

Kiwi Recovering in Bay of Islands

There's good news for northern kiwi: local people are on their side.

Private individuals, especially landowners, have joined the fight to save the North Island brown kiwi *Apteryx mantelli*.

In the greater Bay of Islands alone, nearly 10,000 hectares of privately owned land is now managed for kiwi.

When a landowner near Russell asked Laurence Gordon, a predator-control expert, for advice in 2001, Laurence took one look at the map and decided to treat the whole Russell Peninsula. Now, 100 landowners are involved. A predator-proof fence crosses the peninsula (see *Forest & Bird*, November 2001), and intensive trapping plus brodifacoum poison have knocked back the predators on the 2500-hectare peninsula. The project's maintenance costs are \$27,000 a year.

Two charitable trusts, Enterprise Russell and Russell Landcare Trust, got funding and raised public awareness for the Russell Kiwi Project. Residents didn't need to be told about the number of stoats — they saw them in their gardens.

Kiwi can now be heard right in Russell, at Flagstaff Hill and Matauwhi Bay. Other good listening posts on a moonless night in the Bay of Islands are: Orongo Bay; Opito Bay; Mt Tikitikioure near Russell; behind Paihia; and on Mt Bledisloe near Haruru Falls. High vantage points are best. Call counts, conducted by the Department of Conservation throughout Northland since 1995, show that the decline of the late 1990s has been halted. The Bay of Islands' average count is 10 kiwi calls per hour.

Mataka Station on the Purerua Peninsula surrounds the Marsden Cross Scenic Reserve, where boaties anchored in Rangihoua Bay can

hear vocal kiwi — the call counts here are about 20 an hour.

Greg and Gay Blunden manage Aroha Island near Kerikeri under a Queen Elizabeth II National Trust covenant. This is a good place to see kiwi. Greg emphasises that no one should go crashing around in kiwi country alone. People may walk on formed tracks, but should cover their torches with red cellophane so as not to dazzle the birds.

Dr Blunden is a founding trustee of the New Zealand Kiwi Foundation, a trust that focuses on privately owned land. Laurence Gordon operates the Russell and Purerua kiwi projects for the Foundation.

Another New Zealand Kiwi Foundation trustee, Lindsay Charman, is an ex-DoC kiwi advocate. While agreeing that 'the great calling' is a joy to hear, he worries that we may be listening to 'a bunch of pensioners', the stoats and cats having got the little ones.

'There may not be enough adults to keep the populations viable long term,' says Lindsay Charman, 'so you have to do the work. If you aren't doing predator control, kiwi are going to disappear.'

Kiwi are also on some islands in the Bay, including Moturoa, Motukiekie, and Motuarohia (Robertson Island). Landowner Mike Alexander has planted over 200,000 trees on Motuarohia, 'giving something back to nature'. The original pair of kiwi Mike Alexander introduced in 1978 has increased to 17 fat, healthy individuals in a space which should, in theory, support only two pairs.

It's a grim way to do a census, but when juvenile kiwi show up as road-kill you know the local kiwi are managing to breed effectively. On average, five kiwi die on roads around Kerikeri



Looking north over Tapeka Point, from Flagstaff Hill above Russell, shows dense cover for kiwi on the peninsula. On the far side of the Bay of Islands is Purerua Peninsula, where landowners have established another protected kiwi area.

each year, and the New Zealand Kiwi Foundation has stencilled kiwi silhouettes on the roads and placed warning signs in an attempt to reduce the toll.

Enhancing kiwi habitat helps other wildlife too. On the Russell Peninsula, brown teal,


little blue penguins, New Zealand dotterel and weka are thriving. The number of tui in Russell township alone, attests to the benefits of effective predator control.

— ANNE RIMMER

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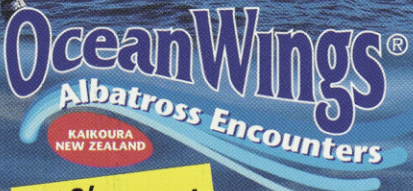
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