

**KERERU NEWS No. 83 (13 February 2012)**

An email newsletter of views and information about and observations of kereru / kuku / kukupa / kokopa / New Zealand pigeon / parea / Chatham Islands pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*, *Hemiphaga chathamensis*.

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## Kereru News back issues

Issues No. 40 to No. 80 are now publically available on the revamped Kereru Discovery website (<http://www.kererudiscovery.org.nz/news/kereru-news-archive/>). The other issues and an updated version of the index page will be added eventually.

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**

Robin Fordham has located issues 17 to 22. If you have any missing ones (even in printed form) please send them to me so we can have access to the complete set.

Astrid

## Observations

From Jonathan Anderson, Wellington City Council

I was out in weekend in Huntleigh Park Forest in Wellington City (Saturday 21/1/12) and noticed two pieces of whitish egg shell on the ground. They were large and from an egg about a third of the size of a standard hen's egg. I immediately thought kereru. After some searching I was able to see a smallish nest with the tail and some white feathers at the rear of a bird. I checked back about 3 hours later to see the same thing.

The nest is in a mahoe that is interlaced with NZ passion vine. It is about 4m above the ground above a corner in a walking track. It is on the lower slopes, south facing, close to the stream and the valley floor. The

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nest is located 30m from the edge of the bush. The vegetation in the area of the nest is relatively low, although there is a taller hinau close by.

Huntleigh Park Forest is a primary forest remnant with a history of logging. It is unusual for the Wellington City area as it contains a good number of mature but young matai, kahikatea and miro, in the order of 80-130 old. Other important trees are large and possibly original hinau, and secondary kohekohe and tawa.

I also observed 3 further kereru about 5.30pm. Two were in a large tawa tree and appeared to be feeding on ripening fruit. I also noted that there is plenty of ripe supplejack berries about and a few ripe pigeonwood berries.

### ***How to tell the sexes apart?***

**I am still interested in hearing from readers if and how you can tell male and female birds apart.**  
(Refer to Kereru News No 80 and 81).

- Monica Awasthy wrote- for a "scientific" point of view, we'll be putting a paper into Notornis soon using morphometrics. This is based off my work and Rachel Cousins who did a masters at Massey. I'll let you know when that happens, but the short version is, you definitely can't do it by size! We combined data from dead specimens (necropsy to confirm sex) and live birds (DNA to confirm sex), and then compared it with previous work. We still have data on feather colouring that awaits analysis, so watch this space!

## **News stories**

### ***Join us for our Kiwi Conservation Club Kererū Count!***

*19th-27th of February 2012*

We're going to count the kererū in cities and towns all over New Zealand. Kids, parents and grandparents - we need you all to help!



#### **Why should I count Kereru?**

Kererū are important for keeping our forests healthy. They are the only birds that can spread the seeds of native trees that have very big fruit, like tawa, miro, taraire and karaka. We want to know where the Kererū are in New Zealand and if there are places where we can help them by planting more food trees or controlling their predators.

#### **What do I have to do?**

It's easy! Between the 19th and 27th of February 2012, count any kererū in your garden, local park, reserves and school grounds.

We need to know:

- 1) Where you spotted the kererū
- 2) How many kererū you saw
- 3) What they were doing
- 4) If they were eating, what plant was it?

Then jump online at [www.kererucount.org.nz](http://www.kererucount.org.nz) and enter your results.

To find out more about kereru see [here](#)

## ***Kereru at The Nest, [Wellington Zoo](#)***

This kereru was x-rayed today, after it flew into a window and was brought in by a member of the community. In this type of accident, it is common for the bird to sustain injuries around the shoulder girdle.

The X-ray will determine whether there is a break (and where). It's quite easy to fix by isolating the wing in a sling for 3-4 weeks; and once the bird has recovered, it will be released back into the wild.

During the procedure, the vet team noticed that the beak has also been broken - and they will undertake further action tomorrow to fix this up.

These beautiful birds play an important role in maintaining our native plants, as they eat seeds (which are too large for other birds) which then pass through their system and get dispersed throughout the forest. Some of our native plants have seeds which actually need to come into contact with the stomach acids in order to be able to germinate.

Kereru are relatively common, but their population is in decline. While it's unlikely that your domestic cat will be bringing one in, kereru are affected by predators that eat their eggs - such as rats, stoats, cats and possums. Loss of habitat, illegal hunting, and competition for food also hinder their wellbeing. By including native plants in your garden, or helping to maintain bush areas, we can help to slow down the population decline.

Have you seen kereru around your garden?

## ***Project Kereru, Dunedin.***

Updates from their facebook site; <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Project-Kereru/>

### **17 November 2011**

Hey Everyone! Tonight I want to share something very special with you all... its a film about some of the Kereru we have cared for - by the very talented Kamani Suppiah from the University of Otago. Make sure you have the sound turned on!

<http://youtu.be/kbA3HYdACoE> It's called Rehab.

### **21 November 2011**

Hey Everyone... Trademe have allowed us to register as a charity and so we have some auctions running for the WindowAlert Decals. If you know of anyone who may be interested please let them know!

