



Newsletter

Issue: 61
December 2010



Wishing you all, a
Safe and happy
Christmas and New
Year break -

From the FoF team!

Welcome to our last newsletter for 2010!

Blue Duck/Whio Survey 2010 - Andy Woodall

The annual survey of whio in the Flora Stream took place on December 3. The water level in the stream was fairly low with weather fine and clear, but perhaps the ducks would have preferred a bit of rain! The survey covers the stream between Flora Hut and below Upper Junction. The surveyors gathered at Flora Hut and then spread out.

Chris Golding (DoC Motueka) and his highly trained bird dog, Tui, came upstream from Upper Junction to meet Andy and Bergit who headed downstream from Horseshoe Creek. Chris Potter and friends headed upstream from Horseshoe to meet Lesley and Bill coming down from Flora Hut.

Tui spotted an unbanded pair at Upper Junction. Chris G saw whio 'Maryann' and 'Bill' just upstream of the junction of Hodge Creek. A lone male was seen just below Saddle Creek but by his

behaviour, may have had a mate nearby. Whio 'Rain' was observed just a little further downstream with an unbanded partner. So three pair and a lone male (with a possible mate) were observed.

Just as a little 'addition' to Andy's notes; the story of Maryann and Bill whio is becoming quite a saga. These two were our first breeding pair in the Flora for 12 years when they had 3 young fledge in '07. Maryann disappeared for about 18 months, sometime after this, and just when we were beginning to think she had gone, she turned up last summer near the Saddle Creek confluence – hanging out with 2 young males! Now, as we can see from Andy's report, she is back with Bill.

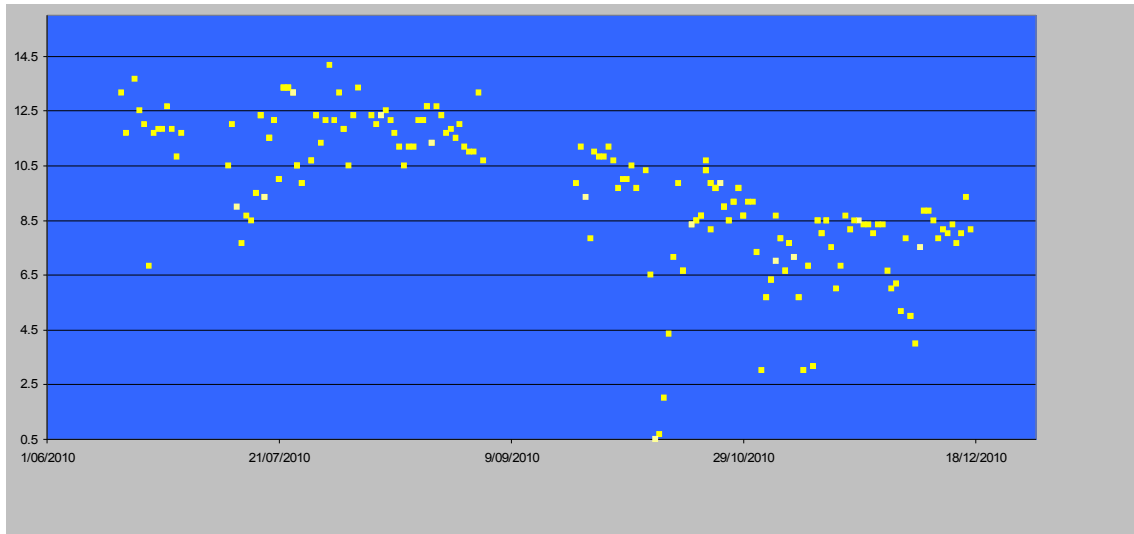
Maybe she just wanted time out?... Ed.

