

THE REMU-TALKER

Spring in the Park

Our resident kiwi population is getting ready for their second clutch of the season. The first clutch of chicks will have left the nest already with Mum and Dad kiwi saying haere rā.



It's not an empty nest situation for long as the kiwi pairs prepare for, or are already sitting on, their second clutch of two eggs.

Spring in the Archives



Kiwi arrives
Spring has heralded in a significant milestone in the Rimutaka Forest Park, with the first kiwi chick left to hatch naturally in the park being born in September.

PRECIOUS ADDITION: Rimutaka Forest Park Trust volunteer Susan Ellis with the new arrival. Photo: RFFT

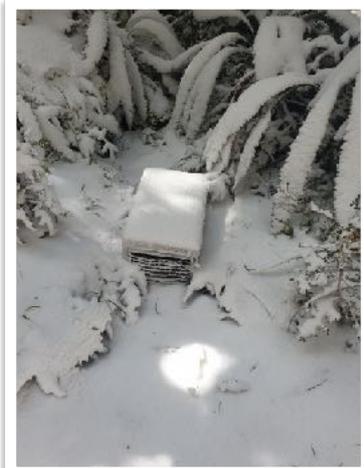
An "ecstatic" Melody McLaughlin, of the Rimutaka Forest Park Trust, says the chick is a result of a pairing between two captive bred birds which were released into the park in 2006. "We have been re-introducing kiwi into the park for the past five years and this is a positive step towards the kiwi becoming a self-sustaining, free-ranging population." Up until now eggs have been incubated and hatched at specialist facilities, but with more than 30 kiwi now in the park, and the success of the Trust's predator trapping programme, a decision was made to start leaving some chicks to hatch naturally in the wild. "We will still be using Operation Nest Egg in some instances," Ms McLaughlin says. "In this case we knew the parents of the chick had had previous breeding success and we were confident they could produce live chicks."

Oct 7 2009
Wainuiomata News

October Snow on East Whakanui

Volunteers Janette Roberts and Lynne White encountered unseasonal snow on the East Whakanui (EW) trap run on the 7th of October. The EW run is the longest in the Remutaka Forest Park with 76 DOC200 traps and 26 A24s. It requires walking between Sunny Grove and Catchpool, with a total climb of about 1000m. During a run the trappers typically replace erayze bait in 38 traps, eggs in around 8 traps and service 2-3 A24s.

That day, Janette and Lynne cleared 20 rats and a stoat on the trap run. They noted that many of the rats were very fresh, and surmised they may have been attracted to the shelter of the traps. Trappers on the neighbouring Whakanui run the following day also made the same observation. On the downside, Janette and Lynne said that many of the trap lids were frozen shut and difficult to open, making for an even longer day.



Annual General Meeting - 19th October 2022

RCT President Geoff Cameron commenced the meeting with a tribute to Cathye Haddock, one of our very active members who tragically died in a boating accident off Kaikoura this year. Geoff noted that her husband, Peter Simpson, was at the meeting and Geoff passed on the best wishes of the Trust to Peter.

Geoff outlined some of the positives from the past 12 months including the work on the 5-Year Operating Plan and the future revenue from the long awaited pine harvesting. Geoff noted that the Trust is an evidence based organisation and that the good work we are doing is contributing to the science based knowledge around conservation.

A task for the 22/23 committee is to explore the implications of the new Incorporated Societies Act. Geoff talked about the ongoing trap audit and noted that this will be an expensive project and it is likely to involve changing a considerable number of traps and possible relocation of some trap-lines. He also reminded the meeting that there is a continuing need to secure funding for all our work.

Karen Baker presented the audited financial statements showing that the Trust is in a healthy position at the moment due to successful ongoing fundraising.

Congratulations and thanks to Peter Reimann, Sarah Hutchison, Tim Stotts, Pierre Tellier, Cathy Wylie, Ingrid Greenslade, Grant Watt, Anne Grant, and Alwyn Rees who were presented with 10 Year Service Certificates.

After 7 years as President, Geoff Cameron has decided to step down. Geoff has seen the Trust through some difficult times. He has been very committed to the Trust over those years and he will be handing over an organisation that is in a good space.

Our new President is Gerry Brackenbury. Gerry comes to us with a long and very successful involvement with conservation in Northland, where he lived until recently. He contributed for over 40 years to conservation and natural history in Whangarei and Northland on a voluntary basis. In 2016 he was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in The Queen's 90th Birthday Honours List for services to conservation. We welcome Gerry to the Trust.



At the end of the AGM, Ian Armitage presented a gift, on behalf of the Trust, to Geoff Cameron to thank him for all the time and effort that Geoff had dedicated to the Trust. The fact that we had one Past President, presenting a gift to his successor, in the presence of the new President did not go unnoticed.

