

KERERU NEWS No. 45 (24 November 2004)

Some more news about kereru

1. Kereru research in the Lyttelton Harbour area on Banks Peninsula - Te Ari Prendergast, Maaike Schotborgh, Leon Fife, Kerry-Jayne Wilson & Shaun Ogilvie

Since January 2004, 15 kereru have been radio-tracked. A few points of interest:

- In January/February eight kereru (2 radio-tagged, plus 6 untagged) were found dead in a poroporo patch (about 0.5 ha). Bite marks suggested the predator was a cat or stoat, but evidence not conclusive.
- Movement patterns varied between tagged kereru. All kereru in Church Bay (five in total) have generally stayed within the Bay which is about 500 m across (occasionally one disperses for a day but always returns).
- Movement of ten kereru captured outside of Church Bay is interesting: 4 have not moved further than a few hundred metres from the capture site. Six have moved about 6 km to the Mt. Herbert Reserve but returned to the original area after a few months. Two of these six did not return but continued on to areas approx. 15 km from the original capture site, where they have stayed.
- At the end of August the first display flights were recorded. The first nest was recorded at the end of September. Since then, 9 out of the 15 tagged kereru have been involved in nesting. As there have been re-nestings after failures, in total 12 nesting attempts have been recorded so far. Of the 12, nine were preyed on (~80%). Possibly include possum, stoat, rats, and cats. However on two occasions the egg may have fallen through the nest instead of being preyed on.
- While on the nest with a brooding chick, 1 of the tagged kereru was preyed on by a cat. All that remained were the wings (from the shoulder joint down), lots of feathers, and the transmitter. Also the content of the crop (total of 12 g) remained with the carcass and consisted of willow and fruit tree leaves (most likely plum). The next day a cat preyed on the chick (recorded this event with a time-lapse camera; Te Ari Prendergast).
- In summary to date, it appears that kereru in the highly modified habitats of Lyttelton Harbour are able to use new leaf growth to satisfy their breeding nutritional requirements. A large proportion of the birds appear to be vigorously involved in breeding activities. Predation, mainly on adults, and to a lesser extent on chicks and eggs, could be having a significant influence on recruitment.

2. Kereru at Nga Manu Nature Reserve - Bruce Benseman

We have spotted 3 kereru nesting sites around Nga Manu Nature Reserve in mid November. All birds are busy nest building so fingers crossed for success.

3. Kereru nesting at Invercargill and New Plymouth - Ralph Powlesland, Les Moran, Kirsty Moran, Kiri Pullen & Nik Joice

At Invercargill, we have 17 tagged kereru whose whereabouts we know of. We've found two nests, only one of which belongs to a tagged bird. Both nests are in Anderson Park, a small area of weedy native forest on the outskirts of town. One nesting attempt failed when the chick died during hatching, and the other was successful. There has been little fruit available since miro and holly fruit became scarce in August. Supplejack fruit is still available in native forest patches, but most kereru have moved from such habitat and are feeding mainly on leaf buds, new leaves and flower buds of exotic species, especially plum, hawthorn, elm, poplar, and willows. Of course, kowhai leaf

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buds, new leaves and flowers were and are also often eaten, the trees being widespread in urban and rural habitats.

At New Plymouth, we have 11 tagged kereru and we still know where each one is! We've found 13 nests, 4 of which belong to tagged birds. Of these nesting attempts, 5 are known to have failed. Because the activities at each nest were not videoed, the reason for each failure was not obvious. Probably some failures were the result of inadequate nests or windy weather disrupting nests, but how many failed due to predation was not obvious. One nesting attempt fledged a chick, and the other 7 are still in progress. In contrast to the mainly foliage diet of Invercargill kereru during the past couple of months, the New Plymouth birds have fed on a mixture of foliage and fruit, with fruit being available each month in winter and spring. The main fruit sources have included lancewood and puriri in June, lancewood, lillypilly and strawberry guava in July, strawberry guava, nikau and puriri in August, taraire and puriri in September, and holly, pigeonwood and puriri in October.

4. Fines for shooting kereru - Jo Gibbs

A person in the Nelson/Marlborough area was fined \$800 for shooting kereru (may have been only one), \$200 for unlawful possession of a firearm, and costs of \$130 in each case.

5. Kereru dropped in for a feed - Kath & Peter Powlesland

A pair of kereru dropped into the back section of our Howick home to feed on ripe nikau fruit on 13 October. A single bird was back the next day for more, but none have been seen since even though ripe fruit were still available. This is the first time that kereru have been seen on or from the section during the past 17 years. While a delight to have them drop in, because they were feeding within a metre of the ground and among much foliage of adjacent shrubs, they were quite vulnerable to cat predation.