

Kereru News 81

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

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Kereru News back issues

Thanks to Pam Cromarty (and Meg from Natural Solutions and Frances Schmechel from ECAN) I now have copies of nearly all the Kereru News back issues, with a few exceptions. I have turned them into pdf files and made an index page listing topics by Kereru news issues. These will all soon be publically available on the revamped Kereru Discovery website (<http://www.kererudiscovery.org.nz/>). I'm still missing a few Kereru News issues so if you have any of the following issues could you sent me a copy please;

Missing

1 to 14
16 to 22

Pam Cromarty has also kindly provided me with the summary of topics collated by Ralph Powlesland (Kereru News Issues 57 to about 71) and his list of kereru / kuku / kukupa / kokopa / New Zealand pigeon / parea / Chatham Islands pigeon references. I will update and cross reference these and when completed will also put these on the Kereru Discovery website.

A valuable resource and some fascinating observations. I hope you will all enjoy access to these resources.

Astrid

Observations

Northland

Male and female descriptions

From Warren Agnew, Warkworth, Fri 30 September 2011

We have a pair that now come and feed from a table on our deck. They eat corn and peas at about 100gm a sitting.

The male is last years chick and he has battled with his mother for months.

She and her partner have now moved to another tree on the section.

Both sexes will perform the display dive.

The female is yellowy white whereas the male is pure white. In the photo you have published (Kereru News 80) you can quite clearly see the male in front with his beautiful white chest.

At present they are spending time in an acmena hedge selecting I suspect a nest site.

Occasionally when the male is a few metres from landing he makes a loud whirring sound with his wings. Not unlike the noise aborigines obtain when they whirl a stick on a string.

Wairarapa

Kereru nesting and falcon visit

From Narena Olliver, Greytown, Fri 30 September 2011

Yesterday our Greytown resident falcon touched down in our back yard, no doubt after the birds at the feeder. This morning a Kereru did the loop de loop over our back yard. Kereru have been nesting in a tree just off the Main Street, perhaps a 100 meters from here.

Wellington

Chased by Paries

From Astrid van Meeuwen-Dijkgraaf, Fri 7 October 2011 (8am)

As I arrived at work this morning, two squawking paradise ducks caught my attention. They were in hot pursuit of a kereru, who, after a big flying loop alighted in the top of one of four remaining gnarled old pine trees. It sat there for a minute or so, then flew out of the tree to display dive, and alighted on the same branch. Two kereru then flew into the tree to join the first, one a more buff looking bird (possibly a juvenile?). The buff bird remained in the tree for some time preening, but the other two birds flew out of sight into a neighbouring pine tree. The paradise ducks were seen on a lower, nearly horizontal, large branch of the first pine tree. I suspect there is a bit of competition going on for nesting sites. These same pine trees were of interest to the paradise ducks last year also.

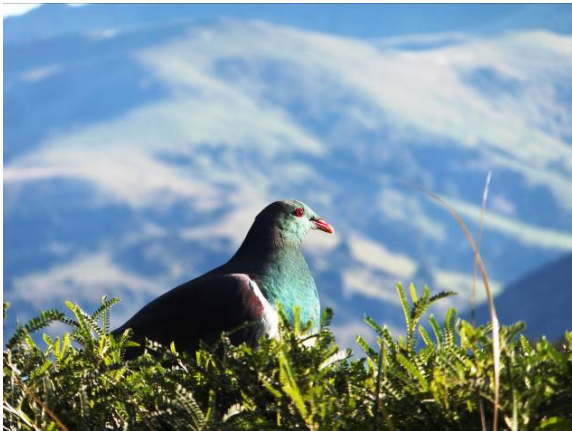
Canterbury and central South Island

Akaroa antics

From Sue Lovett, Akaroa Harbour

Have attached a couple of pictures of kereru here this spring. They have been very busy on kowhai, plums & cherry blossoms. The antics have quit for now & I am hopeful of a nest somewhere as we have just the one

bird at any time feeding in the cherry tree by our deck. After last nights gales I hope they hung on to the eggs!



