

THE REMU-TALKER

Caught on Camera

The main threat to young chicks, like Mata and Riki's, is predation by stoats. A stoat was seen on one of the trail cams staking out the incubation burrow several weeks before this chick hatched.

The Trust added some extra traps around the burrow to try to protect it, which we continue to monitor. We haven't caught the stoat but it hasn't been seen for quite a while now so may have moved on or been caught in one of the Ridgeline traps.

We also detected a feral cat on our trail cam network close to the burrow as seen in the still below. Thankfully it has not been seen for several weeks.



The trail cams allow us to observe the behaviour of predators around the traps. This may form the basis of future study to improve the efficacy of the traps and network itself.

Mata and Riki

The trust actively monitors our kiwi population in the Park and environs using acoustic recorders. We detected a kiwi pair duetting on the North side of the Sledge Track (Wainuiomata Recreation area) late last year.

We named the duetting kiwi pair Mata (female) and Riki (male) in honour of the Wellington astronomical Society's dark skies events that are held regularly in the nearby Wainuiomata Water Catchment. 24 June 2022 will also see the first public holiday to celebrate Matariki, a time for remembrance.

We found the male's incubation burrow using a challenging procedure of back-tracking acoustic recordings of calls and footsteps, from a new method described by us in: *Ellis, S.M. and Marsland, S, 2022. Sounding out the nest: Unobtrusive localisation of North Island brown kiwi (Apteryx mantelli) incubation burrows, New Zealand Journal of Ecology, 46(1), 34-63.*

The chick hatched in early March, so it was only a few days old when it was captured on the trail cams seen below. Kiwi chicks are precocious - kiwi parents do not need to feed their young because chicks can survive off the rich egg yolk for several days. After about 5 days, they start to venture outside the natal burrow and feed themselves.



Here is the [link to the trail cam video](#) of the chick learning how to probe for food just outside his incubation burrow. (Opens in YouTube)

From the President's Desk

For this issue I want to acknowledge once again the incredible efforts that our volunteers put in to achieve our Vision – “A thriving, healthy forest ecosystem, rich in indigenous species, which can be enjoyed by the wider community.” This Vision guides everything we do as an organisation.

To me, one example stands out - the Annual Trapping Report for last year shows that we have 945 manual traps, of which 694 are of the DOC 200/250 type. These are spread over 42 traplines, each with its own trapline leader and team. During the last trapping year, you recorded a massive 15,528 individual trap checks on those 694 traps! An amazing effort, doubly so given the Covid restrictions, thank you all.

There was a similar effort with the Catchpool Restoration project where Peter Cooper and his team have planned and organised many hours of community and corporate volunteer work to plant seedlings grown in our nursery.

I don't normally like to identify individual efforts, but several academic achievements are worthy of note. First, Susan Ellis and Stephen Marsland have had a paper published in the prestigious NZ Journal of Ecology describing their method for finding kiwi nests and chicks without the need for transmitters on adults, using acoustic recorder technology. Then Maddie Deacon's paper has provided invertebrate species diversity baseline data on which to base a monitoring programme, along with a fantastic poster showing the key invertebrate species in our rohe. And our volunteer statistician Winifred Long has been analysing our trapping data to produce papers for her post-grad university course.

Last month I advised the Committee of my intention not to seek re-election at our next AGM. The RCT has had 4 Presidents before me - Vivian Pohl (our inaugural President in 1988), Don Millward, Bill McCabe and Ian Armitage. I was elected in 2014. Each President has made significant contributions and Ian continues to do so.

In my view, the next big step for the Trust is around improvements in predator control. The forthcoming audit of, and subsequent improvements to, our trapping network has the potential to substantially improve the biodiversity of the 7500 ha we operate in. This will require additional funding and fresh governance and, when successful, will continue to place the Trust in the top echelon of volunteer groups working on Public Conservation lands. Added to this is the opportunity to embrace new technology. This is the ideal opportunity for someone new to come and lead the Trust in the exciting years ahead.

We have a very interesting history, a proud record of physical and biodiversity achievements and a committed group of volunteers. A new person is needed to maintain this going forward.

Please can you give some serious thought as to whom this might be? Contact me or any other Committee member about what is required. There will be a formal call for nominations for all Committee positions except Treasurer and Secretary in early September and the nominations will be listed in the AGM notification papers in late September/early October. There will still be scope for nominations from the floor at the AGM.

