



NEWSLETTER
#06 / JULY 2021

WILD FOR TARANAKI UPDATE

Tēnā koe – It's hard to believe we're more than half-way through 2021.

In addition to the fantastic work that occurs day to day, it's been great to see projects gearing up after securing DOC's Jobs for Nature funding. We expect an announcement of the successful projects from the Jobs for Nature unit soon, and in the meantime it's exciting to see recruitment happening and work getting underway.

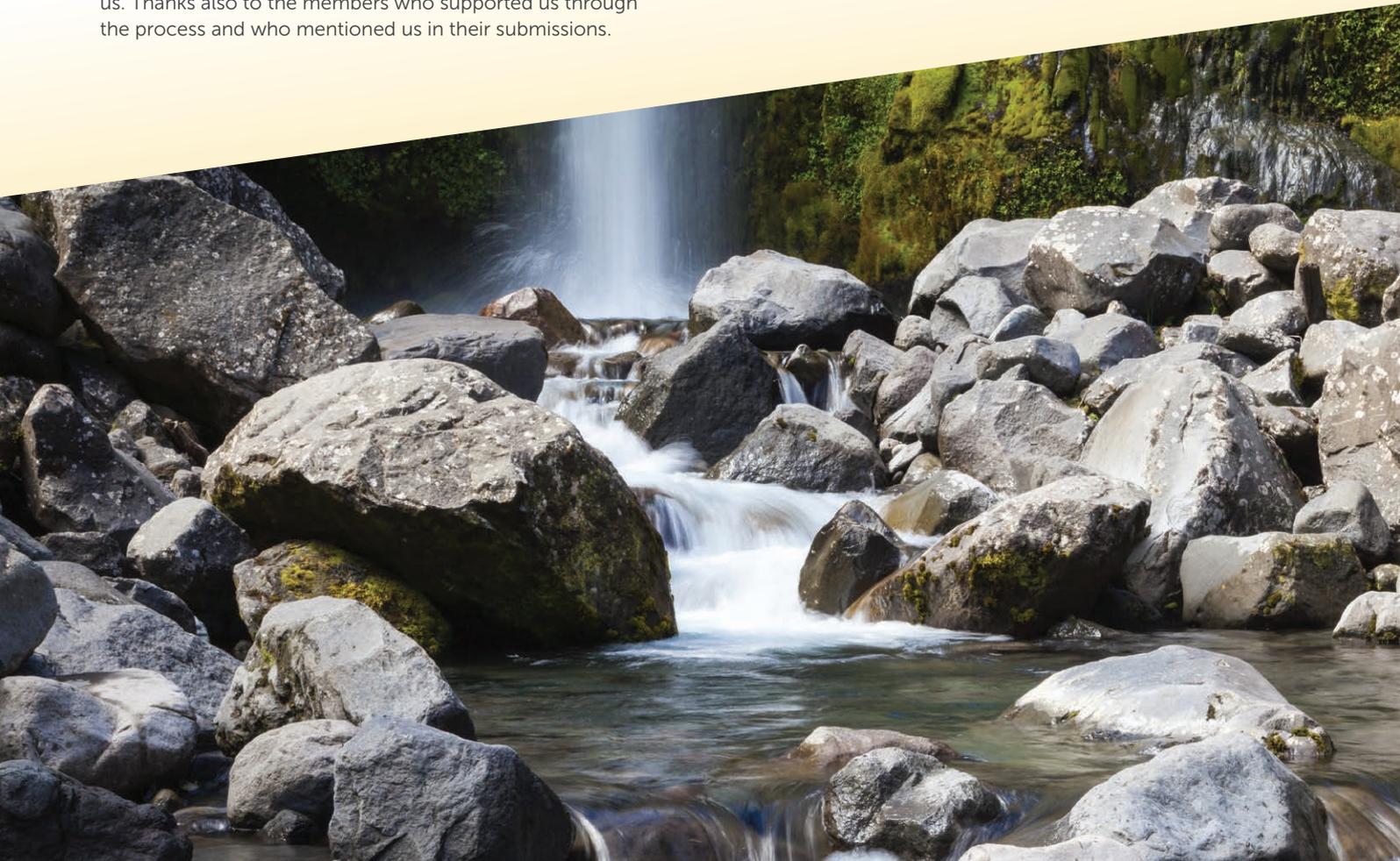
We've also been working on updating our strategy, which simply put, is about connecting, enabling and growing the funding in the sector in order to realise the vision of thriving biodiversity in Taranaki. I look forward to sharing more detail on that with you.

The Taranaki Regional Council recently approved our funding for the next two years with the signing off of their long-term plan. We are grateful to TRC for their long-running support of Wild for Taranaki. Having secure funding is critical for any organisation and we are delighted TRC continues to support us. