

KERERU NEWS No. 28 (21 September 2001)

Observations and queries about kereru, kuku, kukupa and parea. This edition is coming to you earlier than usual because of the recent observation below.

1. Salmonella death of a kereru - Dean Nelson

We have been having a rash of silvereye deaths attributable to salmonella in the last few weeks. A lady who works at the microbiology lab at Dunedin Hospital sent a dead silvereye off for analysis to ESR and it came back as positive for Salmonella strain 135. Strain 160 has been implicated in the sparrow deaths around the country. I sent a couple of silvereyes off to the National Centre for Disease Investigation on 12/9 but have not heard anything back yet.

Perhaps more disturbing was a kereru that I picked up on the 13th exhibiting all the signs that silvereyes had been displaying i.e. hunched up with fluffed up feathers, apparent problems with the eyes (one closed), not reacting to my presence, thin and evidence of scouring. I took it to our local vet who when it died, took faecal samples and sent them to John Gill at Labnet (Invermay) for analysis. It has come back as positive for salmonella but will take a few more days before the strain is determined. I have just sent off another kereru to John that I picked up today. The vet also kept a sample of the liver which he felt looked abnormal.

I will let you know of developments but I wondered whether there were any indications around the country of silvereyes in particular, or any natives in general, showing these signs.

RGP - I've just spoken to Rachel Garthwaite, Biosecurity Technical Officer in DOC (VPN 8213), and the only native species reported to have died of salmonella are the above reports of silvereyes and kereru. Please keep a lookout for dead or dying kereru with signs of salmonella infection. If you want more information about the disease a DOC fact sheet is available at Conservancy and Area Offices at least.

What to do about dead **native** birds:

- a. For sightings of single dead birds do nothing (but keep a note in your diary of date, place and species)
- b. For sightings of 2 or more dead birds please log these occurrences on an active spreadsheet and copy to Christine Reed. Samples of these birds should be collected and sent to the National Centre for Disease Investigation (NCDI-Couriered to NCDI Wallaceville Campus, Ward Street, Upper Hutt. Please ring in advance to 04-5265600 to advise the imminent arrival of the material, what they are, and that they are for salmonella testing.

2. Kereru diet in Golden Bay area - John Mason

Certainly a lot of pigeon activity here in Golden Bay. Over at Totaranui in May-early June it was common to see large numbers of birds feeding on the tree lucerne at the camping ground. Along East Takaka road on 17 August there were six birds feeding on the grass paddock (that was freshly grazed dairy pasture).

3. Kereru and brodifacoum poisoning - Ian Flux

Further to the report in the previous Kereru News of a kereru having died after apparently eating bits of brodifacoum baits is the following observation. Although I didn't see a parea eating bait, I was suspicious of parea doing so. I watched a parea feeding off the ground at a bait station in the

Tuku. When I checked the station it was empty, but the grass around was quite pressed down and there was 1 or 2 pigeon feathers there suggesting that some time had been spent at the station by parea.

4. Are juvenile kereru better dispersers of seeds than adults? - Astrid Dijkgraaf

The answer to a question RGP posed in the previous Kereru News is probably yes since juvenile kereru have bigger home ranges than adults. The evidence is from an MSc study by Rachael Bell at Wenderholm Regional Park, near Auckland. The home ranges (minimum convex polygons) of 3 adults averaged 14.8 ha, compared with 76.0 ha for 3 juveniles ($P < 0.05$).

5. Kereru on show - Ralph Powlesland

I've been down to Southland and up to New Plymouth recently and saw lots of kereru. There were 10s, if not 100s, of kereru in the willows (bud burst starting) along the banks of the Waiau River from the Dean Burn to Tuatapere. In addition, other birds in the vicinity were seen feeding on kowhai flowers and ribbonwood leafbuds. It would be interesting to know what proportion of the population within 20 kms of the river leave the native forests to feast for a week or two on the willow buds.

At New Plymouth the town was ablaze with flowering kowhai in peoples' sections, along streets, in parks, and in reserves. I saw good numbers of kereru (and tui) feeding in the kowhai at each of these various sites, plus roosting on street powerlines. I understand from locals that there are kereru in town year round, but that perhaps more are present than usual while the kowhai are flowering.