All the very best and stay safe!

Geoff

Geoff Cameron, President, Remutaka Conservation Trust

Key Findings:

- * The Remutaka Forest Park has historically been and is still home to a diverse array of invertebrate life. Despite the sampling taking place in early spring where low invertebrate activity was expected, up to 67 possibly distinct species were identified, representing at least 34 different families of invertebrates.
- * Key indicator species were found to be present including - wētā, litter hoppers, peripatus and stag beetles. This is a good indication of the overall wellbeing of the forest ecosystem.
- * There were notable differences in species diversity between sampling locations. The Catchpool Valley sites yielded greater invertebrate diversity than the Turere catchment sites, and the McKerrow track site contained the lowest diversity and abundance.
- * A surprisingly large diversity of invertebrate types was found under tree wraps, which are actually installed in the forest to monitor lizard activity. Invertebrates found under these wraps included slugs, beetles, snails, centipedes, millipedes, wētā, silverfish and spiders (representing 24 distinct families).
- * Freshwater invertebrate diversity was low, but abundance was high in the Catchpool stream.

If you are interested to read more about the role that invertebrates play in the Remutaka Forest, or about the results of this sampling work, please contact us for the report.

Remutaka Invertebrate Study

In October 2021 volunteer Maddie Deacon, conducted an invertebrate survey for the Remutaka Conservation Trust, as part of her Masters course at Victoria University. Invertebrates are animals with no backbone or spinal column - for example snails, worms and wētā. Invertebrates play a hugely important role in forest ecosystems, but are often overlooked in conservation work, making them a 'hidden taonga'.

It was important for the Trust to understand more about the invertebrate life within the Remutaka forest, in order to ensure that our conservation work is supporting our native species at all levels of the ecosystem. If the forest lacks a sufficiently abundant and diverse array of invertebrate, it will struggle to carry out natural processes and become fully self-sufficient in the long-term.

Maddie used a range of invertebrate sampling methods to collect photographs of invertebrates, such as soil samples, tree wraps, visual observation and stream netting. The sampling methods were designed to target a diverse range of species, including leaf-litter, soil-dwelling, arboreal and freshwater invertebrates. Samples were taken in the Catchpool Valley area, the Turere gully and McKerrow and Whakanui tracks. The photos were later examined to identify each specimen to the highest taxa level possible, and document them in an inventory.



Pleioplectron hudsoni, one of three cave wētā species identified. Six species are known to reside in the Remutaka area.



Flat-backed millipede. Millipede are one of the few groups of invertebrates able to break up dead wood and plant debris to aid decomposition.



Odontria sp., a type of Scarab beetle. Scarabs often recycle dung and dead plant and animal material.



Soil centipede, of the order Geophilomorpha. They help aerate the soil by moving through it allowing water and nutrients to reach the roots of plants.

You can review the key findings summarised in the panel on the left. Based on this work, the Trust now have a baseline invertebrate inventory and a better understanding of the array of invertebrate life within the Park. Going forward, we will be conducting more monitoring in different seasons to gain a better picture of seasonal invertebrate activity. As the tree wraps proved to be very useful invertebrate monitoring tools, we will be installing them in other areas of the park.

Volunteer Profile John and Evelyn Rush

John and Evelyn Rush were DOC contractors in the Park for many years. In this role they were responsible for servicing the huts, taking campground bookings, mowing the lawns and generally looking after the place as well as providing a mean meat pie and coffee at the Catchpool centre.



John was very active in the early days of the kiwi project. He led the initial scoping of tracks for stoat control before the kiwi committee was formed. He was an active member of both the Trust and the kiwi committees.

John started the pest control in the Catchpool which led to the idea that we could release kiwi in the Park. The routes he marked and trapped, along with stalwarts Kevin O'Donnell and Bill Milne, are still trapped today by a much bigger pool of volunteers.

Melody visited John and Evelyn earlier in the year, now happily retired to Mamaku, Rotorua.

"Then with an ounce of luck and endless dedication, this place will once more echo to the sound of birds as numerous as the stars in the sky"

John Rush on the Remutaka pest control efforts, DomPost article 2004

Predator Control Network Audit

The continued survival of the kiwi population is reliant on an efficient predator control network.

