). We have our own sub-species in the Flora – ***Powelliphanta hochstetteri hochstetteri*** and FoFers may want to consider helping with their conservation in this area, as these unique and intriguing animals with their beautiful shells, are severely threatened.

I was brought up with a book on NZ animals by A.W.B Powell. It is this scientist who studied these



Powelliphanta hochstetteri hochstetteri cont...

ancient snails between the 1930's and 40's. Up until this time, they were always classified as the Paryphanta, which is found in the North Island. It took until the 1970's to rename this genus as the Powelliphanta. NZ's strong hold for the Powelliphanta is North West Nelson – Kahurangi NP. The species name '*hochstetteri hochstetteri*' was named after a German naturalist, Ferdinand von Hochstetter, who was in NZ for a time, during the latter 1850's.

Their survival is threatened for 3 main reasons: habitat destruction; habitat modification and trampling by grazing animals; being preyed upon by introduced animals and birds. Survival of the snail species will be aided by well conducted pest control operations, as well as protection of our forests. The snails recycle the calcium in their discarded shells, so empty shells need to be left in the bush.

Until next time...

Maryann - on behalf of the Friends of Flora Team

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