

KERERU NEWS No. 25 (30 March 2001)

Some information about kereru/kuku/kukupapa/parea

### **1. St Arnaud kereru study - Nic Etheridge**

The St Arnaud Area Office of DOC has started a year-long study of kereru at the head of Lake Rotorua. The project is replicating that done by Clout, Gaze, Hay and Karl, 1986, "Habitat use and spring movements of New Zealand Pigeons at lake Rotorua, Nelson Lakes National Park", *Notornis* 33: 37-44. We will compare kereru numbers for the year 2001, with those in 1985, in order to determine whether the population is in decline, stable or increasing. The transects were established in December and the first count was completed later that month, with only three birds seen. We will keep you posted as the year progresses.

### **2. "Anecdotal" News from Motatau - Kevin Prime**

Went out to Kaitoki Camp this afternoon to "talk conservation" to about 65 third formers. Some students told me that they counted 18 kuku on one tree alongside the track on their walk up to the camp. 26 kuku (kereru) were seen flying around the camp during a brief sunshine spell late this afternoon. Many others are observed while walking through the forest.

Well the Landcare Research scientists have left for the season. They should be proud to know that they have been part of restoring a "dying Motatau forest" into a luxuriant, vibrant, thriving forest with vigorous understorey regrowth. The totara has just finished fruiting and now the kaihikatea are providing the seasonal food for our native birds. Our residual trap catch monitoring for possums in January this year averaged out at 2.67%.

### **3. Motatau kukupa - John Innes**

Despite reports of poor seasons elsewhere, the Landcare/DoC/Ngati Hine study at Motatau, Northland saw a pretty good breeding season in 2000-01. Kerry Borkin and Daryl Johnson monitored 17 nesting attempts of which 5 (29%) were successful. Ship rat abundance averaged 37% tracking between August 2000 and January 2001, and never fell below 27%. There were 7 possums trapped per 100 trap-nights in October 2000, and this was reduced to 3 in January 2001. This quite poor kukupa nesting outcome is consistent with other data for kokako and kukupa when ship rat abundance was as high as this.

Mammal control in general was difficult mainly because of the loss of brodifacoum (we used Feratox and Feracol), although we started out the season deciding to see whether possum control alone was enough, and it is clear, I think, that it isn't. Eight of the 12 nest failures were from predators, most of which were unidentified. This is likely to be the last fieldwork season at Motatau.

### **4. Rehabilitating kereru - Nikki Egerton**

I have had a particularly busy season with kereru this year so far - have had 14 in care since the end of November 2000. Mostly impacts with buildings but some youngsters have been extremely emaciated.

## **5. Belmont Update - Steve and Jude Benson**

We live in a western side valley of the Hutt Valley in a secluded bush valley, with a small stream. The suburb is either Belmont or Harbour View, take your pick except there isn't actually a harbour view. Most of the land is designated plantation reserve and there are few houses and mostly on the ridges. Ours faces due north and has a terrace at tree-top height.

We moved in last August and noted immediately that several kereru were resident in the (steep & small) valley, which is well vegetated with secondary growth native bush. We discovered that there was one adult pair and what looked like a young one from the previous year. After appearing close to the house in a group of three for August & September, suddenly there were two pairs. Judging by the 'stooping' flights soon after there were two separate nest sites on the northern side of the valley, one at either end of our view. By Christmas we had six pigeons in total.

All the pigeons regularly visit trees in the area near the house to feed at dusk. Also they use the gum tree at the front of our property to rest and preen during the day, especially if it is misty or raining. As at 21 March there are 8 birds. We assume each pair has had two successive offspring over the summer, the young being recognisable by their slimmer bodies.

Generally they appear one or two at a time, but all seem to use the same favourite trees we have identified in the valley. We now know where to look for them. The other evening we were surprised to observe all 8 in a 'flock' (what is the collective noun for kereru?) flying across the valley. There has also been much collective feeding in trees very close to the house, with their characteristic clumsy landings and crashing about on small branches. We feel it is a real treat to view them so close up. We are hoping the flock is resident for the winter, but how likely is this?

## **6. Data from dead kukupa - spreadsheet from Ray Pierce, comments from Ralph**

The attachment is an Excel spreadsheet indicating the details that Northland Conservancy have collected from kukupa specimens handed in by the public or found by staff. The list of factors that information is determined for is quite comprehensive. Even though some DOC offices around the country may get only a few birds each year, it is well worth recording as much information as possible into an Excel spreadsheet.