The number of traps to be serviced and maintained by volunteers has grown significantly over the years with parts of the network first installed in 2003 (19 years ago). These traps have been kept operational by the dedicated effort of the Trust's Fixit Team and the committed efforts of our volunteer trappers.

In addition to the regular checks and repair that currently takes place, a complete review of the network is now underway to identify a priority replacement regime with a view to replace some or all the network over the next 5 years.

As part of this review the team will also identify where there may be a requirement to increase trap density and expand the network.

Purpose:

To maintain the efficacy of the predator control network in the Southern Remutaka to ensure the continued survival of the kiwi population in the park.

High Level Timeline:



Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
Identify planning team	Collect Information on Traps	Order Traps/technologies
Define Criteria for audit	Tweak Criteria as required	Helicopter new in/old out
Audit kit requirement	Apply for funding	Trap deployment resources
Order and test trap/option	Request DOC support	Visibility of ongoing cost (5 years)
Research	Research replacement options	

Expected Outcomes:

- * End of life and faulty traps identified
- * Visibility of costs
- * Plan in place for replacement, with timeline
- * Reduced fixit callouts
- * More efficient pest control network

Introducing Vlad Macoiviuc, Kaiāpiha Papa Atawhai - Wainuiomata Regional Park



My name is Vlad, and I was originally born in Romania, but I grew up in Auckland with the Waitakere Ranges being my first taste of New Zealand bush.

Over the years, as my love for the outdoors grew led to a change in careers and enrolment in ranger school down in Nelson. During that period I was sent on placement to Kaitoke Regional Park as a summer ranger and got to meet and work alongside the Parks team at Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC). After the completion of the course I a number of years with DOC Motueka in their Recreational and Visitor Assets team in some real great places in Abel Tasman and Kahurangi National Park before joining back up with GWRC

I am now the ranger for Wainuiomata Regional Park – and have been for the last 6 months-ish. I will be honest, I have only discovered the place last year while helping out the previous ranger, but I instantly saw its magic and now I cannot think of a better place I'd rather be. I hope to carry on the great work that's been done here previously and look for exciting new ways of maintaining and showcasing this hidden gem.

From the Archives

This 2004 newspaper article showcases the success of the newly developed DOC200 stoat traps tested in the Remutaka Forest Park.

The trap was designed by Lower Hutt artist Phil Waddington along with DOC officers Ian McFadden and Darren Peters. The new traps were designed for an instant humane kill as well as being easy to set and less dangerous to trappers. These traps are now the industry-standard kill trap for stoats, rats, and hedgehog

Following the successful trial 227 additional traps were deployed in the park, kickstarting the trapping network we have today.

In 2022 we have 655 DOC200 and 46 of the larger DOC250 in our trapping network.



Preliminary Bat Survey Results

Fanny Leduc and her team of volunteers have almost completed the bat survey of the Park. The areas surveyed covered habitats suitable to long-tailed bats or lesser short-tailed bats and extended through most of the accessible parts of the park from Catchpool to Cross Creek and from McKerrow to Waiorongomai.

Unfortunately so far no bats have been detected. The full survey analysis will be completed over winter and a report compiled for DOC and the Trust. The report will also review the survey design and provide recommendations for any future studies.

If you have seen bats in the park before we would appreciate any information such as location, time of night, season and year. You can email info@remutaka.nz

We would like to thank all the volunteers who put their hands up to bush-bash their way around the park and climb steep banks and trees to set and remove the recorders. We would also like to thank PlaceMakers Seaview for their contribution of batteries for the recorders.



Fanny Leduc had to perform some acrobatics deploying recorders at Siberia on the Remutaka rail trail.

Stoked about Dead Stoat

Pat van Berkel, Programme Coordinator for Pest Free Upper Hutt, sent us a fantastic account of his 2 day visit to the Remutaka Forest Park over summer.

Starting at the Catchpool carpark, Pat and his wife enjoying using the wind-up birdsong stations before making their way to Jan's Hut, an easy 2 hour walk in via the Ōrongorongo Track.

They were delighted to hear what they thought was a kiwi during the night. On the Clay Ridge track they encountered a dead stoat in a trap. As a predator free champion, a dead stoat is a pleasing sight despite the evidence that active trapping is still needed.



We thank Pat for sharing his Remutaka Forest Park experience with us.

