

KERERU NEWS No. 69 (4 February 2009)

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An email newsletter of views and information about and observations of kereru / kuku / kukupa / kokopa / New Zealand pigeon / parea / Chatham Islands pigeon by Ralph Powlesland

1. Few kereru in Te Anau township during winter 2008 – Nik Joice

It was an interesting winter as regards the kereru about Te Anau. There wasn't the usual influx of birds to town during late winter-early spring to feed on clover at the golf course (or the kowhai/poplar etc either). However, I did see quite a few across the lake (around the Chester and McKenzie Burns) during late winter doing display flights. There was a fair bit of fruit on the miro trees at the time, so figure they were too busy feeding on the fruit and nesting to bother visiting town for foliage foods!! There is the odd kereru hanging round town now (Dec 2008).

2. Rehabilitation of kereru and tui at Invercargill – May Evans

Between March 2007 and April 2008, May & Russell Evans had 7 kereru passed to them for rehabilitation. Most of them had very few injuries or no obvious injuries, and so it wasn't always obvious why they ended up 'down'. One had a minor bone broken at a wing tip, and one had been caught by a cat such that it needed time for several feathers to re-grow. Six of the kereru have been released back into the wild, and the seventh is still in captivity.

Three tui were handed in during the same period, of which 2 died soon after arrival (1 with head injuries after being hit by a car, and the other was mauled by a cat). The third, a chick, was reared and released, and is occasionally seen about the property.

3. An article that may be of interest

Powlesland, R.; Miskelly, C.; Innes, J. 2008. City Slickers. *Forest&Bird* 330: 36-38.

Short article describing adaptability of tui and kereru to the urban environment, such as readily able to fly long distance over unsuitable habitat to reach seasonal food sources, having broad diets that includes foods from introduced plant species, and having fewer introduced mammalian competitors and predators to contend with, in part, as a result of pest control operations. However, urban life does have its risks for tui and kereru; abundant cats, limited water sources (particularly in summer), and injuries / mortality from flying into windows, lines and vehicles.

4. A decal that may reduce kereru window strike – Les Moran

Here's a product that might be useful for minimizing kereru window strikes - www.windowalert.com

5. Kereru in La Trobe Mainland Island – Peter & Jean King

La Trobe Mainland Island is at Karekare, Waitakere Ranges, Auckland, and covers about 200 ha of mature kanuka, young podocarp/broadleaf and taraire forest. We use a 100\50 metre bait station grid, with the bait stations loaded with brodifacoum to control rodent and possum populations, and periodically set traps to control the stoat population.

This year the kereru began their display flights in October in the mainland island, which was later than normal (we usually observe kereru display flights in June-July, and see the first hatched eggs in August-September). The first hatched egg shells were found at the end of October in 2008, perhaps the very wet winter delayed breeding. This year we saw a predated kereru egg shell, and trapped a stoat nearby, hopefully it was the criminal that got the egg. The predated egg was found within 30 metres of an earlier successfully hatched egg and I wonder if the same parents had two nests going at the same time.

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We have been using two different types of window decals to successfully prevent kereru injuring or killing themselves by flying into windows (same decal as indicated in item 4). One type reflects uv light, a frequency visible to birds, and the other models a spiders web with a central stabilimentum, which apparently the spiders weave into their webs to make the web visible to birds.

Regarding the kereru's important role as a disperser of the seeds of large fruited native tree species, we have noticed large numbers of seedling karaka, tawa, miro and nikau on the forest floor in the last few years (we have large 'lawns' of nikau seedlings developing everywhere). Moreover I have noticed large numbers of seedling kohekohe, especially in taraire forest. The kohekohe were devastated by possum browse, and the lack of possums plus the increasing numbers of kereru are contributing to the re-establishment of this tree in our area.