West Coast

Nesting in Buller

From Liz Meek, Buller, Fri 7 October 2011

We live at Hector in northern Buller Bushclad hills/mountains on one side and the sea on the other. Over September we have had a pair of kereru in the vicinity of our garden and the ones around us, altho' over the last week or so of there was usually only one working the area - hope the other is on the nest.....? They use our garden and driveway as a

flightpath - you have to watch your head sometimes - to get to the larger trees for food - these are on our border or just over into the neighbours' gardens. They've been feeding on Puriri fruit, kowhai young foliage and flower buds, plum foliage and buds, etc.

We see them perched on overhead wires, in the big *Coprosma repens* and *C. robusta* round us, even on the next door garage door once, in the big kanuka by our drive. They seem to be generally working our whole village area and I guess that they're coming down from a roost/nest somewhere up in the bush above the Ngakawau River .

Pretty sure that the same pair were here last summer and thru' most of the year, but there were 4 birds later last summer. The present pair know the area well. Maybe the other two were their young???

Dunedin

Nearly falcon food

From Project Kereru, Dunedin, 4 October 2011

Had a Kereru bought in today that had been attacked by a New Zealand Falcon. Currently she is at the Vet awaiting surgery to have a large wound on her neck sutured..... there is also a possibility that she has spinal damage due to being grabbed around the neck in the attack. We can only hope at this stage its not permanent. Please keep your fingers crossed for her!

From Project Kereru, Dunedin, 17 October 2011

Project Kereru has had an excellent day today. The wee Kereru we have been caring for that was attacked by a falcon is well and truly on the mend! She is now capable of flying the length of our 40ft aviary and if all goes to plan she will be fit for release by the end of the week!!!!!!

How to tell the sexes apart?

I would be interested in hearing from readers if and how you can tell male and female birds apart.

From my reading I understood the following (copied from Kereru News No 80) but Warren Agnew (this issue) has raised some additional items.

To my knowledge males and female birds hang out together although it is very difficult to sex them by size or colour, the nesting behaviour (males on the nest during the day) can help with this. Females sit on the egg overnight and males during the day from about mid-morning. Only males make display dives within the breeding territory, during breeding season, probably to stimulate sexual receptiveness of his mate and unpaired males will continue to display during the breeding season.

I've summarised what has been published before. **What other observations have you made?**

- Adult males had slightly but significantly shorter bills and longer wings than females, but there was no significant difference between the sexes for tarsus and tail length. Adults weighed 420–780 g, with an average of 638 g for males and 596 g for females (not significantly different).
Source: Gill, B.J. 2006. Post-mortem examination of New Zealand pigeons (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) from the Auckland area. *New Zealand Journal of Zoology* **33**: 31-37.
- Male and female kereru look alike. The head, nape, hind neck, throat and chest are green, often with an intense metallic green and bronze iridescence. The mantle, and lesser and median wing coverts are maroon, but with brown-orange and green tones towards the margins. The rump and upper tail coverts are a pastel blue-green, with a faint green and bronze iridescence. On perched birds the exposed portions of the primaries and secondaries are black with a dull green sheen. The upper surface of the tail is black, but having an extensive brown tip. The under tail coverts are white, except with occasional grey patches on the outer coverts. The breast and belly are white. In the nesting season, the eyes, eye rings, beak and feet are crimson, the claws black. Occasionally the tip of the beak is paler than the rest, and may be orangey in some regions. Kereru have only 12 tail feathers, fewer than most other fruit pigeons. Weighing from 550 to 850 g when adult, the kereru is also heavier than most fruit pigeons.

Kereru are seen undertaking paired flights and chasing for up to two months prior to nesting. Display flights are apparently performed only by males in breeding condition and are most common prior to laying and immediately following nest failure. Males associated with nests during the incubation and chick-rearing stages very seldom perform display flights (James 1995). The first display flights of the season are usually noted only one to two weeks before the first nests are found. The onset of display flights therefore provides a fairly accurate indication of the onset of breeding. The male incubates during most of the day with the female taking over from early evening to mid-morning.

Sources: Mander C., Hay R., Powlesland R. (1998): Monitoring and management of kereru (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*). *Technical series* No. **15**. Department of conservation, Wellington, New Zealand. 44 pp.