Kiwi update – Sandy and Robin Toy

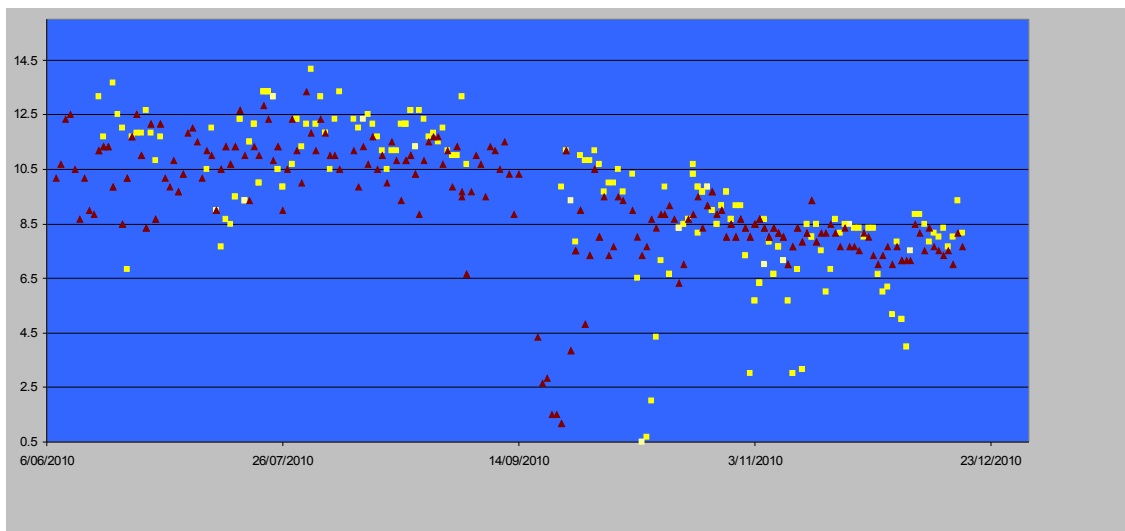
NB: this is an extended update as Sandy and Robin explain with graphs, just what the birds are up to

What are our kiwi doing?

As you know, the transmitters the kiwi are wearing tell us how long they have been foraging the previous nights. A sudden drop in hours foraging followed by consistently lower foraging hours is supposed to indicate the start of incubation. That's the theory, but the actual messages aren't as clear cut, take Rameka's activity for example. That looks pretty random!



In the face of such confusion the messages of paired birds are supposed to be informative, i.e. one partner, usually the female may be more variable, but their mate shows a clearer pattern. So here you have Rameka (yellow squares), with Papapara, her mate (red triangles).



Still confused? Well, we've been uncertain too, so we've been doing two things:

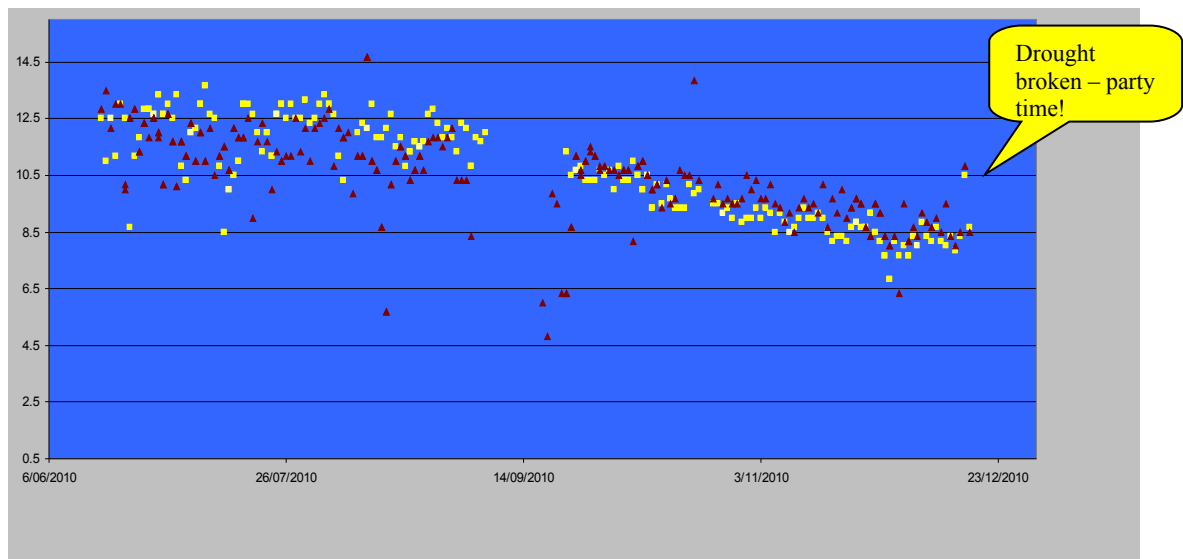
- Sending the activity patterns of our birds to other great-spotted kiwi practitioners;
- Tracking the birds a bit more closely to see if they are using the same burrows.