<http://www.trademe.co.nz/a.aspx?id=425425270>

### **11 December 2011**

Another special day on the Kereru front today.... we released two more birds this morning!

### **17 December 2011**

Is rapt! The wee pale Kereru that we cared for and released back in September (see post September 4) has been seen again and looks very much to have paired up with a "normal" coloured Kereru!

### **22 December 2011**

is thinking that the Kereru have decided it's Christmas Dinner at our house this year..... 3 casualties since 11am yesterday morning!

### **6 January 2012**

Happy New Year Everyone. It seems that the Kereru of Otago have decided to give us a holiday this year for the first time ever! With that being said, we are signing off and going away on holiday for a few days. Take care out there everyone!

### **17 January 2012**

Some days you win( a release yesterday ... yay!) some days you don't (2 deaths today)... making "release days" all the more special.

**4 February 2012**

4 Kereru in this week.... 2 hit windows, 1 small baby that was windblown and one Hit By Car..... At this stage, we've lost two, but the others are looking really good. Fingers Crossed!

**5 February 2012**

has now had 3 patients in 8 days that have hit windows. If you know anyone at all who has problems with this occurring with any birds at all - not just Kereru - please direct them towards our website ... and in particular <http://www.projectkereru.org.nz/preventing-window-strike>

Window Alert Decals go a long long way in preventing birds from hitting windows.

**9 February 2012**

and so it continues ..... another window victim today ... a very young and not very streetwise baby kereru. He sustained a fractured collarbone, so is going to need to be in care for a good few weeks.

## Research

### ***Pigeons' math skills are as good as monkeys'***

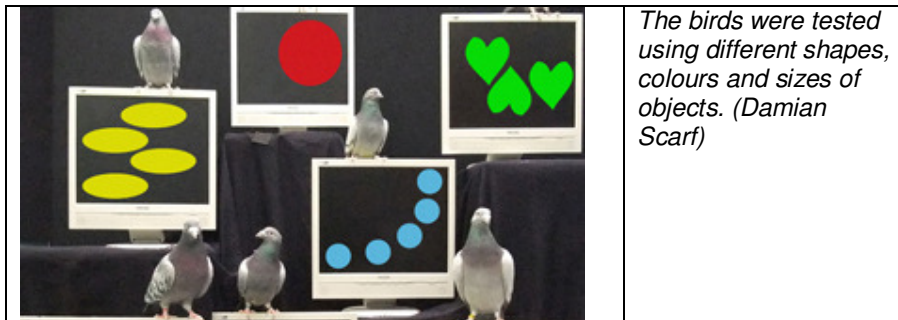
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/offbeat/story/2011/12/22/science-pigeon-math-monkeys.html>

[Wonder how kereru compare to the standard pigeon described in this article?]

Pigeons perform just as well on certain math tests as monkeys do, scientists in New Zealand have found.

While the birds may not seem very bright at first glance, they can be trained to use abstract mathematical rules to decide which of two images contains a higher number of elements such as circles, squares and triangles, according to a study published Thursday online in Science.

Previously, scientists had thought that only humans and other primates could learn the abstract math skills needed to put numbers in order.



"Our research not only shows that pigeons are also members of this exclusive club, but, somewhat surprisingly, their performance is on a par with that of monkeys," said Damian Scarf, a psychology researcher at the University of Otago in Dunedin who led the study, in a statement.

"Our findings add to a growing body of evidence that pigeons are among a number of avian species exhibiting impressive mental abilities that really do give the lie to the old 'bird brain' insult."

Scarf and his colleagues trained and tested a group of pigeons using the same method used 15 years ago to show that macaque monkeys could learn abstract numerical rules.

They taught three pigeons to peck, in ascending order, lists of three items that consisted of one, two or three shapes that sometimes varied in size, shape and colour. If they completed the task correctly, they were rewarded with some wheat.

Then the researchers tested the birds with pairs of images that each contained one to nine objects, to see if the birds could order numbers that they had not explicitly learned.

Over 10 test sessions, the birds scored over 70 per cent correct, even when both numbers were not familiar to them. In fact, their scores were quite similar to those of the monkeys on similar tests. Like the monkeys, they were more accurate and responded more quickly if there was a bigger difference between the two numbers.

Both monkeys and pigeons tended to have more trouble distinguishing between smaller numbers of objects, even though those were the numbers they originally trained with.

The researchers said they don't yet know whether pigeons' and monkeys' mathematical abilities come from a common ancestor or whether they evolved independently.

During the next phase of their research, they want to monitor the birds' brain activity while they perform tasks involving math. They also want to test a species of parrot native to New Zealand called the kea, which is reputed to unusual intelligence.

## Video and photo

### *Kereru weather vane*



The weathervane in the shape of a [New Zealand Wood Pigeon](#) (kereru) against a beautiful summer sky. At the Auckland Botanic Gardens.

<http://auckland-west.co.nz/?p=8175>

## 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](http://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.