

Autumn 2017

COROMANDEL ENVIRONMENT NEWS

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THE FACTS & ISSUES

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Growing kiwi through collaboration

We're part of a grand plan to establish Coromandel kiwi on Motutapu Island in the Hauraki gulf. This summer we began Operation Nest Egg to help kick-start this island population.

It has been a busy summer for our kiwi handlers, Diane and Tommy, and their dogs. They have been up and down steep bush-clad gullies, monitoring kiwi nests, patiently waiting for the right moment to lift the eggs.

This season we have lifted five eggs and one chick from three kiwi nests. Unfortunately, all of the eggs have turned out to be either infertile or rotten. This is all too common in kiwi, with only 50% of eggs successfully hatching in the wild. The next batch of eggs will be harvested in September 2017.

With Coromandel kiwi now being translocated into new protected areas, (like Motutapu and the Hunua ranges), local kiwi care groups are working together with DOC to meet demand for founding kiwi via Operation Nest Egg.

Operation Nest Egg is a way of fast-tracking the growth of kiwi populations, without removing the breeding adult pairs. Because it removes eggs, leaving the adult breeding pairs in situ, these kiwi can continue to breed year on year. With kiwi living for up to 40 years, that can mean many new recruits—as long as predators are kept at bay.

Motutapu is earmarked to become a Kohanga- a kiwi crèche. Meaning once this predator-free island is overflowing

with kiwi, young birds will be relocated back to the Coromandel. Scientists predict kiwi could be 'harvested' from Motutapu in 15-20 years from now, providing up to 220 juveniles a year.

Kiwi were once spread along the full length of the Coromandel peninsula, and beyond. But in the last 20 years they have disappeared from about 40% of their range. Coromandel kiwi are now only found in the north, where predator control is ongoing. This operation is part of a larger vision to see kiwi numbers increase exponentially, and be heard once again in the Southern Coromandel.

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So how exactly does Operation Nest Egg work? This photo essay helps explain the process.

1. Diane, our kiwi handler, fits Neo the kiwi dog with a muzzle. This tells Neo it's time to go kiwi tracking.

2. Diane uses telemetry gear to listen to radio beeps. Since the male kiwi does all the incubation, he has a transmitter attached to his leg. The transmitter monitors his activity, and tells us when he is incubating and when his eggs are due to hatch.

3. Diane and Neo follow their noses to the kiwi nest. Once they get close, they need to be very quiet, to avoid disturbing the nesting bird.

4. The egg lift is a delicate operation. Eggs are either lifted when the male kiwi leaves the nest to feed, or gently removed from under him as he incubates. It seems cruel, but it gives these chicks the best chance of survival and will help repopulate kiwi in other areas.

5. Precious cargo. The eggs are carefully packed in a padded chilly-bin and kept warm by a hot water bottle, ready for the long drive to Kiwi Encounter in Rotorua, a captive-rearing facility. Upon arrival, staff will candle the egg with a torch beam to check if it is viable.

6. If all goes well, the egg will be incubated and hatched at the facility.

7. Once the chick is feeding and putting on weight it will be ready to be released back into the wild.



Psst! Can you spot Neo the kiwi dog?



Meet Mauricio, the first chick from within our protected area to be released onto Motutapu. With Operation Nest Egg now underway, we're confident he won't be the last.

Mauricio took us all by surprise. In mid-January, Diane went for a hike to mark the location of a kiwi nest near Port Charles. She suspected Totara, the male kiwi, was incubating his second clutch of eggs. In fact, what she discovered was not eggs, but a chick, already a couple of weeks old! There was also an infertile egg in the nest which had failed to hatch.

This fluffy bundle was whisked off to Kiwi Encounter in Rotorua, a captive breeding facility. In March, after passing quarantine, Mauricio and two other kiwi from the Coromandel were released onto their new island home on Motutapu, to run wild. He joins kiwi translocated from around the Coromandel, to make up this new island population.

He is named after a very close friend of the Upchurch family (pictured below, with Hazel Speed from DOC), who attended the release. Top right photo supplied by Rainbow Springs Kiwi Encounter.



Lure trials intrigue rats

Remember how in August last year, we began trialling an experimental lure in our network of stoat traps in the Coromandel Kiwi Project? We thought it was time for an update...

The lure comes from Lincoln University and is the bedding material used by male stoats in captivity there. We have been placing a mere 0.5 gram of this cottonball-fluff in half of the traps in addition to the normal egg or rabbit bait. In the other half, only the normal bait was used.

The trial is still ongoing but an analysis of the kill statistics for the first five months has shown a slight drop in stoat kills from the experimental traps compared to the normal traps. Using the lure in conjunction with normal bait appears to not be more attractive to stoats. On the other hand, rat kills went up 40% in the experimental traps. We also caught our first ever ferret in 5 years on this lure.

We will continue the experimental method until we complete a six-month cycle. After that, we may try a different bait/lure combination over the following six months.





Winter Lecture Series

Back by popular demand this year's **Winter Lectures Series** has something for everyone. The free public talks are held at Moon Hair Salon, behind Wharf Rd Cafe. Come get cosy beside the fire with a warming drink. All welcome.

The Godwits Migration: Long-haul Champions

Keith Woodley

Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre
Monday 1st May, 7pm

Conservation projects-motivations and pitfalls

Dr Chris Lalas

Penguin Rescue North Otago
Monday 12 June, 7pm

Impacts of creating an urban sanctuary in Wellington

Dr Colin Miskelly,

Curator Vertebrates, Te Papa
Monday 10th July, 7pm

Māori fish-hooks; catching fish using wood, bone, stone & shell

Dr Chris Paulin,

Author of Te matau a Maui: Fishhooks, Fishing and Fisheries in New Zealand
Monday 7th August, 7pm

Helping landowners enhance their slice of paradise

Elaine Iddon

Waikato Regional Council
Monday 4th September, 7pm

Shop Online

Looking for unique gift ideas? Our online shop has a range of items for sale including traps, gift cards, key rings, and T-shirts.

100% of the profit of these items will fund local conservation projects.

To make a purchase visit www.meg.org.nz/support-us/shop/

Want to protect kiwi at your place? Buy a stoat trap today



A powerful, humane kill-trap for stoats, rats and hedgehogs. Easy to set, the DOC 200 trap is made from stainless steel, housed in a wooden box.

Purchase for \$85 and get free delivery on the Coromandel.



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You can also pay online here

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Pleased note for accounting reasons we no longer offer direct debit as a payment option unless requested.

Membership subs are due 1 October.

Have you paid? If so, many thanks. We really appreciate your support.

For further information please contact:

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