



Newsletter

Issue 89

August 2015

Back to Work!

August always represents the start of the Friends of Flora (FoF) trapping year. Following a line leaders get together on August 14 trap checks are now underway. This year we will be using the new FoF "trappers' notebook" (waterproof) to record kills and line leaders are now all trained to enter trap catch data straight into our volunteer management system (VMS). Thanks to Robin Toy and the operations team for developing the notebook - volunteers will find them in the gear shed. As always at this time of year, snow will affect higher lines and access via the Graham Valley Rd may be an issue after heavy rain - check with DOC Motueka.

Pest numbers

Large numbers of mustelids and rats continue to be caught so some lines had extra checks made during the winter months. In addition, Footprint Tracking Tunnels (FTTs) were set over the night of 5th August and detected rodent numbers as high as those in June. It seems surprising that this cold winter hasn't knocked back the rodent numbers, but we're advised that a crash may still happen any time up until November. Let's hope so. In the meantime, FTTs will be run again in late September to try to keep track on pest numbers as we go into spring.

Kea

We've been asked by the Kea Conservation Trust to record any kea we see while up in the Flora area. Records should include, date, time, location, observer, number of birds seen. The best way to report your observations is via eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/newzealand/>). eBird is a worldwide bird sighting reporting system. Its use in New Zealand is still in its infancy, but it is endorsed by Birds NZ (aka Ornithological Society of New Zealand). You do need to register to submit observations, but it is straightforward. If you do have observations, but you really, really, really don't want to sign up, send them to Robin (twotoys@xtra.co.nz) and he will submit them on your behalf. If anyone wants help getting started with eBird contact Robin. If anyone has a lot of historical records of kea or any other birds, also contact Robin, because there are ways to submit large numbers of data that are quicker than submitting casual bird lists. It would be great to capture sightings of other



interesting birds such as kaka, falcon and whio as well as kea and complete checklists for a visit are even better!

Kiwi

We have managed to keep tabs on all the Flora kiwi over the winter months. Some birds really don't like the cold and reduce their foraging hours when it snows, but others don't seem to mind and it doesn't seem to be related to altitude.

FOF has recently hosted the annual great spotted kiwi (GSK) practitioners hui at Te Āwhina Marae. There were more attendees at this year's event than at previous ones, probably due to several substantial developments in the conservation of GSK. Among these, the development of a taxon plan that will map out how we are to proceed with the conservation of the species has begun to gain traction, there are new data on genetic diversity in great spotted kiwi, the Government has allocated \$11 million to start to turn around the decline in numbers in all kiwi species. While GSK are one of the more numerous kiwi species, fresh evidence suggests its threat status should be increased to Nationally Critical and there is increasing recognition that aspects of its ecology and habitat make it one of the hardest kiwi species to conserve. There was plenty of debate and a lot of work lies ahead to try to draw together the knowledge from the disparate projects and come up with effective conservation plans. But it's exciting times.

(Check out Rebecca Priestly's column "Killing the kiwi killers" in the August 29 - September 4 "Listener" for more on the money targeting kiwi conservation - Editor)

Gear Shed.

A solution to our storage problem has been offered by DOC Motueka. The department will make available a part of the fire store next to the current shed. It has power, lights and is fully secure. A bit of work and some of FoF's funds are needed to separate off a space for us. It should be ready in Spring. Thanks, DOC!

4WD Course

Email Mike Malone (FoF Operations) <mailto:mike@aquadynamics.co.nz> if you need to attend a one-day 4WD driving course. If you drive the Flora Rd (past the gate) you really should be 4WD trained. Look at the near miss below if you think the Flora Road is a safe drive! FoF will cover your course cost.

