

THE REMU-TALKER

Meet Wiki



Marcel & Hemi's chick Wiki initially struggled to gain weight after her release back into the park which was causing us some concern.

Melody contacted Wildlife vets at Massey Wildbase about her condition and whether to remove her for a health check. This is always a fraught time as the preference is to leave them be, in the wild, but also we have a duty of care to ensure the young birds health is not compromised.

Happy to say it looks as though young Wiki has finally got the hang of finding her own food. She is certainly feisty and snappy which are all good signs.

She was moving further south towards the Orongorongo River. Perhaps she was off to visit the new Waharoa in the Catchpool!

A new chick for Lorenzo

Lorenzo is one of the original male kiwi released in 2006. He set up a territory in the Upper Turere Stream with his mate Potiki. The photo below shows their latest chick, hatched in early March, and caught on a trailcam just outside the natal burrow as he/she explores the great outdoors.

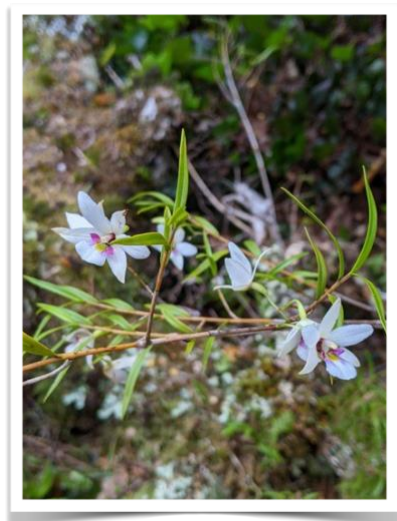


Chicks are independent about 10 days after they are hatched, though they often stick around with Dad for a while longer. it's unclear if this chick is male or female- without DNA analysis it's difficult to tell until the chicks grow up and start calling!

Botanical Beauty

Winika (*Dendrobium Cunnighamii*), a really pretty native orchid was snapped in the park by trappers Shrividyia and Dmitri. They almost fell over one on the track because the tree it was on had fallen onto the path.

The name winika derives from the name of a Māori war canoe carved from a tōtara tree, on which this type of orchid grows. (Source: www.teara.govt.nz)



From the President's Desk

Firstly, I would like to pay particular tribute to our "Team of 170" – the volunteers and their families who make up, and contribute to, the Remutaka Conservation Trust. Our community is incredibly varied and includes long-term volunteers alongside recent recruits; all with a real sense of doing the right thing for the Remutaka Forest Park. You have all done exceptionally well over the past year – to stay safe, keep healthy and to maintain your volunteering efforts alongside all your other commitments.

There are several projects the Committee is working on that I wish to tell you about:

1. The review of the RCT Strategic Plan: As I mentioned at the AGM, the current Committee has re-affirmed the Mission, Vision & Values statements that go back to 2011. We have also defined the major goals for the next phase of the Plan. We will now be working to define the specific projects we wish to undertake out to 2050. The key point will be to keep you informed of our progress.
2. We recently applied for 'Jobs for Nature' funding for particular projects that need additional effort beyond that of volunteers. These are the development of the Catchpool wetland, the extension of the Eco Hot Spot, and increased pest control. This bid was part of a competitive process and our success is by no means guaranteed.
3. We have been involved in seeking bids to harvest the 30+ hectares of remaining mature pines in the Park. The formal tender process yielded 1 unsuitable bid, and now 2 companies are preparing offers. If it goes ahead, this project will present new opportunities for future conservation activities within the Park, such as reforestation work, goat control, and enhanced pest control.
4. As previously announced, the Trust has adopted our Kiwi Group's advice to replace intensive monitoring of individual kiwi with more population-scale remote monitoring. We are working on successfully bedding-in the new strategy.

