



'to the motu and back'

Kiwis for kiwi – Coromandel Peninsula
Regional Update – 5 May 2020

Dear Reader,

The aspiration that kiwi will once again become abundant, that their call will be heard by many throughout the Coromandel Peninsula is becoming real. This peninsula has the greatest rate of kiwi recovery in the country because so much of the land where kiwi live has active and efficient pest and predator control in place. There are many, many individuals and groups involved in this effort, protecting native species and the environment where they live. Thank you all – every effort, no matter how big or small is significant. Every dead stoat helps a kiwi chick live.

But we're not there yet. Our aspiration is not yet fully realised. If we want our children, and our grandchildren, to hear kiwi from their bedrooms as they fall asleep at night, we need to keep going and we need to bring more people along with us.

Kiwi need our help. It is our job to keep them safe from what hurts them. While we can celebrate our rate of recovery on the peninsula – currently 4.8% - way above the aim of reversing -2% annual decline, we must also understand what the statistics are telling us. 75% of the land where kiwi live currently has pest and predator control in place. This means 25% of kiwi are vulnerable. This statistic also means kiwi can thrive, but only in spaces we remove predators from.

The opportunity ahead of us is to stack the numbers in favour of kiwi. If we increase the number of people involved in pest and predator control, and increase the places where pest and predator control is, there will be less things out there to hurt kiwi. This means more kiwi living in more parts of the peninsula, increasing the opportunity for people to experience the thrill of living next door to kiwi.

Introducing *'to the motu and back'*

'To the motu and back' is a key part of returning kiwi in abundance to the Coromandel Peninsula. To achieve this, a population of Coromandel brown kiwi is being established on predator-free Motutapu Island. Free from danger, kiwi

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released onto Motutapu Island will breed and create a robust population that can be returned to safe sites on the peninsula, expanding existing populations, boosting small remnant populations and even creating new ones.

The first stage of this project is to build a geographically well-represented founding population of kiwi on Motutapu Island. *Kiwis for kiwi* is sourcing this population through monitoring of adult male kiwi in a variety of spaces on the Coromandel Peninsula and lifting their eggs (male kiwi incubate eggs). This is called the Operation Nest Egg (ONE) programme. Eggs are hatched at a captive-rearing facility and then released onto Motutapu Island and this will be their forever home. We are using this programme strategically.

Many, many thanks to those who have already supported this kaupapa. We realise it may not have been an easy decision because it has meant a short-term loss for the kiwi population you represent and also because the decision was made on behalf of something that owns itself. We hope it brings you comfort and joy to know that within this project, kiwi have been moved to a safe space to make more kiwi that will return home in the not-so-distant future.

Where are we in this project?

We are halfway! 106 kiwi have been released onto Motutapu Island and the island population already has the representation of 52 sires. It is highly likely a number of chicks have hatched on Motutapu Island, so realistically there's more kiwi than just those released on the island.

The second stage of this project is to bring kiwi hatched on Motutapu Island home to the Coromandel Peninsula. Only non-microchipped birds will leave the island to maintain the founding population. They will also exceed a specified weight threshold to ensure they're big enough to fend off a stoat once back on the peninsula **and** they will only be released into spaces we know are safe. This will happen once the population on Motutapu Island reaches half of its carrying capacity.

What's next?

The next part of the project is to increase the representation of kiwi on Motutapu Island from the eastern area. To achieve this we are working with the Kapowai Kiwi Group. We would also like to return to the upper Coromandel area (avoiding the Port Charles and Stony Bay areas because of their contribution already) looking at sites on the western side of the peninsula, Papa Aroha, Tuatēawa as well as the Colville Hills.

Do you have friends or family who own property where kiwi are present who may be open to contributing genetics to the island population in these areas? Budget restrictions may limit our approach by fiscal year, but it would be great to start following up on any leads/contacts you may have. Please contact me directly.

A few details for you to communicate from the outset:

The catching and subsequent monitoring of these birds would operate under the *Kiwis for kiwi* authority and costs would be met by *Kiwis for kiwi*. The male kiwi will be monitored until they contributed up to 5 chicks for the Motutapu Island population and then the transmitter will be removed. If there was a sixth egg in the nest with the fifth, this would also be lifted, and provision would be made for it to be reared to 1kg at a captive rearing facility and then released back into a safe space at, or near where the egg was lifted.

At the same time, *Kiwis for kiwi* will also start implementing a number of different monitoring techniques on Motutapu Island to understand the population size and its growth, so we know more precisely when kiwi can start returning kiwi to the Coromandel Peninsula. The numbers returning to the peninsula will be in smaller quantities initially, but if estimates are correct, could be in excess of 200 kiwi annually (and perpetually) once carrying capacity on Motutapu Island is reached.

Getting Ready for the Return

The next challenge is getting ready for kiwi to come home by making sure the places we bring them back to are safe. Sustaining, expanding and making new areas safe for kiwi will not happen overnight and not without significant effort. *Kiwis for kiwi* has recently started working with the Waikato Regional Council and the Department of Conservation on a specific project around group readiness using the return of kiwi from 'to the motu and back' project as a relevant, but not exclusive, species return. The purpose of these organisations working together is to utilise the best of their collective abilities while focusing on providing consistency, quality and the right type of support where it's needed. It is acknowledged this piece of work is really pressing, we know people are keen to move, and this is being treated with a high level of urgency. Watch this space.

In the meantime, please celebrate how well we are doing for the benefit of kiwi on the Coromandel Peninsula. Keep up your pest and predator control effort. Kill those stoats. Save those kiwi chicks. Think about the opportunity ahead of us - to stack the numbers in favour of kiwi. Take a moment to consider who you can get involved in growing the pest and predator control effort. Think about how we can expand and connect pest and

predator control effort. Maintain focus on the aspiration kiwi will live in more parts of the peninsula and more people will live next door to kiwi. Keep up the awesome work, Be proud.

You can expect to receive the next update from me during August. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any queries or questions you may have. Please also feel free to circulate this widely – we need to bring our communities along with us. If you received this via a friend but would like to receive it directly in the future, please email me and I'll add you to the mailing list.



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Please note: I have no phone reception at home, so please use What's App or Messenger. I am happy to receive texts/messages.