

KERERU NEWS No. 42 (26 March 2004)

Giddy All,

A few more snippets relating to kereru. I'm always keen to receive observations, comments, references, whatever, relating to kereru for this newsletter.

1. Kereru tagging and mortality on Banks Peninsula - Maaike Schotborgh, Peter Dilks, Terry Greene & Kerry-Jayne Wilson

As part of the Kaupapa Kereru programme initiated by Ngai Tahu, and with assistance from the Department of Conservation, Lincoln University and Landcare Research, we four captured and radio-tagged 15 kereru in January 2004. The kereru were mist-netted at Orton Bradley Park (Charteris Bay) and Church Bay, of Lyttelton Harbour. The birds had congregated in fruiting plum trees and patches of fruiting poroporo. The main poroporo patch was a dense block of poroporo approx 10 m wide by about 200 m long stretching up a ridge along the side of a Douglas fir plantation. The bushes were up to 2 m tall. There were many thousands of fruit present. There were also other scattered poroporo bushes and smaller patches in gullies around this plantation and across an adjacent hillside that had recently been planted in "pines" of some sort. You could sit for an hour or more near the poroporo patches and assume there were no kereru present. However, once one bird flew down to feed, it would be followed in quick succession by many others. At times we had 20 kereru in a small poroporo patch. There must have been at least 50 birds in the area. After the kereru had fed, all would go quiet again as they roosted, slept or sun-bathed in the conifer trees.

Unfortunately, three of the tagged birds were found dead during the following 4 weeks. One had a broken collar bone, and the other two had been predated in another poroporo patch, possibly by a cat. On closer inspection, signs of predation of a further six non-tagged kereru were found within the same patch. Given the predation of kereru feeding near the ground during previous studies (Pelorus Bridge, Marlborough and Whirinaki Forest, Bay of Plenty), the predation of kereru while feeding in low growing poroporo is not too surprising. In late February, a further three kereru were captured and tagged to replace those that had died.

2. Kereru crossing Foveaux Strait

A. A flock of about 40 kereru were seen in November 2002 about halfway between Stewart Island and the mainland, heading for the mainland. **Karen Baird & Chris Gaskin**

B. Six kereru arrived on Raratoka (Centre) Island and landed in a macrocarpa by the airstrip at about 1 pm of 6 February 2004. They came from the direction of Stewart Island. Four kereru were seen to depart Raratoka Island for Stewart Island at about 5 pm. They did not fly in a direct line to the island, but rather took a very zigzag course towards the Ruggedy Range. **Ros Cole**

C. The remains of six kereru have been washed up on Oreti Beach, near Invercargill during December 2003 to February 2004. Obviously, these flights by kereru between Southland and Stewart Island can be hazardous for the birds! **Lloyd Esler**

3. Tagged Southland kereru - Ralph Powlesland, Les Moran & Kiri Pullen

To date, 11 kereru have been radio-tagged in an endeavour to monitor their movements, and to find their nests. One of the kereru died two months after being tagged, and the pathology report from Massey University suggested that it had been poisoned. What it might have been poisoned by is difficult to determine, but we are looking into the possibility that it was by toxins in laburnum, a very poisonous plant to mammals, but one which kereru often denude of leaves by their feeding and without incurring fatal repercussions themselves. Of the other 10 kereru, all have moved from

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their capture sites to varying extents. Two birds flew to Stewart Island, a distance of about 55 kilometres from Invercargill, one of which remained there for just 1-2 weeks, and the other is still there after three months. Two others have been found in the Pourakino Valley / Longwood Range area, about 35 kilometres to the west of Invercargill. It has been difficult to relocate the kereru once they have left Invercargill, even though we have flown considerable distances radio-tracking from a Cessna aircraft to try to obtain signals from their transmitters. At the moment we don't know where six of the 10 kereru are. However, the limited information to date suggests that kereru management in Southland needs to be considered in a regional context, not locally.

4. Kereru on Brodrick Pass - Hilary Iles

Four kereru were seen in January 2004 on the top of Brodrick Pass resting on rocks in the snow. They had just flown up from the north branch of the Huxley River (eastern side of Southern Alps, near Twizel), and later continued on over into the Landsborough (western side of Alps, near Haast).