Since [Pest Free Upper Hutt](#) started in 2018 they have caught over 13,000 predators. One of their key bird corridors goes from Keith George Memorial Park to the Wainuiomata Mainland Island where some of our RFP kiwi have taken up residence. Tino pai rawa atu!

Wild and Muddy Feet

A volunteer on a GWRC guided walk spotted this clear kiwi footprint in the mud in Skull Gully within the Wainuiomata Water Catchment area.



This mainland island, with its lush native forests and restricted public access, is a known home to some of our wild kiwi.

We are always keen to hear from anyone who hears, sees a kiwi, their tracks or poo in or around the Remutakas. Location would be great and if you can, a GPS location. This will all add to the information mix on the kiwi locations and help us keep kiwi safe.

email: kiwi@remutaka.nz or text: 0275712451

Native Flora in the Park

Shrividya Ravi snapped these great pics to share with us.

Check out this amazing blue mushroom reminiscent of smurfette but more scientifically called *Entoloma hochstetteri*.

The small native mushroom is a distinctive all-blue colour, while the gills have a slight reddish tint from the spores

The Māori name is werewere-kokako, because its colour is similar to the blue wattle of the kōkako bird.



Left is the native Easter orchid / raupeka (*Earina autumnalis*).

Its dainty white flowers are beautifully perfumed and flower in autumn.

Next time you spot something interesting in the Park you can use the iNaturalistNZ app on your smartphone to provide you with rapid confirmation of your observations.

Aerial 1080 Drop for Southern Remutakas

EcoFX and OSPRI New Zealand have notified us of a possum control aerial 1080 drop planned for May/June in the Southern Remutaka range. Please check signage when visiting the park and follow these guidelines.

- * Do not touch bait
- * Watch children at all times
- * Do not eat animals from the treatment area and buffer zones
- * Bait or carcasses are deadly to dogs

For more information please refer to www.ospri.co.nz

Kiwi Avoidance Training Postponed

Kiwi avoidance training has been postponed till after November due to OSPRI's possum control operation in the Southern Remutakas. The recommendation is no dogs in the Park for 6 months after the drop which is planned for May/June 2022.

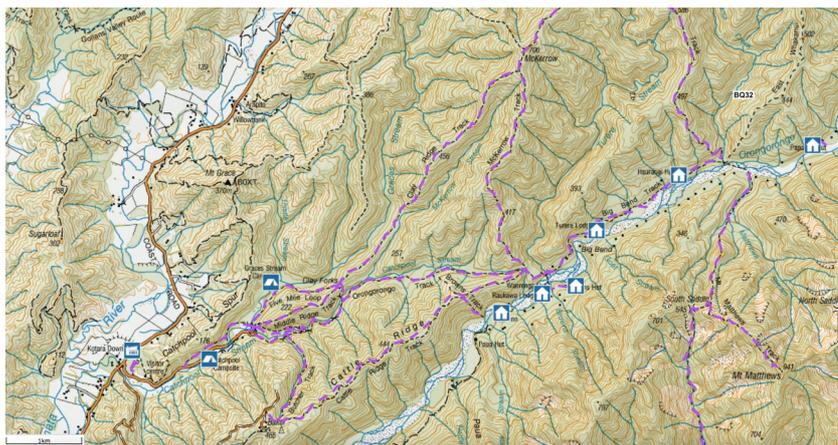
If you need to renew or get a certificate for kiwi avoidance training for your dog/s for hunting (in other areas) please contact one of the following certified trainers:

- * Jim Pottinger from National Park - 021 259 8299 - or
- * Willie Marsh from Woodville - 027 385 8191, willymarsh@inspire.net.nz

DOC in the Park

Elly Peters, Senior Ranger has provided us with a few highlights of what DOC has been up to in the valley over the past months:

- * In late summer we sprayed the wilding pines in the Catchpool valley, using helicopter boom spray. We were told it will take several months up to a year until we would see the results. But optimal weather conditions resulted in a faster result: the pines are browning (i.e. dying) already. Nevertheless a few pines in the valley still need treatment, as they weren't captured by the aerial operation.
- * The pines on further up the Cattle Ridge Road have not yet been harvested. Timber world market prices have plummeted below production costs. Therefore the harvesting company contracted decided to postpone any activity to next summer. The current harvest operation in the valley is on private land.
- * The Rural Connectivity Group are planning to install a cell-phone tower on the Cattle Ridge Road. Installation is planned within the coming 6 months. After that we expect cell phone coverage for most of the park, making any activities in the park safer and immediately instagrammable.
- * Popular huts: The Ōrongorongo huts are the third most booked huts in the North Island having seen the biggest increase in bookings in the past 12 months in the North Island. Over the Summer months (Dec 21 to Feb 22) there were 2290 visitors across the six huts. The 32-bunk Turere Lodge accounted for almost half the visitors. Jan's Hut was the most popular hut booked with the highest occupancy rate of 82%.