James R.E. (1995) Breeding ecology of the New Zealand pigeon at Wenderholm Regional Park. MSc Thesis, *School of Environmental and Marine Science, University of Auckland, Auckland*. 93 pp

- We care for injured pigeons handling a dozen or so a year. We have a DOC approved aviary we built for the purpose. My wife Lois noticed that she could identify male from female by the tail. It is quite easy to look at a bird 30 metres away and sex it. The female has a slightly deeper V in the tail feathers. Then she counted the tail feathers of female birds and found there were some females with 12 tail feathers [as per the records] but another with 14. She went down to the Auckland Museum and studied birds in their collection and one bird as far back as the 1930's had the 14 feathers. In all, of a small sample 25% had the extra 2 feathers.
Source: Warren Agnew (2010) *Kereru News* No 77

Bird of the Year - polls open today 20 October 2011

Singer Hollie Smith, actress Lisa Chappell and former All Black and seabird advocate Anton Oliver are throwing their celebrity weight behind some of our native birds in Forest & Bird's annual avian popularity contest, which opens today.

Forest & Bird's seventh Bird of the Year poll will kick off at the Songbirds concert this evening at The Cloud on Auckland's Queen Wharf. The concert features several other New Zealand songbirds including Kirsten Morrell (NZ robin), Maisey Rika (ruru), Seth Haapu (kakariki) and Steve Abel (wandering albatross).

These celebrities and others, such as musician Riki Gooch and TV3's Rachel Smalley, will be posting blogs and videos on Forest & Bird's website urging people to vote for their favourite bird.

Forest & Bird staff are promoting some of the birds worst affected by the Tauranga oil spill such as the dotterel and common diving petrel, "Our seabirds and shorebirds are taking a battering at the moment with this oil spill, so Forest & Bird will be going into bat for these little strugglers," says Forest & Bird Seabird Advocate and diving petrel campaign manager Karen Baird. Karen last week worked on identifying dead birds at the oiled wildlife response centre in Tauranga.

"Our incredible diving petrel has been one of the biggest casualties in the Rena disaster. It seamlessly moves through air and water. I've seen these birds fly through a wave and just burst out the other side. It's been terrible to see so many diving petrels killed by oil."

Conservationist, campaigner and musician, Steve Abel, will also be campaigning for another bird affected by the spill - the wandering albatross.

- The poll opens on October 20 and will close at 9am on November 25.
- This year, Forest & Bird has launched a micro-site which allows the avian contenders to treat voters to a sample of their birdsong (www.birdoftheyear.org.nz).
- Bird of the Year has been running since 2005 as a way to raise awareness of our native birds and the threats they face.
- Past winners are 2005 tui, 2006 fantail, 2007 grey warbler, 2008 kakapo, 2009 kiwi, 2010 kakariki.

News stories

Canterbury business looking good – kereru used in advertising

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/marlborough-express/business/5739348/Canterbury-business-looking-good/>

When the doors opened late yesterday morning, people quickly filled the cavernous space of The Cloud.

A huge multi-media screen showed a journey through the eyes of a Kereru, who flies from the Southern Alps, past a ski resort, over a dairy farm, merino farm, and then follows a jet boat up a river to Christchurch. It ended with a statement that the region is bold and courageous, and a great place to do business.

Manu huruhuru bird pelting workshop a success

<http://www.voxy.co.nz/lifestyle/manu-huruhuru-bird-pelting-workshop-success/5/103459>

More than 20 people from across Northland attended a joint Kororareka Marae Society / Department of Conservation (DOC) manu huruhuru (native bird skinning) workshop in Kororareka/Russell recently.

The workshop provided the opportunity for people to show their natural affection for New Zealand in a practical hands-on way -this year's Conservation Week theme.

Workshop attendees came from Whangarei, the Hokianga, the northern Bay of Islands as well as Kororareka/Russell. The wananga was hosted by Te Rawhiti Enterprises at their workshop in Matauwhi Bay, Russell.