Looking outside the Trust, but still impacting on our rohe, are several different projects:

- * Project Wainuiomata: This was described to us by Jim Lynch at our last AGM and it impacts directly on us. Whilst we generally support the idea of a sanctuary, we do have a number of significant concerns and as such have made submissions to the Regional Council.
- * Friends of Baring Head and the Wainuiomata catchment: The Park is a major component of the catchment and our wetland project forms part of the overall area covered by this project.
- * The Hem of the Remutaka: This project is also in its infancy but covers the area from where the Remutaka range finishes, to the coast beyond Baring Head.
- * The Department of Conservation's Remutaka strategy: Our Trust began this project several years ago and we are part of a group bringing together the various disparate groups in this area.
- * Capital Kiwi: Although some distance from us, we have a lot in common with this project and we share operational knowledge on a reasonably regular basis.

One important part of our involvement with the Park is to acknowledge that Iwi are, by statute, co-managers of the Park. We have been working more closely with Iwi members in recent projects including the erection of Pou and Waharoa at the gateway to the Orongorongo track. Through our DOC Relationship Lead, we have sought to develop a programme for all interested Trust members to be properly introduced to the Iwi, their Tikanga and their links to the Park. I'm personally looking forward to this.

Thank you, best wishes and stay safe everyone. Geoff Cameron, President, Remutaka Conservation Trust

Volunteer Profile Rosemary Thompson

Contributed by Melody



There are many volunteers in the Remutaka Conservation Trust who do amazing things. We are so lucky to have passionate volunteers who care about the park and enjoy the opportunity to get out there on a regular basis. Then there are those, like Rosemary, who are the glue who keep people connected...

- * Organiser of the Kiwi Avoidance Training weekends
- * The induction for new volunteers
- * Organises get-togethers to keep all volunteers connected.
- * Kiwi tracker
- * Chases me up when I haven't delivered something I said I would ☹.
- * Companion gardener to the uninitiated (that's me)
- * And a mirage of other activities that are too long to list.

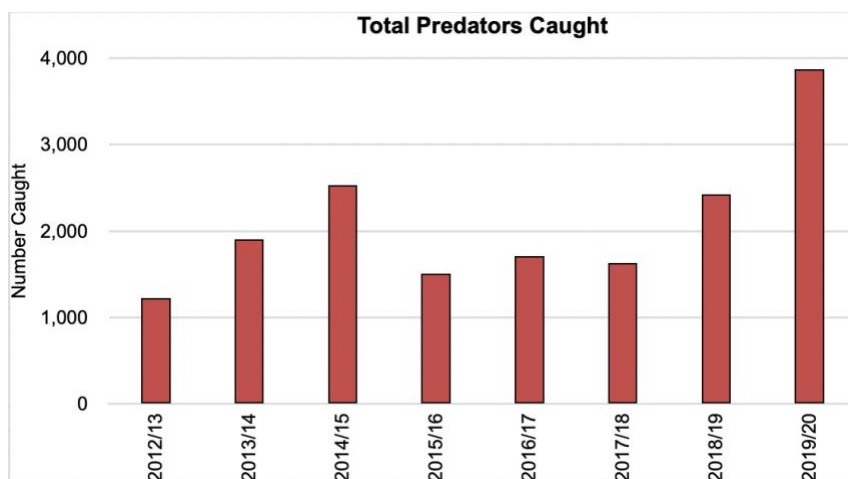
Next time you receive an invite from Rosemary for a volunteer get together, come along to say thank you for all her amazing work.

Thanks Rosemary.

A Bumper Catch Last Year

Contributed By: Winifred Long

The 2019/20 year saw a bumper crop of pests caught in the Trust's network of manual traps with 3,870 predators caught, significantly higher than any other year since 2012/13 and possibly a record for the Trust. The catch was predominantly rodents at a total of 3,631 but also included 119 stoats and weasels, plus 40 hedgehogs and 80 possums.



