



Newsletter

No. 108

Spring 2019

Welcome to another update from the Friends of Flora. As detailed in our previous Newsletter the June bait drop and the deployment of the new double traps were to be significant and timely contributors to rodent and mustelid control following the recent mega mast.

As pointed out below, however, things didn't go quite to plan –

FOF Operations – Mike Malone comments

Hopefully spring has finally arrived although you wonder a bit with those recent falls of snow down to low levels!

Unfortunately the success of the 1080 bait drop to combat the mega mast rodent explosion was under expectations so there still remains a worrying number of rats in the Flora. Maintaining our regular trap checks continues to be crucial to stay on top of any increase as summer approaches, together with ensuring the baits are fresh.

The Flora road was closed for maintenance for a few weeks, so trap check timing had to be programmed around this, plus the Cobb road has again been closed, meaning delayed entry for some line work. Coupled with this was the usual late winter snow falls, so hopefully these challenges are now largely behind us.

Most of the new double traps have now been dispersed by chopper to the drop points and their layout on the remaining trap lines is in progress. Much of the latter work will be completed by the contractors, however there will be a number of lines – three or four - that will require FOF volunteer working bees, and invitations will be sent out for assistance as the weather shows some improvement. Our intention is to have all the double traps fully installed by Christmas.

We recently had our annual Line Leaders meeting which was well attended, so thanks to you all for recommitting your enthusiasm and leadership for another year, and bringing new volunteers into the FOF fold.



Mike at work on TK line



Peter and Warren at with traps at Asbestos Cottage

Farmers for Whio – an update by Sky Davies

Over the past few years whio have become a regular sight on the Graham River. Sky and James have had up to four whio swimming in the pool under their bridge. Although they have been quiet over the last month (nesting?) they are seen and heard almost daily during some months of the year. It's amazing to see the birds spilling over from the park – a testament to the years of work put in by Friends of Flora.

Farmers for Whio is a group farmers and landowners who want to see the whio in our rivers safe and thriving. We are encouraging trapping in the Graham, Pearse, and Baton river valleys, and aim to move into the main Motueka River corridor over the next year. We have been approached by landowners in other Motueka tributaries who would like to be involved so we think there is excitement in the community about this project. Our goal is to create a halo effect along the Motueka Valley boundary of Kahurangi National Park. We hope that by suppressing stoats on our land, we can enhance the efforts of Friend of Flora in the park.

It has been almost two years since we first started putting traps out, and we now have a total of 198 traps.

Three landowners are trapping with 90 traps along upper Baton, Skeet and Ellis rivers. Approximately 200 rats and more than 50 stoats have been trapped since first traps placed two years ago. Rat numbers have increased since last summer's beech tree mast and we are likely to see more stoats over the next months. Whio continue to be seen intermittently, but without any reports of breeding over the past two years. A pair were seen on the road in the lower Baton recently with concerned local farmers keen to get traps out around that area.

In the Graham Valley there are currently 10 landowners with 108 traps along the main Graham and North Branch. Approximately 30 stoats (maybe some were weasels?) and 1 hedgehog have been caught since traps were first put in place two years ago. We haven't kept very good track of rat numbers!

We are very pleased to have secured some funding for a trapping field officer to get all our existing traps loaded on a platform to gather catch data, bring new landowners on board, and keep an eye on the network to ensure traps are being checked and are well maintained. We also hope to do a repeat of the whio survey carried out last year on the Graham.

Farmers for Whio is very grateful for all the hand-me-down traps received from FoF so far, and we would love any more you can spare!

FFW Contact: Sky Davies skydavies@tet.org.nz

Note - FOF's catch data on the periphery trap lines with the upper Graham Valley reflects the increasing impact that FFW's predator control work is having, and their contribution is greatly appreciated. Ed.



Our own Kea story – by Lesley Hadley

A Friends of Flora team are currently closely monitoring a Kea nest situated centrally within our trapping territory.