An overnight stay in the park is an adventure not to be missed. There are six huts in the Ōrongorongo Valley - seen in the map above. These can be booked via the DOC website at [this link](https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/wellington-kapiti/places/remutaka-forest-park/?tab-id=50578): <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/wellington-kapiti/places/remutaka-forest-park/?tab-id=50578>

Trapping Adventures in Fiordland

Contributed by: Geoff & Linda Todd

In March, Linda and I were part of a team of 8 to maintain traps the length of the Irene Burn over 540 sites in untracked remote Fiordland.

This trapline is still new, only started 3 years ago. It is part of the 3 Valleys project and largely funded by a private individual, plus volunteers and DOC and a few others. Most of the traps are A24s with a smattering of DOC 150s. They are placed about every 100meters down the true left almost all the length to Charles Sound and about half of the true right. The steep hill sides were very active and some six traps were lost under a big recent landslide.

Assembling in Millbrook, Arrowtown, with a trailer and ute full of gear we had already lost our first person to COVID. We seven helicoptered in from Te Anau to our respective upper and lower bases, dumped our gear then the three of us forming the lower valley team flew up to the mid reaches to work back to our base, a newly constructed bivy. This was by far the hardest day as the river dropped through a narrow gorge with significant bluffs to climb over and poor GPS reception.



In the gorge quite a few traps were not where they were meant to be. We discovered our cell phone GPS was better than the Garmin which couldn't seem to spot satellites.

After the gorge we had a beautiful wide valley, plenty of deer trails (and sign), lots of bird life and, in particular, black pīwakawaka and black weka. Between our two teams we spotted nine different who which made all our efforts feel worthwhile. One of us was even buzzed by a kārearea.

The upper team lost a member in a fall and he was evacuated on a sling with a badly damaged arm. Thank goodness for PLBs.

Our two teams reunited mid-week to finish off the very lower reaches. The plan had been to pack raft down and walk back up. However, Fiordland did not live up to its reputation and the river was too low and the bush was so beautiful that the walk was not a chore.

Of interest was the height of the A24s and the chirp system. The chirp system is meant to download trap activity to a nearby cell phone. However, this turned out to not work very well and one could spend quite a bit of time trying to wake up the chirp to no avail. We decided not to spend valuable time trying to engage with a system that needs further development.

The A24s were required to be placed quite high on the trees so that weka and kiwi couldn't put their beaks into the traps (and to survive floods in some areas). We wondered whether this affected their efficacy. However, good news, on our last morning there was one dead rat at the base of the trap near our camp.

Help Needed

The Remutaka Conservation Trust is currently seeking the services of an auditor to undertake the audit of its 2021/22 financial accounts. We are looking for a Chartered Accountant or someone with the equivalent qualifications. Some brief details are provided here.

The financial year ends on 30 June and the accounts are presented at the AGM in October. The accounts are not complicated or large. Annual revenue and expenditure for the past two years has been in the order of \$50,000 and Net Assets are around \$80,000. All financial information is held on Xero meaning that it can be accessed remotely.

If you or anyone you know is interested in providing this service to the Trust, further information, including previous financial statements, can be obtained from our Treasurer by contacting treasurer@remutaka.nz.

How to Donate

Please email sponsors@remutaka.nz with your donation amount and contact details. You will receive a receipt and we are a registered charity (CC37211) for tax deductible claims.

Deposits can be made directly to Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust 02 0544 0002549 00 (make sure that you also include your surname so that we can associate the payment with your donation)

Thank you to the following key sponsors as well as all of you who sponsor kiwi, transmitters, traps and trees for your continued annual support



William Noel Pharazyn Charitable Trust



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



*Mau māi, haere māi
Kia mau ki to Maoritanga*
Te Runanganui o Taranaki Whanui