The importance of putting the information into such a spreadsheet is that in 10 to 20 years time, and after various staff have retired/changed jobs/whatever, the existence of the spreadsheet is likely to be known or can be readily located, the data is readily available to new staff, and it can be summarised to determine if there are any changes in results, for example, change in no. of birds received per year, change in percentage of juveniles, change in peak time of mortality.

If the data is filed on a card system, often it is unknown to others in the office and gets 'lost' when the person that sets it up 'moves on'. Thus, if you haven't already got such a spreadsheet for recording details from dead kereru/kukupa, you would benefit from doing so and here is an example.

If you don't have Excel here are the column headings:

Date

Location

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Observer

Cause of death

Sex

Gonads (1=small, 2=inter, 3=large)

Weight g

Gut contents

Wing moult - no. of old, new and growing feathers Tail moult - no. of old, new and growing feathers Fat score Bill length Wing length Tail length Bill colour

Mantle (shoulder) colour

Belly colour - e.g. check for cinnamon band at top (juv) Feet colour

Miscellaneous

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KUKUPA DEATHS NORTHLAND

DATE	LOCATION	OBSERVER	CAUSE DEATH	SEX	GONADS	WEIGHT	STOMACH	WING	TAIL	FAT	BILL L	WING L	TAIL L	BILL	MANTLE	BELLY	FEET	MISC
					1 = small 2 = int 3= large	g		MOULT	MOULT	SCORE				COLOUR	COLOUR	COLOUR	COLOUR	
								n = new o = old 1-5 stages	n = new o = old									
21/10/1996	Dargaville	A Marsh	WNBRC 445	M	3	555	NA	n10	n12	0	18	272	207	red/orange	blu/green	white	crimson	full sized egg
30/12/1996	Maunu Rd, Wr	N Phillips	car kill	F	3	515	0	n10	n12	0	17.2	273	213	r/o	b/g	grey	crimson	
1996	Kamo	WNBRC	house window	M	1	615	taraire fr	n10	n12	0	17.9	274	201	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
1996	Tui Cr, Wr	WNBRC	house cat injuries	F	3	585	NA	03,41,n6	o7,31	0	16.9	249	188	r/o	int/g	grey	crimson	
24/04/1997	Access Rd	U	U	F	1	400	Taraire fr	n10	n10	0	20.1	265	197	brown	green	grey	brown	
25/01/1997	U	U	U	F	1	345	0	n10	o12	0	17.9	254	211	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
4/01/2000	Whangarei	S Allan	Shot by possumers	F	2	550	Karaka fr	o10	o8	0	16.8	254	179	r/o	b/g	cream	crimson	
25/06/1997	U	U	U	F	2	415	Foliage	n10	n12	0	17.3	268	212	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
31/10/1996	Norris Rd, Wr	P Hawkins	Garage window	F	1	645	Taraire fr	n10	n12	0	18.2	262	186	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
13/06/1997	Haruru Falls	U	Shot	M	1	500	0	n10	n10 42	3	17.6	263	193	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
22/06/1997	U	U	House window	U	1	735	Taraire fr	n10	o12	0	17.9	267	181	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
28/06/1997	U	U	Starvation?	U	1	330	0	o5 n5	o12	0	16.9	259	195	r/o	b/g	cream	crimson	
9/07/1997	Whakapara	U	Starvation?	F	1	360	Foliage Jerusalem ch	o10	o12	0	17.4	263	200	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
1/09/1997	Maungakaramea	M Montgomery	U	F	1	425		o10	o11	0	18.9	257	197	r/o	b/g	grey	crimson	
9/05/1997	Kamo	J Hynes	U	M	1	510	0	n10	o12	0	16.5	262	199	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
2/11/1993	Ruatangata	A Barton	U	U	U	560	0	n10	o12	0	U	266	198	bn/o	b/g	cream	brown	
6/11/1996	Kerikeri	DoC	U	F	1	285	0	n10	o12	0	16.1	263	187	r	b/g	grey	red	
27/07/1997	Mimiwhangata	M McGlynn	U	U	1	365	0	o10	o12	0	U	257	195	r	b/g	grey	red	
8/05/1997	Springfield Rd	Mrs Wooding	Collision/tree?	M	1	580	0	n10	o12	3	14.7	264	208	bn/o	int/g	grey/cream	red/brown	
13/11/1997	Wells Rd Kaitaia	T Higginson	Predator/harrier	F	3	615	puriri fr	o10	o11	0	17.8	274	208	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
1/07/1996	Maunu Rd, Wr	A Jessop	Car kill	F	2	525	0	n4 24 42	o12	0	16.2	264	199	r/o	b/g	cream	red	
U	U	WNBRC 224/97	Car injury?	U	1	700	NA	n10	n10	3	15.9	258	188	r/o	b/g	grey	red	
		229/97		F	1	595	NA	n10	n10	0	18.9	262	196	r/bn	b/g	cream	red/brown	
		218/97		F	1	280	NA	n10	o12	0	18.6	264	182	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
		323/97		M	2	545	NA	n10	n12	0	19.3	265	185	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
		253/97		F	1	470	NA	o10	o7,31	0	16.7	268	194	r/o	int/g	grey	brown	
		267/97		F	1	325	NA	n10	n12	0	17.9	274	215	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
10/10/1996	Kerr Rd Katui	U	Power lines	F	2	680	nikau fr	n10	o12	0	17.8	270	208	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
23/10/1996	Whangarei	B Russell	House window	M	3	695	foliage	n10	o11	0	18	271	201	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
25/04/1996	U	U	U	F	1	350	0	n10	n9	0	16.7	252	184	r/o	b/g	grey	crimson	
29/07/1996	Titoki	L Harrison	House window	F	1	600	0	n10	n12	3	16.8	258	189	r/o	b/g	white	crimson	
16/10/1996	Rosella PI Wr	WNBRC	House window	F	3	685	0	n10	n10	3	17	248	181	r/o	b/g	cream	crimson	