Able led by tutor Deb Harding and assisted by David Mules (Programme Manager Community Relations, Bay of Islands DOC), the participants first honoured the birds with karakia and waiata then learnt how to skin and prepare the birds' feathers for weaving into korowai (feather cloaks).

Wananga participants worked on more than 40 native and non-native birds from the Russell Peninsula, including North Island Brown kiwi, North Island weka, kukupa, kotare (kingfisher), pukeko and korora (little blue penguin) were worked with.

Helen Ough Dealy, Community Relations Ranger, Bay of Islands DOC says, "The kiwi and weka died as a result of being hit by cars; others, such as the kukupa and kingfisher killed themselves by flying into windows."

Sandra Thompson, a textile designer from Parekura Bay, Russell found the course very interesting. "I was very pleased I went to it and came away quite stimulated by what I had learnt. I found it fascinating that now when I see a dead bird I know how to help its feathers live forever rather than simply burying it in the ground."

Alyssce Ranger from Whangarei, who also works at Te Uri o Hau Settlement Trust also found it an enjoyable experience: "I had an awesome time. I can't wait to do more!"

Veronica Kingi from Purerua Peninsula was thrilled with the course. "I tino pai tenei mahi! Ataahua!"

Preparing the skins is the first part in the process. Deb Harding explains: "The skins can take up to two months to dry. Once they are ready, people wanting to weave with the feathers can apply for them through a cultural materials committee (Te Pataka Kamiti o Te Tai Tokerau). This committee comprises people with particular expertise in a range of traditional cultural practices/matauranga Maori."

Paula Wilson (Iwi Relations Officer, Northland Conservancy, DOC) explains the feather allocation process: "Manu (birds) are generally allocated to the local hapu first (in the region from where the manu is found), and if the hapu does not need them, then they are available to other applicants. The Pataka Kamiti hears applications for kiwi because of the rare and special status of the kiwi."

Maiki Marks, Kororareka Marae Society Chair says, "Participants who visited the korowai exhibition after the manu huruhuru workshop were full of praise for the skilful weavers who had produced the korowai on show."

The Kororareka Marae Society's korowai exhibition is on at Haratu Marae, the Strand, Russell until 31 October from 10 - 4 every day.

Research

A Mathematical Model for Animal Navigation

<http://www.royalsociety.org.nz/2011/10/06/postlethwaite/>

Posted: Thu, 6 Oct 2011 under [Marsden Funding 2011](#)

Many animal species migrate. Turtles and whales travel thousands of kilometres across deep oceans, while insects and birds perform astounding feats of navigation on the wing. For example, godwits fly 11,000 km non-stop from Alaska to New Zealand. At the beginning of their journey they must pinpoint a target only 2–3 degrees wide.

For animals to navigate successfully through winds or ocean currents, it is essential for them to have an effective and accurate way of determining their position during travel. Despite intensive research for over 60 years, there has been no convincing explanation of how they achieve this.

Dr Claire Postlethwaite from The University of Auckland will use her Marsden Fund Fast-Start grant to combine ideas from both mathematics and behavioural ecology to develop a new mathematical model of animal navigation. The investigators will study homing pigeons, well known for their ability to 'home' under a variety of challenging conditions.

Dr Postlethwaite will test several different hypotheses about which environmental variables, including magnetic fields and sense of smell, pigeons use for navigation. The model is based on the idea that there are differences between the animal's cognitive map of the variables it uses for navigation and the 'true' map of these variables. These differences cause orientation errors, seen when the bird does not fly directly 'home' from a release site.

Behaviour similar to that of pigeons has been observed in other animals, suggesting that the mechanisms they use to work out their position are shared by different species. Hence this research hopes to answer important questions on how a wide variety of homing and migratory animals find their way home.