The conclusion is.....our birds don't seem to be incubating. Shame! Its getting late in the season for them to start, but given some of the variability in activity patterns, we might still be surprised and find a chick in the burrow when we come to change the adults' transmitters next year. Lets hope!

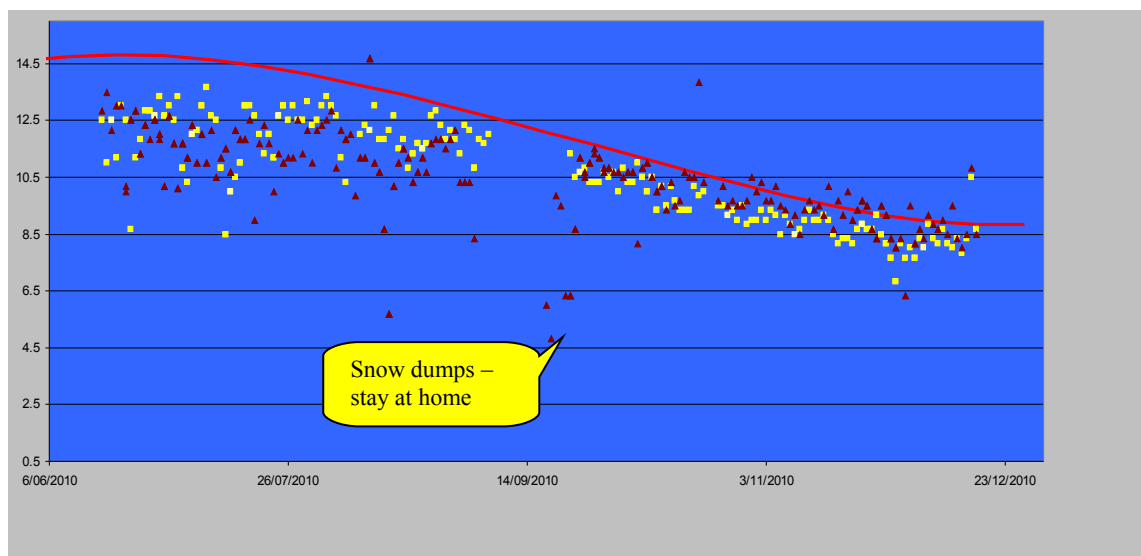
We may not have incubation but we are learning a few things about our kiwi, like their response to weather events. For example:

- Snow - stay at home,
- Raining after a drought – get out and party!

as illustrated by Anatori (yellow squares) and Anaweka (red triangles). We have seen this activity change in nearly all the birds.



We're also seeing some interesting response to lengthening days – note the decrease in activity from September to present and compare it to the decrease in 'night' hours (red line reflecting sunset to sunrise hours). Pretty reasonable correlation isn't it?



It will be interesting to see what they get up to in the New Year. Thanks for all the fun hours out tracking this year.

Sandy & Robin

Dogs... again

An addition to what we wrote in November's issue about dogs in the Flora from **DOC Motueka**.

Any dog seen in the National Park, without authority, is taken very seriously by Motueka Office, and we will certainly follow-up on any information given.