Two main factors probably contributed to the very high catch in 2019/20; the beech mast event in the summer of 2018/19 which meant that there was an abundance of beech seed for the rodents to eat, and the eight-week closure of the Park last autumn due to covid-19. Both these events provided opportunities for rodents to breed at higher numbers than usual with the latter allowing at least one and possibly two generations of rats to be born unchecked by our trapping efforts.

The high numbers of predators caught last year show just how important the trapping and other pest control work is, and the huge effort put into predator control in the park by the teams of trapping and fixit volunteers. If it wasn't for their effort the pest populations in the area could increase unhindered.

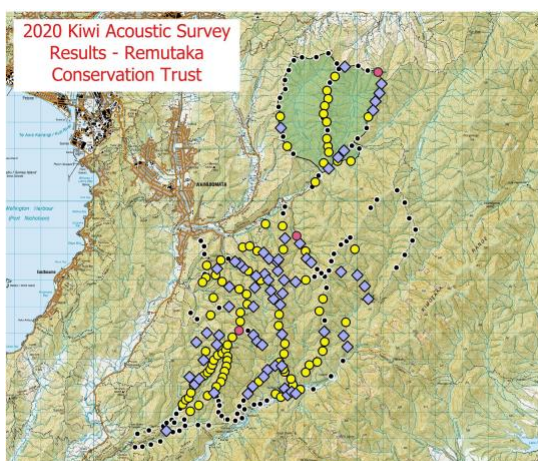
In his latest blog Brent Beaven, Programme Manager Predator Free 2050 talks about how pest control and pest eradication are two very different things. His article explains the mast cycle in a clever way and why we must continue to 'mow our lawns'.

<https://blog.doc.govt.nz/2021/03/09/pest-control-is-like-lawn-mowing-brent-beaven-pf2050/>

Kiwi Distribution in Remutaka Ranges

Contributed by: Susan Ellis

We're pleased to share the latest results from the Remutaka Conservation Trust's annual kiwi acoustic recorder (AR4) survey in the Remutaka Forest Park and adjoining area. From an initial population of ca. 30 birds (kiwi house releases 2006-2008 + Hauturu translocation in 2009) our volunteer-led project has now increased to (est.) > 150 kiwi. The latest data shows that they are spreading rapidly through the Remutaka Forest Park and adjoining Greater Wellington water catchment (see map, below).



Black circles- no kiwi. Brown circles- female kiwi calls. Yellow circles- male kiwi calls. Blue diamonds- male and female kiwi calls (eg duets). GW Mainland Island (Skull Gully) - outlined transparent green overlay.

Particular points of interest are:

- * The kiwi are now closing in on the Wainui township from several different tracks (Old Whakanui, Sunny Grove, Boys Brigade)
- * The first close calls have been picked up on the Orongorongo Track
- * Duets heard on the far end of the Big Bend track
- * Kiwi also calling up the far end of the Orongorongo region (near Papatahi Hut, and across to the eastern

A big thanks to all of you who have helped out deploying and bringing in the recorders for us over the years, and to Greater Wellington/ Ned Bruno for funding, data collection and analysis in the Water Catchment Area. We'd also like to acknowledge the DoC Community Fund for enabling us to purchase additional acoustic recorders.

What's next?

With the last transmitters being removed from our kiwi this year, remote monitoring with recorders will become our main method for gauging the spread and calling density of our birds. We are looking to expand the acoustic monitoring team with some keen, proactive people who are able to help focus on particular projects, including:

- * boundary mapping the spread of the kiwi through time. This is getting more challenging as the kiwi zone spreads out and widens!
- * pair mapping -- where are the kiwi pairs? We can try to estimate this by picking up duets in winter. This requires 1-2 people per catchment to systematically map calls (using computer software that filters kiwi calls). It will provide us with a better estimate of the number of breeding kiwi in the Park
- * leading tour groups to conduct kiwi call counts at night

