



THE RIMU-TALKER

*A newsletter of the Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust Incorporated
April 2017*

Bird Information Panels

The Trust has recently designed and built seven attractive information panels depicting 13 native bird species occurring in the Park. Tony Stoddard of Human Nature <http://humannature.kiwi.nz> has done a wonderful job in the design and build of the panels and also gave many volunteer hours to this project. Trust committee member Ian Armitage put in a huge effort with managing the project.

The panels are near the Catchpool Valley carpark, three at the start of the Orongorongo track that visitors follow towards the Orongorongo Valley, the other four panels are near the start of the Five Mile Loop Track. The aim of the Bird Information Project is to provide information and illustrations about the birds that visitors can expect to see or hear as they move along the Forest Park tracks.

The Department of Conservation and local iwi support this Project. Some funding was generously provided by the United States Embassy to help celebrate 100 years of the U.S. National Parks Service (in 2016) and a shared love of national and forest parks. The Payne family also provided funds for one panel, dedicated to the memory of Norman and Jean Payne



Robert Tate USA Embassy



Mate, Linda & Sep from the Wainuiomata Marae

Another invention by Alan Thompson, the interactive bird callers, will be added to the panels over the next few months providing the different calls of each bird.

Draft Wellington Conservation Management Strategy

A draft Wellington CMS has been prepared by the Department of Conservation in consultation with the Wellington Conservation Board, tangata whenua and others. The Trust feels that it is a comprehensive and balanced document that provides considerable scope for introducing

various conservation initiatives in the Rimutaka Forest Park during the 2016 to 2026 period. You can view the draft online [here>>](#).

O.N.E (Operation Nest Egg)¹ Kiwi Chicks

Three of the chicks from the 2016/17 breeding season have already been returned to the park: Zen, Alamein and Tamahine, all females. We still have 11 chicks to be returned to the park over the next few months.

Jo Sim, kiwi dog handler searched the Wairakei kiwi crèche for one of our chicks with a dropped transmitter. She, Mattie and Rua (the kiwi dogs) spent 2 days searching but were unable to find her. The weather conditions were not ideal as little wind to carry scent but we will have another try when the crèche has emptied out over the winter months. The chicks like to hide in blackberry patches which can be challenging.

A special thank you to the team who got up at an uncivilised hour on their Saturday morning to ensure the eggs from the second clutch were off the hill and on their way to incubation facilities and David and Stella Lacey who arrived back home at 1am on the Sunday morning after delivering the eggs.

We would like to thank all the Chick Sponsors who have made this O.N.E operation financially viable.

Volunteers

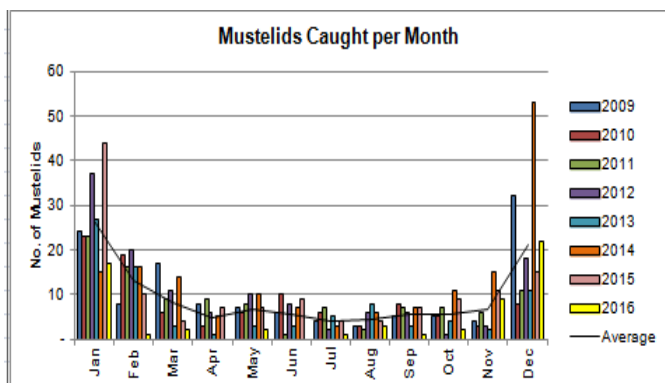
As always, we would like to give our thanks to the wonderful volunteers, new and returning, who give their time to help RFPT. Without you, this work would not be possible.



Alamein - newly hatched



Alamein – all fluffed up now



¹ O.N.E. Removal of eggs from the nest, incubated and hatched in captivity with the chick returned to the park once able to fend for itself.

Tunnel Monitoring Results – February 2017

There has been a reasonably significant decrease of in rats tracked in February 2017 compared with November 2016. However only a slight decrease in the mouse rate for the same period.

Summary of results for February 2017:

- Mustelid is 0%, none detected
- Mean rat tracking rate is 25% (5% error)
- Mean mouse tracking rate is 16% (7% error)

Although we are not actively monitoring weta, many of the tunnels recorded an increase in weta tracks. 30% of tunnels during the February 2017 rodent survey showed weta tracks compared with 4% in November 2016.

Z Energy and MetService Volunteer Days

On 16th December a Z Energy Team and on 24 February a MetService team visited the Catchpool to volunteer their time. Refurbished loppers and newly arrived bow saws were used to great effect on the woody weed species near the start of the Orongorongo Track. Large numbers of acacia, gum trees and wilding pines were brought down and quite a lot of gorse removed as well.

Some surprisingly tall and thick-trunked trees were quickly felled using the new bow saws. We also trimmed back the kowhai and mahoe trees obscuring the newly installed signs so that they were more readily seen and photographed during the dedication ceremony performed the following week



MetService volunteers - love the new bow saws

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In Memoriam



Dr Graeme Sutherland (1938 – 2016)

We would like to pay our respects to long-standing volunteer Dr Graeme Sutherland who passed away last year.

Graeme was the trapline leader for Whakanui and assisted in the restoration nursery. Our annual fundraiser, the Stoat Trapper's Ball, showcased his love of ballroom dancing. His friends and family have made a generous donation to the Trust in his honour.



Colin McLaughlin (1933 – 2017)

Colin was the much loved father of our Kiwi Project coordinator Melody and shared her passion for the natural world.

Colin was involved in the kiwi project from the beginning, doing anything and everything that was needed. From trapping pests, driving kiwi eggs and chicks around the country, fixing transfer boxes in his magic garage to having a friendly chat, cup of tea or whisky for those coming down off the hill after a tough day in the bush. His friends and family honoured his life with a service at Rimutaka Forest Park and have made a generous donation to the Trust in his name.

Tororaro (*Muehlenbeckia astonii*) at the Turakirae Head Scientific Reserve

The Turakirae Head Scientific Reserve is a windswept area at the southernmost part of the Rimutaka Range.

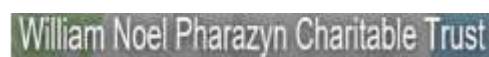
The reserve has an ecologically and scenically interesting assemblage of coastal herbaceous plants, shrubs and patches of low forest including the twiggy endemic tororaro shrub, *Muehlenbeckia astonii*. Because of its rarity and its vulnerability to loss through livestock grazing and wildfires tororaro now has a conservation status as a 'Threatened-Nationally Endangered' species.

In 1998, The Dept. of Conservation fenced a small trial to test whether transplanting of this species was possible on an exposed coastal site, and to test survival and growth when sheep and rabbits were excluded. The *Muehlenbeckia* plants were raised from seed collected from naturally-established plants growing in the Orongorongo Valley, on Orongorongo Station (private land). All of the plants have GPS locations and have been mapped by DoC; so their locations are well-known. The Turakirae Head trial finished several years ago but clearly it was at least partially successful in that it



showed that *Muehlenbeckia astonii* can be established in this ecologically hostile site, and that plants can cope with some grazing by sheep and rabbits. *Muehlenbeckia* shrubs were also planted at four sites near Cape Palliser in the late 1990s (several thousands of plants). There is opportunity to grow the population by collecting seed from the naturally-established *Muehlenbeckia* shrubs in the Orongorongo Valley, raising seedlings at the Catchpool nursery, and transplanting small plants into well-protected coastal sites in Rimutaka Forest Park.

Thank you to all those like minded people and organisations who have sponsored a trap, kiwi or tree through the Rimutaka Forest Park Trust's sponsorship programme



Flyrite – Rimutaka Heli Services

