

THE REMU-TALKER

Replacing traps for a kiwi-friendly future

The biggest task undertaken in 2023 was a major audit of the traplines across our 7500ha pest control network. We identified extensive work needed to adjust traplines and to replace our ageing traps. The first traplines were installed in the Park in 2003, making some of the traps over 20 years old.

This upgrade project has now begun and will take place over three years with the team replacing different traplines each year. This year's stage of the trap replacement will cost in the region of \$45k and focuses on the Big Bend, Clay Ridge, East Whakanui and West Whakanui tracks.



Peter Simpson Credit: Susan Ellis

The trap building weekend in January was a huge success, with around 200 new stoat and ferret traps readied for installation by a team of enthusiastic volunteers.

On March 20th the new traps were transported to key locations in the Park by helicopter. It was a bluebird day for flying with a light southerly and the deployment was a great success.



The expertly-made new traps.
Credit: Melody McLaughlin

The traps are then carried from the drop points to their new locations on foot with the old traps being helicoptered out as a back flight the next year.

The Department of Conservation Kapiti-Wellington district office is supporting the Trust by managing the helicopter deployment. It is a large undertaking for an organisation that operates solely through committed volunteers, and DOC is thrilled to support this work says Angus Hulme-Moir, Operations Manager, Kapiti Wellington DOC office.



A bluebird autumn day for the helicopter deployment. Credit: James Wright



The DOC Team supporting the deployment - carrying more than just the traps! Credit: Elly Peters



James Wright from the Fixit Team with the pile of old/broken traps. Credit: Neil Parker

Kwick Kiwi Kwiz

Long term volunteers, new recruits, loyal newsletter readers, bored school holiday kids...how will you go with our quiz? Answers on page 7. no peeking!

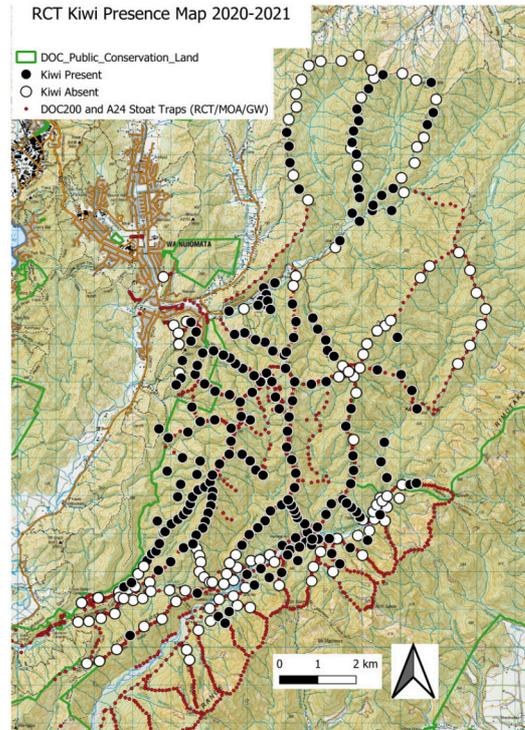
1. What year was the "Rimutaka Forest Park" formed?
2. What is the Park called now?
3. What year was the Trust formed?
4. How many species of kiwi are there in Aotearoa New Zealand?
5. What type of kiwi are in the Park?
6. How many kiwi were released into the Park in 2006?
7. Where did the 20 kiwi translocated to the Park in 2009 come from?
8. In the upper reaches of which stream were the first kiwi released?
9. Until what age are kiwi chicks fed by their parents?
10. What is the current name of the Trust?



Picture credit: Paige Sommers

Remutaka kiwi spread their wings

Recently surveyed Whitemans Valley residents have reported hearing kiwi calling at night. These local reports back up the kiwi acoustic monitoring that has been carried out by RCT volunteers since 2011. This monitoring showed that kiwi had reached the ridge at the boundary between Whitemans Valley and the Wainuiomata Water Catchment by 2021.



Results show that the kiwi population - initially introduced into the upper reaches of the Turere stream from 2006 to 2011- have spread steadily through time, with kiwi calls recorded from the northern boundary of the Wainuiomata Water Catchment (Greater Wellington block), in the region adjoining Wainuiomata Township in the north (near Sunny Grove); from across the Orongorongo River in the east, to the Orongorongo Track/Clay Ridge area in the southwest, and the Boys Brigade region in the west.

Pat van Berkel from Pest Free Upper Hutt said additional work was underway.. US Students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute have been working with Pest Free Upper Hutt to develop a safety plan. The plan includes an increase in the predator control network as well as engaging the local community by encouraging kiwi aversion training for dogs.

Susan Ellis and Winifred Long were able to chat to the US students and share some of the maps showing kiwi calling sites. Susan says "It's good to see Upper Hutt taking the future arrival of kiwi so seriously"

For the wild population of Remutaka kiwi to be expanding their territory is a great result born from the vision of the original volunteers of the RCT followed by years of hard mahi and beyond..