New RCT President, Gerry Brackenbury (left) and the outgoing President, Geoff Cameron (right)

22/23 RCT Committee

Along with a new President there are a few changes to the Management Committee for 2022/23.

One of our longest serving and best known members, Peter Cooper, has decided to step away from the Vice President role and the Committee but will continue his excellent work on the RCT website and Catchpool restoration.

Our new Vice President is Malcolm Arnot pictured here with Fanny Leduc who taking on his vacated secretary role. Fanny has been an active Committee member for the past year.



Joining our returning committee members, we also have Rosemary Thompson who is back after a 3 year break.

We are delighted to welcome a new member, Sean Gurr.

RCT Committee:

President: Gerry Brackenbury

Vice President: Malcolm Arnot

Secretary: Fanny Leduc

Treasurer: Karen Baker

Committee: Winifred Long, Alan Peck, Pierre Tellier, Geoff Cameron, Rosemary Thompson, Sean Gurr.

Gold Stars for Gipsy and KAT

Jacob Hulme-Moir and his dog Gipsy recently encountered a kiwi in the park. Jacob's employer Trap and Trigger routinely put their working dogs through the Kiwi Avoidance Training (KAT) programme. Jacob shared with us what happened:

"We walked within about 1 meter of (the kiwi) which is when she let me know it was there.

I pushed some crown fern away with my foot thinking it was a possum and the dog stood behind me the whole time. The dog is usually ahead of me and pushing if it's something she's keen on.

I took a quick video and the dog kept a 1-2 meter distance from the bird with no interest in coming closer. When we left she didn't try stay around sniffing at it."



If you have a dog and visit the Remutaka Forest Park for hunting or recreation you need to get it avoidance trained. A return visit in a year is required to ensure that your dog shows continued aversion. Contact kat@remutaka.nz for more information.

A wonderful experience for Jacob and a great behavioural response from Gipsy. It's fantastic to see the results of Kiwi Avoidance Training out in the park. This programme is keeping our kiwi safe. Top marks for Gipsy and Jacob, Trap and Trigger as well as for our KAT programme.



Jacob and Gipsy working in, and enjoying, the Park



Pine Harvesting

The harvest of the last commercially viable pines in the Catchpool Valley is set to begin in mid-November. The operation is expected to continue until late summer/early autumn - weather and port closures dependent.

DOC continues to work closely with the Trust, iwi and Moa to shape the outcomes of the revenue investment programme.

Grace's Campsite Closed

DOC has decided to close the Grace's Stream Campsite in the Remutaka Forest Park to protect visitors from dangerous trees.

The popularity of the site has been its downfall, with high numbers of visitors causing damage to the forest through soil compaction. This has led to many trees dying and an increased risk of tree-fall in the campsite.

Ultimately, DOC is not able to manage the risks at site so the Department has decided to close the campsite and remove all facilities there. Signage will go up before the summer holidays advising visitors of the dangers of camping there.

Save the Date - 27 Nov

The Remutaka Conservation Trust end of year BBQ is on **Sunday 27 November at 4pm in Petone.**

Mark the date in your diary to come to share food, meet other volunteers and supporters and have a relaxing evening

Registration details will be sent out by email on 18 November.

Catchpool Valley

The Catchpool Valley was once a magnificent rimu and rātā forest, with a significant lowland broadleaf component. Radiata Pines were planted by the NZ Forest Service in the 1970s-1980s and quickly became the most common species in the southern part of the valley.

Logging of the majority of the radiata pine forest commenced in early 2002 and continued into late 2004/early 2005. The photo below was taken around 2002 before much of the stand was harvested.



Since 2009 volunteers from the Remutaka Conservation Trust - with help from DOC, hundreds of corporate volunteers and thousands of school students - have hand-pulled countless pine seedlings and cut-and-poisoned thousands of larger wilding pines from the most accessible lower slopes and valley restoration sites.



The comparison photo above was taken in October 2022. It shows the re-vegetation in natives along the valley, as well as the dying wilding pines, which were sprayed in early 2022.

First Round to Eddie

Eddie the kiwi gave this trainee kiwi handler a memorable introduction to the kiwi's feisty nature and sharp claws.

Eddie says "mate, hope your tetanus jabs are up to date!"



Remutaka Lore

Did you know that one of the last confirmed sightings of a living huia - a magnificent member of the wattlebird family - was in the Remutaka Ranges?

Huia were once widespread in the eastern North Island primarily in the Ruahine, Tararua and Remutaka ranges, northern Wairarapa, as well as the hills around Wellington.