## **7. Whirinaki kereru - Ralph Powlesland**

Dave Wills, Andrew August, Claude August and I have attempted to capture kereru in our two study areas this summer with not much success. Initially birds were feeding on foliage, were widely dispersed, inconspicuous as they were not making long-distance flights, and often did not respond aggressively to taped sounds of kereru calls and wing noises. Once kereru started feeding on ripening tawa and wineberry fruit in January, they began displaying (display flights, short noisy courtship flights below the canopy, contact calls) in earnest. None of our tagged birds was seen nest building or found incubating. However, some or a few pairs attempted to nest; egg shell fragments were found at two places, and a nest located at one of these.

It seems from the shell fragments that both nesting attempts failed due to predations. Even though there was still ample ripe tawa fruit through much of the forest at one study area in mid March, and other species of fruit were ripening (miro, matai) and being eaten by kereru, very few display flights were seen, flocking was starting to occur, and moulted feathers were found. Three birds caught in mid March were of light weight, being c. 550 g. This latter result suggests some kereru were unable to attain sufficient condition to breed before they had to start moulting.

## **8. Kukupa advocacy - Wanda Vivequin**

The Department of Conservation's Northland Conservancy has recently engaged the services of Alison Henry to review the Kukupa Advocacy Programme that has been running in Northland since 1998. In 1997, Alison Henry and Lynda Burns were contracted to come up with a series of recommendations for kukupa advocacy in the region following the successful bidding for funds to undertake protection work for the bird in the region. The pair identified limited community understanding and knowledge about the ecology of the bird and threats facing it as being a major risk to its future. They recommended a kukupa advocate be employed in the region to increase the profile of the bird and issues facing it as well as the development of an education kit and production of a booklet for landowners.

The commitment was made way back then to undertake a review of the programme in several years time and Head Office agreed to fund this out of the conservation awareness funding during the current financial year. Alison spent a week in Northland during mid March interviewing a series of people about what the programme has achieved to date including member of the community and DoC staff. The review is not intended to be a comprehensive one such as that done for the Kiwi Advocacy Programme by Bev James last year but simply an opportunity to see what adjustments should be made and where the successes have been.

To date Northland Conservancy has successfully employed Sandra Heihei as kukupa advocate, developed an educational resource in both English and Maori, and produced a Kukupa Survival Guide, now into its third reprint. Sandra's work has taken her into a large number of Far and Mid-North communities where the message about the bird has been strongly heard. A strong focus on compliance and law enforcement has also been undertaken by the conservancy. The results of the review are expected in the next three months.