Volunteer profile: Denis Wood

Wainuiomata resident Denis Wood is our “go-to” man for fixing up old traps.



Denis has been volunteering for the trust for a number of years now, working in his magic garage to ensure the fixit team have traps maintained, scrapped or resuscitated.

Denis has a forgiving nature, gracefully receiving manky retired traps from the fixit crew or last minute requests for new traps at all hours of the day and night.

Denis is also very generous and patient, passing on his knowledge of trap mechanism maintenance to the fixit crew so they are better able to fix traps in place.

Denis loves traps so much that he also walks a trapline for Wainuiomata Predator Free in the hills behind his home.

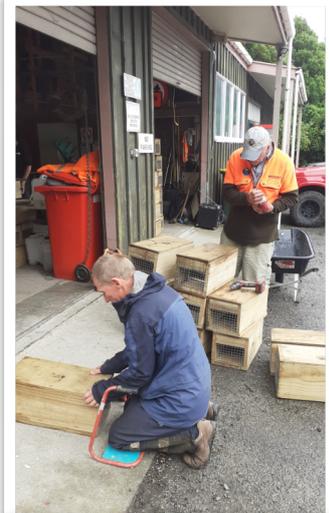
A side note from Melody: “Denis is one of a number of volunteers in the background doing the mahi and keeping a low profile”

Trap builders - snapped in action

Pictures by Susan Ellis



Alwyn Rees



Mike White & Alan Thompson



Penny Evans



Ingrid Greenslade



Joanne Youthed



Owen Rowse

US students helping keep kiwi safe

By Paige Sommers, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

We are a group of students studying at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the United States of America. As part of our curriculum, we go abroad to work on an environmental or social science project. For our project, we are working with Pest Free Upper Hutt to help prepare residents of Upper Hutt for the arrival of kiwi. Recently, residents in Whitemans Valley on the border of Upper Hutt have been hearing kiwi calls at night, providing evidence that the kiwi are moving closer to Upper Hutt. To ensure the kiwi's safety in Whitemans Valley and Upper Hutt, we are creating a kiwi safety plan that Pest Free Upper Hutt can utilise.

We spoke with Willy Marsh to learn more about kiwi aversion training and the procedure he follows to train the dogs. Willy walked us through the equipment he uses, which is all home-made. This consisted of kiwi props, wooden boards that the props attach to that can move the kiwi back and forth, and synthetic fur. When the dog approached the kiwi props, Willy had us pull on a string to move the kiwi attached to the wooden board forward. Willy would pair this with a vibration on the dog's collar to teach the dog to avoid the kiwi.



Willy explained that his training teaches the dogs to think for themselves by combining three senses: sight, smell, and hearing. Sight comes first, as the dog walks down the trail and approaches a kiwi prop. Next, smell is introduced as the dog comes across a kiwi scent. When the dog smells the kiwi scent, Willy has the collar vibrate to teach the dog to associate the scent with a negative feeling. Sound comes last, when the dog reaches the end of the course and hears the kiwi calls. At this point, the aversion is already built but hearing the kiwi call allows dogs to put everything together and associate the call with the kiwi as well.

This training was eye-opening for us because it taught us so much about kiwi aversion training but also about dogs in general and how they learn. Willy has immense knowledge about dogs and the way they think. He told us that he can read a dog right away and learn how they'll react to the training. It was amazing to see the training in action because it was so successful with every dog. We experienced the dogs learn this aversion quickly and efficiently through Willy's training without even experiencing electric shock.



Remutaka Conservation Trust has been running this training annually since 2009.

In conjunction with the RCT, Willy Marsh trained 30 dogs in November and 27 in February. Willy generously donated his training fee from these sessions to the Trust which we are very grateful for.

Pictured: Willy Marsh (Tūhoe), RCT Mascot Rimu, William Brownell, Domenic Sena, Seth Frank and Paige Sommers.

Jacek honoured in the Remutaka Forest Park

By Alan Thompson

On the Saturday morning of Queens Birthday 2008 a young Polish man working in Wellington set off for the day and never returned. Jacek Grzybowski's flatmates reported him missing on the following Tuesday but they had no idea where he had gone.

I was in Wellington Land Search and Rescue at the time and, with assistance from the Police, we cracked into Jacek's laptop and recent Internet browsing showed he had been looking at how to get to Mt Mathews. A review of the security cameras in the Wellington Railway Station identified him heading for the 08:05 train to Waterloo in time to catch a bus to Wainui. A door-to-door visit was made of the residents up top of Sunny Grove and one confirmed that a "foreign" chap had knocked on their door and asked where the Sunny Grove track started.