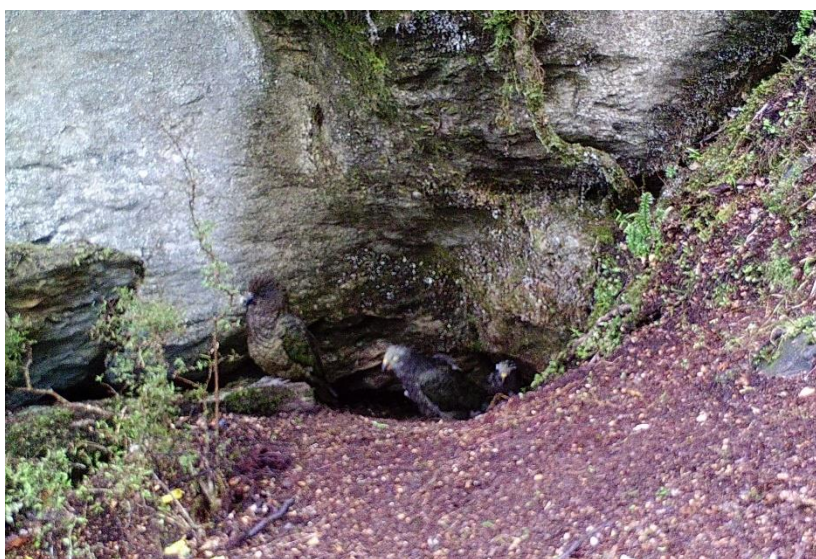
Cameras have been placed at the entrance to the nest cavity - estimated to be some 4m underground. The nesting site was initially located in early August, and at that time using a camera tied to a stick the team were able to sight an adult female with one chick, about one week old, on the nest.

At each subsequent visit the male kea has been seen flying to the nest entrance, entering and leaving. He brings food – which is regurgitated male to female, then female to chick – regularly during the day. The female is seen outside the nest entrance once a day, presumably having a wing stretch and getting some fresh air?

Last week was the first time that the two chicks have been seen outside the nest, and they should remain in the nest for around another month.



The Kea parents – female with wings outstretched



Female Kea with two chicks on their first day outside the nest cavity

In Memoriam –

It is with sadness that we advise of the passing of a long term and very active FOF volunteer, Dave Wilson, earlier this week. Our sincerest condolences on their loss are extended to Barbara, and their daughters Kate and Rebecca, and the extended family.

A funeral service to celebrate Dave's life will be held in the Motueka RSA Rooms on Monday October 7th at 2pm.

Lesley Hadley, who shared Line Leader duties with Dave, shares her thoughts on his contributions, activities, and memories -

Dave Wilson -

FIT was synonymous with Dave. Seeing his legs disappearing up the hill - on foot or bike - was the experience of many. He set standards of fitness that most of us couldn't maintain. But most impressive was his attitude to life.

Dave was a helleva nice guy, quiet and determined and especially determined to make the most of life's opportunities. Retiring from DOC in Te Anau, he and Barabara made Motueka their base where they both could pursue their many and varied interests - paddling, cycling, tramping, conservation, overseas travel, visiting family and grandchild and making lots of friends.

Dave maintained his active passion for the outdoors and conservation - he worked as a volunteer for Birdsong Trust as well as FOF and in the honey harvest time, he was to be found helping out at Muzzle Station in the Clarence.

For the last few years Dave was line leader for T line which goes around the tableland from Balloon hut where Dave spent many a night. Warren, his teammate remembers a lovely evening there when Barbara and Warren's wife came too. However as a hut companion, Dave, as a snorer, was not always the best. Another night Warren woke to find all the other hut occupiers were on the deck - driven out by the slumbering Dave. Dave was caring. He was fun. He was thorough. He pushed the boundaries and lived life to the full.

We / I'll miss you Dave

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Lesley - the other T line leader

From the Chair –

During the next few months you'll learn more on FOF's move into the Grecian and our expanding protection work in that catchment.

The next Alpine Footprint Tracking project will also be getting started at year's end, providing memorable days on the tops, including those great views.

So, some great opportunities ahead, including the trap layout work and November's FTTs, to get out and further our species' protection in the Flora.

Also, a welcome to new volunteer, Sam D, who joins us from Whio protection work in the Manawatu.

Lastly, a special thank you to the artisan team at Menzshed Waimea who have assembled a phenomenal number of double traps for DOC and ourselves during the past few years. As you can see from the following montages, as well as being really keen on their community contribution, they're enjoying that work, for which we're all grateful. Brent Hartshorne of Motueka DOC captured the smiles – much appreciated – and, well the photos tell the story.

Many thanks, team, from FOF!

Gerald - Editor