If FoF members do come across a dog, the key information to collect and pass on would be the ***date, time, specific location, dog breed, colour, sex, vehicle registration number, and brief details of the situation, and if possible, a photo. If you see the dog on the track and don't know which vehicle belongs to the owner, then take the numbers of ALL the vehicles in the car park.***

This information should be able to be collected without engaging the dog owner, so as to avoid any confrontation. The specific location is also very important, as there are areas that are not in the National Park (i.e. is legal road) in which dogs are allowed. Any information forwarded to DOC should have the FoF persons name and phone number.

Any additional information can be the dog registration number, or dog owners name – but this can be a lot more difficult to obtain, and requires approaching the person/dog. Not recommended.

Annual OSNZ Bird Survey of the Flora

For the 6th year, Pauline Samways and her team from the NZ Ornithological Society, spent 3 days over November doing 6 bird counts. The weather was dry (and hot) enough to do the full 6 counts. Some years this isn't possible because of the wet/windy conditions.

The counts are done in the morning, and again in the afternoon. They monitor birds seen and heard, for 5-mins at 20 trap stations past Flora Hut, from trap #36 to #55. They didn't find much change in the number of birds, with some species up (notably rifleman), and others down (warbler and fantail).

Pauline notes kaka were heard in the same place on a number of times near stations 54/55, and is hopeful it might indicate breeding – or possibly just feed in the valley.

Thanks to Pauline and her team of volunteers!

Friends of Flora's bird counts are done from the Flora car park to trap #83 at Gridiron, every 200 metres, at all even stations. We record only species seen or heard, for 1 minute.

It has been interesting to follow the different recording systems. Our data generally shows the same trends and figures over a year as the OSNZ's does in their annual survey.

D Line completed – Bill Rooke

D Line has at long last been completed! Andy and Pete completed the final marking and over two weekends all the traps were laid out.

Helicopter drops at Balloon Hut and on the Cobb Ridge, made the going somewhat easier. Tony, Janet, Steve and Pamela were dropped off in the Cobb by Titch and the team of Paul, Kim, Alan Barker, Wayne Wootten and Bill, walked in from Gridiron to Balloon. It was a long day but a very successful one. There were still a few left to be placed the following weekend at the Cobb end, the job of which was undertaken by Tony, Janet, Paul and Steve H.



This line is the longest and has 132 trap stations. The first 41 are DOC's, leaving 91 as the longest FoF line. This line now finally marks the western boundary of the project and on the Cobb Ridge, joins Bush and Beyond's R line of 89 stations, which runs along to the reservoir lookout. Three other lines, Z (FoF) and X and Y (B&B) run from the ridge to the Lower Junction track to join I line – this completes the circuit. Because of its altitude, D line may well be closed for most of winter, but a very high stoat kill was recorded when the first of FoF's traps laid out on the line, was first checked. This shows the importance of these outer perimeter lines.

What's that plant?

Peraxilla tetrapetala – Red Mistletoe

This beautiful native mistletoe was once abundant throughout the Flora – we hope it will be again some day.

For any volunteers who walk A line to the Arthur Ridge, you may see one of the only local specimens we know of, at this stage, within our trapping area. It is on the right of trap #22, hanging from the mountain beech. It may be out in flower by the time of our next monitoring. Keep a close eye out for petal fall, as this is the best means of finding new plants as the foliage can hide within the host tree.



The red mistletoe is a 'hemiparasite' and will use most of our beech tree species, and also puriri and pohutukawa as hosts. Its status is in 'gradual decline'. Our Mistletoe's are like ice cream to possums.

FoF volunteer Philip Lissaman, noted on his last monitoring of 'Little B', what must be leaves from the yellow mistletoe species – *Alepis flavida* – about 40 metres above #10 trap station, but he couldn't pick it up in the canopy. Anyone monitoring this line over the next couple of months please keep your eyes open for petal fall, and report to either FoF or DOC, if you see any.

Novembers catch results:

Catches were very low this month, however, we are expecting higher numbers over December/January, as the young stoats are out of their nests now. They usually arrive a little later at our higher elevation, than the lowlands.
4 stoats, 3 rats, 1 mouse, 3 possums and 1 hedgehog.

Until next time...

Maryann and Bill
On behalf of the Friends of Flora Team

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