This is where valuable assistance by Trust volunteers helped unravel the mystery of where Jacek had gone. I knew that a RCT kiwi team had walked down the Sunny Grove track at the time Jacek should have been heading up. However they advised that they had seen no sign of Jacek and the only person they met on the track that morning was a hunter. From this information we were able to deduce that Jacek missed the sharp turn up the track and instead carried straight on around and exited at the Hine Rd Reserve. Our kiwi team had walked down and exited at Sunny Grove whilst Jacek was out at Hine Rd. When we tracked down the hunter he was able to tell us he had gone out via Hine Rd and seen a male looking a bit lost standing by the cemetery. This was almost certainly Jacek! We presumed that Jacek retraced his path, found the turn off and continued up the Sunny Grove track towards Mt Mathews. However as it was now mid morning and the June winter days are short he was never going to make it. We don't know how far he got or where he turned back but he was overtaken by darkness and a severe southerly storm that rolled in that night.

In the days that followed members of the RFP Kiwi Project continued to provide valuable information to the search HQ based upon their detailed knowledge of the area. Sadly, after an intensive week long search, Jacek was found deceased in the lower Turere area.

With his parent's approval, we named a Kiwi in Jacek's memory which was released in the lower Turere area. When kiwi were still monitored we kept his parents in Gdansk, Poland up to date with where "Jacek" was and what he was up to. "Jacek" proved to be very popular with a couple of the local females and so there was often news of his contribution to our expanding colony of kiwi.



In 2022 a monument to Jacek was established at the beginning of the Sunny Grove track. A dedication ceremony was attended by SAR representatives, members of the Trust, the Wellington Polish Association and the Polish Consul. A video of the ceremony was sent to Jacek's parents in Gdansk along with a promise that their son would always be part of the history of the RFP and of the work of the Trust to re-establish Kiwi in the park.

The tragic loss of their only son greatly affected Jacek's parents Anna and Piotr. A recent letter from Anna advised that Piotr had passed away and she talked of the great comfort they had both taken from the efforts we had made to preserve the memory of their son.

When you next visit the Park via Sunny Grove, pause for a moment at the memorial to read Jacek's story and say hello to him.

In Memoriam Mike Lear



In February one of our valued volunteers Mike Lear passed away peacefully at home. A great lover of the outdoors, Mike was famous for taking on 3 traplines at once. Eventually Rosemary had to wrestle one off him to give to a new volunteer. Mike was a lovely man who was always willing to lend a hand, we extend our arohanui to his family.

Flora in the Park

Trapper Rebecca Nawalowalo captured this beautiful picture of the Easter Orchid/Raupeka.



With its low growing nature and small white flowers you will often smell its beautiful vanilla type scent before you spot it. It is endemic to New Zealand and flowers around Easter-time (hence the name!)

Tiny Remutaka treasures

Rifleman/Ttītipounamu are New Zealand's smallest bird and are one of two surviving species of the ancient family of wrens. Males are smaller than females and are bright green on the head and back. They call constantly but can be difficult to hear as their calls are so high-pitched. *Ttīti* - a high pitched call, *Pounamu* - for bright green feathers

These tiny forest-dwelling birds are constantly on the move foraging for small insects and spiders within the forest canopy and on tree-trunks. In Remutaka Forest Park, they mostly occur at higher elevations in beech forest, above 400 metres.

Remutaka Ttītipounamu were introduced into Zealandia 6 years ago and the population is doing very well, even spreading as far as Wadestown. Populations have dropped elsewhere because of habitat loss and through the impacts of introduced pest species, particularly stoats.



Ttītipounamu facts:

- *They breed from August through to February, often in cooperative family groups which raise broods together.
- *They build spherical nests within existing cavities.
- *The male does most of the nest building, and both sexes contribute to incubation and to feeding of chicks.

Have you spotted any of these tiny treasures in the Remutaka Forest Park?

Two for One

Trapline volunteer Dale Gyton submitted these photos showing "two in one hit" 6 months apart on the Old Five Mile Loop Trapline.



Help needed!

The Caltex garage in Wainuiomata will be closing their doors on the 23rd June 2024. The owners have been amazing supporters of the Trust over many years allowing us access to their backroom where we have stored the baits and other randoms equipment needed to make the trappers life run smoothly. I am looking for ideas on where we can store the equipment next?

Somewhere central. (PS: BP Garage is not an option) Any ideas gratefully received contact Melody bidi@xtra.co.nz or 0274-524-982

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 38 9024 0505274 00 (make sure that you also include your surname or company name so that we can associate the payment with your donation)

KIWI KWIZ (Page 2) ANSWERS (Sources: www.remutaka.nz, www.doc.govt.nz, savethekiwi.nz)

1. 1972
2. Remutaka Forest Park
3. 1988
4. 5 (North Island brown kiwi, great spotted kiwi/Rorua, Little spotted kiwi/kiwi pukupuku, Rowi, Tokoeka)
5. North Island brown
6. 8 in total (6 kiwi released May 2006, a further 2 kiwi in August 2006)
7. Little Barrier Island
8. Turere Stream
9. Trick question! Kiwi parents do not need to feed their young because chicks can survive off the rich external egg yolk for several days as they slowly absorb it. they emerge from the nest to feed at about five-ten days old.
10. Remutaka Conservation Trust

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