The colourful feathers of the huia were highly-prized by both Maori and early European settlers, who hunted them to eventual extinction.

Volunteer Profile - Geoff Cameron

Our outgoing Trust President Geoff Cameron joined in 2015 after being approached by outgoing President Ian Armitage. Geoff knew Trust stalwart Bill McCabe through Rural Fire so was already aware of the work being done.

Geoff's main motivation to stay involved came from observing the tremendous long-term commitment from other volunteers. He says "The myriad of tasks they all get involved in, year on year, is simply astounding. I lost count of the number of 10-year certificates I presented, and a number of members will be coming up to their 20-years next year. That is truly amazing in the world of volunteer activity"

A long term motivation was to ensure that the revenue from the last of the pines planted in the 1980's was used for conservation in the Park. Back in 2015, Ian and Geoff presented a paper to the DOC DG and lobbied the Minister Maggie Barrie. DOC finally awarded a harvesting contract - only for Covid to intervene, and the NZ/US dollar exchange rate to crash along with the Chinese property market. The harvest operation is commencing imminently.

Asked about his highlights, Geoff lists some his most vivid ones as:

- * Attending the ceremony for the last of our ONE kiwi chicks. We partnered with Village Accommodation for naming rights and they carried the bird onto the Marae where it was formally welcomed home. That was a lovely experience and I finally got to touch a real live Kiwi!
- * Checking traps with Grant Watt's "Brat Pack". After a very full day my previously trusty boots finally came apart. The pink marking tape found another use for keeping my boots together!
- * As part of the Committee, agreeing to a thoroughly researched proposal from the Kiwi Operations Group to move away from intensive monitoring of selected individual kiwi to a population monitoring approach - a move towards the goal of a wild, self-sustaining kiwi population.

Geoff is remaining on the Committee as Immediate Past President to provide support to Gerry - as Ian did for him. Asked what he might do post-presidential duties, he suggests photographing the RCT T-shirt in other exotic parks and reserves - we might hold him to that!

In Geoff's own words: "The RCT is an amazing group of people. I don't know of other conservation groups with such a long history and who have run on such shoe-string budgets as this group. I want to continue whatever input I can to ensure we keep going with Kiwi and other native flora and fauna flourishing in the Park. Nga Mihi"

Flora & Fauna in the Park



Image: (c) mattward

Matt Ward captured this beautiful Peka ā waka (*earina mucronata*) in flower within the Remutaka Forest Park on 18 October. This New Zealand native orchid flowers during spring and early summer.

The orchid has distinctive pointed leaves and small flowers growing along a stem. It has a drooping nature and grows on the trunks and branches of other forest trees.



Image: Andrew Morrison

Peripatus/Ngaokeoke are unusual animals of the forest floor. They are called 'living fossils' as they are remarkably unchanged from 500 million years ago. Also known as velvet worms, they look a bit like caterpillars and have pairs of stumpy legs along the length of their body.

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.

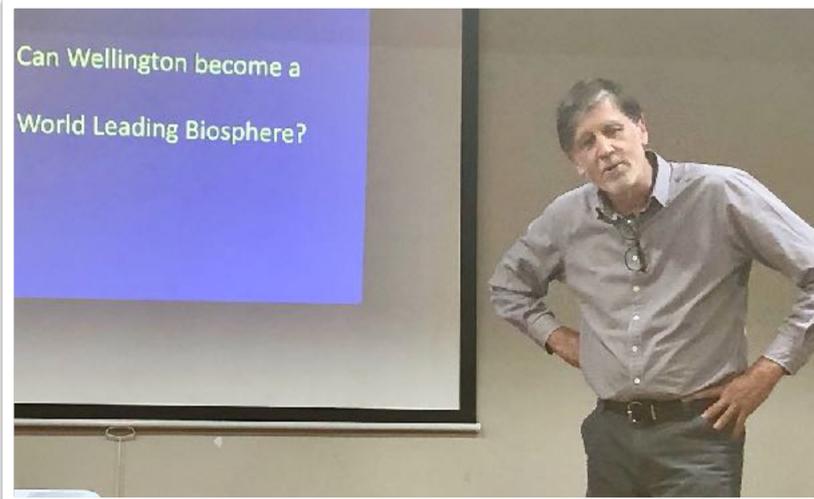
www.remutaka.nz

People are the Solution

AGM Guest Speaker Paul (Scratch) Jansen set the Trust a challenge back in 2004/5 to introduce kiwi into the Park. He came along to the AGM to sing our praises, commenting that the Remutaka kiwi are a significant population in the overall management of the North Island brown kiwi.

