



# Newsletter

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**Danger! Danger! Ongaonga!**

*Avoid confusion ... and other symptoms!*



Photo: Forest and Bird

This readily-identifiable soft woody plant is definitely worth avoiding. In the Flora it can be encountered around Hodge Ck, in places along the Flora Stream and other creeks and is, of course, abundant around several entrances to the Nettlebed Cave. If brushed against bare skin, expect a painful rash and numbness in that area for some days afterwards. The large spines inject a neurotoxin called tryfidin. Cold water exacerbates the sting. Treatment for a minor "brush" is seldom necessary or effective, but antihistamine will reduce itching and swelling. Extreme reactions can lead to "loss of motor movement, paralysis, drop in blood pressure, convulsions, blurred vision and confusion" (Wikipedia). Ongaonga is responsible for several dog deaths and the death of a trumper in 1961. It's not all bad though, as it's the main food plant of the red admiral butterfly/kahukura (below) and, at up to 3m tall, it's the world's biggest nettle. Plants in the Flora seem to occur well above the maximum altitude (600m) quoted in literature.



photo: Rod Morris/DOC



quite a smart move.

It looks like Mangarakau has ousted Korowhiti in Anatori's affections. Smart lad - Korowhiti left him to do virtually all the incubating last year. It will be interesting to see if Mangarakau lays an egg this year.

We thought that Opau and Tai Tapu are both males, but they appear to have paired up....the other newly translocated kiwi have been slow to pair up, but the good news is that they're all still in the trapped area (just!).

### **Safety Messages**

*Be safe but don't be silent*

While Friends of Flora has a pretty good safety record it may be due in part to incidents not being reported. Over the years a few incidents involving FoF volunteers have been investigated by DOC including:

- Weld on kill bar of a trap on P line broke casing piece of metal to fly out of box and strike operator in face, causing bleeding.
- Handbrake failed on vehicle in carpark while driver was closing gate, causing it to roll downhill, colliding with DOC sign.

Each of the incidents above led to changes to the safety plan and as a result changes in procedures. All incidents in the course of FoF activities involving injury, no matter how minor, or a near miss should be reported to your line leader, who will refer it on to the DOC liaison if sufficiently serious.

### **FoF sees red over green and brown pellets**

*FoF calls a strike on clearing tracks*

While eagerly awaiting the Battle for our Birds aerial 1080 operations, Friends of Flora have voiced to DOC their opposition to the use of deer repellent in part of the block. This was a feature of the 2014 operations, when FOF was assured it was strictly a one-off. With it again a feature of the operation and with a whopping 8,800Ha zone to be sown with deer repellent bait, FOF announced it would recommend to its volunteers not to assist by clearing tracks of baits. Our opposition stems from a view that deer, like goats and pigs are simply (large) pests causing damage to fragile ecosystems and the money spent on repellent would be better spent on conservation.



#### **Deer Repellent baits:**

Toxic (1080) pellets are green

Prefeed pellets are brown.

## Trap Design Evolves

*Back to the future with double set traps - Robin Toy writes*

In the past FOF has trialled double-set traps, in which there are two traps in one box. But one trap tended to set the other off and they were phased out. Changes to the design of double-set traps, in particular anchoring them with lengths of rebar, have brought them back into favour and they are now DOC best practice. As FOF adds or replaces trap boxes they'll be the new design. TK-line, which was installed in September 2015, has double-sets. After a year of trapping, analysis of the kill rate and number of sprung traps shows that the problems with one trap setting the other off have been overcome. What's more, the number of double-kills, where both traps in a box kill something, is encouragingly high, suggesting that the first pest killed acts as bait for the second.

If you wander down the Flora over the spring, you'll see much of the rusty old I-line being replaced with new double-set traps. Spare a thought for those installing the new trap boxes – they're monsters to carry!



The old



The new