Total Funding: \$345,000 over 3 years

Researcher: Dr Claire Postlethwaite, Department of Mathematics, The University of Auckland

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A pigeon fitted with a tracking device to study its homing behaviour

Canopy and above canopy movements of birds on Whatupuke Island, New Zealand

Beauchamp, A J, Katrina Hansen, and Gerard Pilon (2009) *Notornis*, **Vol. 56**: 213-216

Flight heights are not generally recorded in studies of New Zealand birds or during monitoring programmes, but this behaviour has received recent attention due to concerns about the impact and risk of wind turbines to birds (Powlesland 2009). Counts of kukupa (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) in the forest canopy have also been undertaken at Trounson Kauri Park to monitor changes in forest use by this species with management (Gillies *et al.* 2003). Clearly, understanding the movements of birds both through and above the canopy will be needed to assess how they respond to changes in management practices or, as in the case of wind farms, the placement of barriers to flight movements. The objective of our study was to define the patterns of movements of a variety of native birds within and above the canopy.

Tui ($n = 602$), bellbird ($n = 303$) and kukupa ($n = 124$) movements comprised the bulk (78.7%) of the records (Table 1). Bellbirds and kukupa tended to move within or just above the canopy. In contrast, most tui movements were either above or well above the canopy. Three kukupa and 2 tui gave dive and stall displays. [Abridged results]

Video and photo

Ecology Detective : Case of the Missing Kereru (2009)

http://www.google.com/url?sa=X&q=http://www.becomingdetective.com/ecology-detective-case-of-the-missing-kereru-2009/&ct=ga&cad=CACQAhgBIAEoATABOAFAreOe9ARIAVgAYgVlbi1VUw&cd=Hp_RvQg6Udo&usg=AFQjCNGAVhvtJg3o3iH--lFgcMvnaZ8SHg

Kauri Park School video that summarises the plight of the kereru and what they can do about it.

Waka kererū



This waka kererū (pigeon trough) was photographed at Ruatāhuna in 1899. The trough was filled with water, and kererū would come to drink. Snares were set on either side of the trough, and when the birds tried to drink they were caught.

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/te-tahere-manu-bird-catching/5/2>

Websites

[Editor's note: I thought it might be a useful resource to list websites with a focus on kereru- kukupa-kuku-para. Let me know if you agree and if you know of other websites.]

Project Kereru

<http://www.projectkereru.org.nz/>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Project-Kereru/127259537311782>

Dedicated to the Rehabilitation and Release of the New Zealand Native Pigeon" Is a voluntary community based Conservation Project that is changing the fate of sick and injured native pigeons in Otago and surrounding areas.

Kereru Discovery

<http://www.kererudiscovery.org.nz/>

In these pages you'll find ways you can help the kererū, New Zealand's native pigeon, right in your own backyard. A revamped website is due at the end of September 2011.

Editors Note: Download and get any kids you know to play the Urban Jungle Game – it is awesome.

The Kereru Awhina Project

<http://www.kereru.org.nz/>

In late 2003 an Auckland based, not-for-profit group Kaipatiki Project formerly called Kaipatiki Ecological Restoration Project (KERP) recognised the plight of local Kereru (New Zealand's native wood pigeon) on Auckland's North Shore.

The small community group were determined to reverse this plight and developed The Kereru Awhina (Care) Project hoping to enrich the pigeon's food supply and habitat by encouraging the planting of fruiting native trees such as puriri, nikau, pigeonwood and kowhai. In addition to this they also began developing education programmes on Kereru for local schools and community groups.

Banks Peninsula, Kaupapa Kereru

<http://www.ngaitahu.iwi.nz/Ngai-Tahu-Whanui/Natural-Environment/Environmental-Research/>

Kaupapa Kereru is an iwi-lead, community based, multi-agency project that was set up in 2000 to increase the numbers and range of kereru on Te Pataka o Rakaihautu/Banks Peninsula, Canterbury. Kereru have been an important food resource for Ngai Tahu on Banks Peninsula.

New Zealand Pigeon | Project Noah

www.projectnoah.org/spottings/7433353

Project Noah is a tool to explore and document wildlife and a platform to harness the power of citizen scientists everywhere. Our ultimate goal is to build the go-to platform for documenting all the world's organisms and through doing this we hope to develop an effective way to measure Mother Nature's pulse. By encouraging the mobile masses to document their encounters with nature, we hope to build a powerful force for data collection and an important educational tool for wildlife awareness and preservation. We hope you'll support us on this mission by joining Project Noah today. Project Noah is a tool that nature lovers can use to explore and document local wildlife and a common technology platform that research groups can use.