Paul's message was simple. It was summed up in his words "People aren't the problem. People are the solution". He emphasised the importance of getting people involved in conservation and he stated that it was community efforts that had played a significant role in averting the extinction of the NI brown kiwi. He was quite clear, however, that the battle has not been won. Although the NI brown kiwi has been removed from the endangered list, habitable territory continues to contract and this poses a real threat. The NI brown can only stay off the endangered list if community support continues at least at the current level.

Paul also talked about the proposed fenced sanctuary in the Wainuiomata catchment area. He said that the number one motive for pushing this project is to provide more suitable habitat for kākāpō as the existing spaces are not able to support any significant increase in breeding numbers. The mature podocarp forest in the catchment area, especially with its large rimu, would be perfect. He believes that the proposed sanctuary would continue to provide excellent habitat for our kiwi and the fact that a large number of them would be protected by a fence would free up Trust resources for other areas.



The photo shows Scratch talking to his opening slide which asks "Can Wellington become a World Leading Biosphere?". By the end of his entertaining talk, the answer was clearly "yes".

Introducing Elly Peters Department of Conservation



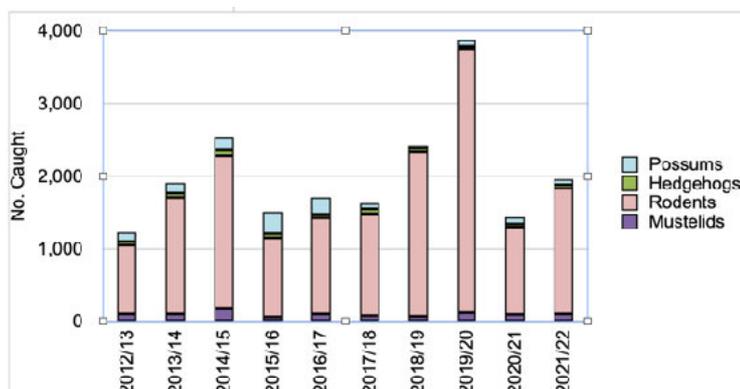
Kia ora! Ko Elly tōku ingoa. Nō Hamburg ahau. E mahi ana au hei Kaitiaki matua ao hapori kei te Papa Atawhai. I was born in Germany but since my late teens I've basically uprooted myself because I wanted to live "abroad". Driven by my passion for sustainability and conservation I was lucky to work in various places in Latin America and Europe.

After my degree in Natural Resource Management, I worked in sustainable agri-systems for WWF Belgium and International. Love brought me to Aotearoa in 2017 where I started working for DOC, first as a Marine Policy advisor and since 2020 as Community Senior Ranger for the Kapiti-Wellington district.

My role covers the programme management of the community team. We work on anything that doesn't neatly fit into the existing programmes of the Biodiversity, or the Recreation & Historic Teams. I've been working closely with the Remutaka Conservation Trust and other stakeholders on a strategic approach to the Remutaka Forest Park. One of the core projects I'm currently working on is the pines harvest in the Catchpool valley, as well as meeting DOC's obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi.

Annual Predator Catch Results

The Trust's trapping year ended on 30 September which means that Winifred Long has been busy compiling the 2021/2022 annual trapping report. Her annual report summarises the catch by predator taxa for the 2021/22 trapping year and compares this with the predator mix for the previous nine years.



Summary of the graph above:

- * In 2021/22 88% of the pests caught were rodents (predominantly rats), up from 85% for the 2020/21 year.
- * The percentage of mustelids (stoats and weasels) reduced from 7% of the total catch in 2014/15 (the peak year for mustelid catch) to 6% in both 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- * Although the number of mustelids caught increased by 16 (18%) in the most recent year compared with 20/21, the number of rodents increased by 43%, affecting the ratio of mustelids to rodents and therefore the overall proportional mix.

Know Your Pest



Rat (Rodent)
Nga Manu Images



Stoat (Mustelid).
Nga Manu Images



Mustelids by size
Ferret, Stoat, Weasel
GWRC



Feral Cat



Hedgehog
GWRC



Possum

Help Needed

The Committee is looking for a volunteer or team of volunteers to replace Rosemary Thompson and Sarah Hutchison as sponsorship coordinator(s) for the Trust.

As a non profit volunteer run organisation, the Trust relies on funding for day to day operations and to promote our conservation work. The sponsorship coordinator(s) work with the committee to help secure funding and work with our amazing sponsors. Together with our sponsors and supporters we can achieve our goals.

If you are interested, or if you know of anyone else who might be, please email us sponsors@remutaka.nz. We will arrange an introduction to the role and support to get up and running.

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 mai, haere mai
Kia mau ki to Maoritanga*



Te Runanganui o Taranaki Whanui