The first two projects are for fit and proactive people with good navigation skills, a love of bush bashing, and insatiable curiosity to discover kiwi hideouts! The kiwi call count project is for someone who loves sitting quietly in the bush at night, and would enjoy introducing others to kiwi calls; only moderate fitness is required. Training can be given for all of these projects, though the ultimate goal is for these to be self-directed projects. If you are keen, please contact me (susanfromwainui@gmail.com)

Kiwi Confirmed Across River

Contributed by: Meg Shaw

In October last year, Rochelle and I were staying in the hut her dad built back in the 70s on the Eastern side of the Orongorongo River. I was woken suddenly in the middle of the night by a loud noise very close to the hut. I lay there trying, sleepily, to work out what the noise had been. Something in my brain was instinctively saying: "kiwi!" but that couldn't be true - we're on the wrong side of the river for kiwi. Then the noise came again! Further away this time, but unmistakably a male kiwi! Rochelle's dad, Mike, confirmed it with a loud excited whisper: "KIWI!!" and someone else said: "I heard it too!". We were all awake by this point and buzzing with excitement, but we didn't hear it again that night. However, we heard one after dinner the following evening, just across the creek - so close! - and again at 2am the following night.

We reported our exciting news back to Susan and Melody, got some acoustic recorders up there a few weeks later, and confirmed that we had at least one pair living up behind our hut! We then gave Mike a trail cam for his Christmas/birthday present, setting it up near where we'd had the acoustic recorder. Even though we knew for certain there were kiwi up there, it was still so exciting to see, among the many photos of possums, a handful of shots of kiwi.



The kiwi have been heard by most of our hut visitors over the summer - it gets carefully reported in the log book. We're upping our trapping efforts around the hut and encouraging other local hut owners to do the same and to get their dogs kiwi averted.

Having been trapping and tracking with the Trust for about 12 years now, it's really awesome to be able to see evidence of the population expanding so much. Long may it continue...!

Trapper Snippets from the Tracks

Adrienne Nicholls, Friday 26th March - With the promise of a fine weekend ahead, lots of people heading in for a couple of nights, including a family with 4 very young children and a large group of Mums and children of various ages who were originally connected to a Paremata pre-school play-group and bound for Turere Hut.

Also 3 sets of earnest chaps aiming to hunt - and also met 3 pairs of chaps coming out after a fruitless hunting trip. Various other walkers in singles, pairs or more and all with dogs - on leads. Some just day-walking and others intending to stay a night or two. One big fast walking chap off to Mt Matthews but not intending to climb to the top. I have never seen the track so busy! There were so many that I lost count!

Catchpool Restoration Project Update

A few highlights from Peter Cooper's recent project update are below.

- * Seed collection has been a focus as we re-stock the seedling nursery with native species like Akeake, five-finger, karamū, mahoe, toetoe, harakeke, pukatea, kawakawa and tarata.
- * A few recent reports of heavy Myrtle Rust infections on Ramarama in the Remutaka Forest Park (mostly near Big Bend on the Orongorongo River banks) have come through via the Myrtle Rust Reporter/ iNaturalistNZ. Ramarama species appear to be particularly susceptible to this pathogen. There is some concern that we may lose these populations. Fortunately (so far at least) our precious rata, kanuka and manuka species are showing considerable resistance.
- * We welcome two new volunteers - James Miller and Will Collins. Both have been through their induction session recently and will also take up trapping duties for the OW and ST lines.
- * Nikau palms were planted for Karen Baker who sponsored a tree as a memorial gift. These were planted on the banks above that wee feeder stream in the shady, kawakawa-dominated native bush area between the wetlands and the Catchpool Campground.

Waharoa

The beautiful new Waharoa (gateway) at the start of the Orongorongo Track was blessed at an opening ceremony in December. The Waharoa was commissioned by the Department of Conservation and carved by Ihaia Puketapu of Taranaki Whānui.



Photo: Peter Cooper

The Ōrongorongo Valley is named after Rongorongo (c.1280AD) and who is depicted in the middle whakairo (carving) below.

