



9 July 2010

## Helicopter Kiwi hunt

Jaybee, a Rimutaka Forest Park kiwi with a reputation for being a bit of a disappearing act, has been found thanks to a helicopter, a tracking device and some good old fashioned perseverance.

Jaybee, sponsored and named by JB Hughes Contractors Ltd, appeared to “disappear in a puff of smoke” about a month ago said Melody McLaughlin of the Rimutaka Forest Park Trust, “We are elated he has been found safe and healthy”.

Kiwi in the Rimutaka Forest are fitted with radio transmitters that allow Trust volunteers to track and monitor the 38 kiwi in the park with relative ease. “Jaybee has been a special case since he was first released in to the park in January” said Ms McLaughlin, “Every time we thought we knew where Jaybee was – he turned up in the opposite direction!”.

Trust members were starting to get worried after spending over 40 hours over the last month trying to find the elusive bird.

To the rescue came Maurice Wooster from Rimutaka Heli Services Ltd. Maurice generously offered his services and with Trust member Alan Thompson strapped in a safety harness and with a tracking antenna in hand, the pair located Jaybee in just over 30 minutes.

“In true form Jaybee was exactly where we thought he wasn’t” said Mr Thompson.

Mr Thompson also remarked that the operation had been a successful exercise for the Trust in not only finding out that tracking kiwi from the air does work but also learning just how far Jaybee can gallop when he has his mind set on it “That kiwi is building up some serious leg muscle”.

“I’m amazed at the enthusiasm and energy of the people involved with the Trust and was very happy to help and glad that the effort was successful” said Mr Wooster who successfully navigated around the park to find the kiwi.

“We don’t expect this will be the last of Jaybee’s expeditions” said Ms McLaughlin who also noted that before reaching a stoat fighting weight of 1200 grams and released in the Rimutaka Forest,

Jaybee was trying to find his way out of the Bushy Park predator free crèche in Whanganui. “His handlers said the only thing stopping him was the predator proof fence” she laughed.

“We hope that Jaybee will settle down in a year or two when he finds a mate and starts a family, it will certainly make our job of tracking him much easier”.

The good news continues for the kiwi in the park with Trust members confirming Tohe, a male kiwi, has started incubating an egg – the first of the season. Another kiwi, Kadine, sponsored by Patty Kilpatrick, is due to be released in to the park this weekend and will no doubt help the trackers keep fit – but are hopefully not as active as Jaybee. Three more kiwi are also due for release in the coming months.

Members of the public are asked to help keep kiwi safe in the Rimutaka Forest by keeping their dogs on leads and getting them kiwi aversion trained. For more information on the activities of the Trust, how to get your dog kiwi aversion trained and how to volunteer for the Trust, visit [www.rimutakatrust.org.nz](http://www.rimutakatrust.org.nz).

For further information please contact Melody McLaughlin on 027 452 4982.