To complete the project, DOC will be commissioning an information panel telling the story of rongorongo. The information Kiosk directly behind the Waharoa will also be updated and moved.



In Memoriam - Colin Ryder

Contributed by: Melody McLaughlin

Colin has been described as a "giant of the conservation world". He raised tens of millions of dollars for different conservation projects over the years including Taputeranga Marine Reserve and Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui. When I first started in this game and I was asking around about how to go about getting funding for the kiwi, all roads led to Colin. Very generous with his time, happy to help and give me pointers on how to obtain funding from different sources. He will be missed by me and many others.

Dogs and Kiwi

Contributed by: Alan Peck & Melody McLaughlin

When the Trust released kiwi in to the Remutaka Forest Park back in 2006 there was a requirement for DOC to amend their policy around dogs in the park. The Turere Valley catchment became a specific no-go zone for dogs except for management purposes, i.e., trained dogs to track kiwi.

Prior to the release of the kiwi, historically the park had long been a popular place for dog owners to take their dogs for long walks and tramps. The Trust surveyed over 200 dogs owners and park visitors to see if they would be happy with kiwi returned to the area. The overwhelming feedback was yes. Some dog owners were understandably concerned that they would no longer be able to access the park with their dog/s.

Dogs need to be on leads on DoC maintained tracks. This is about sharing the park tracks and ensuring everyone can enjoy the park and not be faced with an out of control dog as they walk along the tracks. The Trust then added another level of control for the benefit of the kiwi by introducing the 'Kiwi Avoidance Training' for dogs. This ensured people walking their dogs in the park were confident there was another control, apart from the lead. Avoidance training is not a silver bullet nor is it an excuse to have dogs off leads on the public tracks.

We know we have had kiwi killed by dogs in the park. In other parts of the country the main predator of kiwi are dogs! Recently a case, further north, involved a dog injuring a kiwi, which only survived because the dog owners took it to a vet. They were understandable horrified their dog had attacked a kiwi, not realising by not having their dog avoidance trained and encouraging their dog to chase and kill possums meant kiwi were at risk of that split second reaction by our furry friends.

Kiwi smell is to dogs what catnip is to cats, irresistible, and as kiwi have a very weak chest structure, even a gentle squeeze by a dog can kill a kiwi.

Pictured is a mature Remutaka female killed by a dog. Dogs will grab and shake their prey in seconds.



Thank you to all those dogs owners who keep their dogs under control. We run regular KAT courses during the year. The next course is 29th - 30th May. Applications open 2 weeks before this event, to get extra information and to be on the email list please contact Rosemary on kat@remutaka.nz

Please encourage your dog-owning friends to come along for training and re-training. You might also like to gently spread the word about keeping dogs on a lead.

Spotted in the Park

One of our awesome kiwi trackers Cathye spotted this bright green beauty in the Park.

Only found in the North Island, the Pūriri moth / pepetuna is New Zealand's largest moth with a wingspan of up to 150mm. It takes its name from the Pūriri tree which is one of the common hosts for the caterpillar. The caterpillar stage can last for up to six years.

The caterpillar is eaten by ruru, kākā and robin as well as cats, rats and possums. (Source: LandCare New Zealand)



Sankalpa Botanicals

Robyn and Pip from Sankalpa are keen supporters of the RCT through sales of their Ayurvedic oils. The two friends are passionate about well-being and healing using nature as their guide. Sankalpa stock 100% natural perfume and oils for arthritis and sinus sufferers - with Kiwi plant extracts. Their packaging has minimal ecological footprint and bottles are reusable.

We thank them for their kind support and wish their young business huge success. Please visit their website www.sankalpa.co.nz for more information.

Our Sponsors/Supporters

Thank you to the following businesses and organisations as well as all of our kiwi, transmitter, trap and tree sponsors for their new and continued annual support.

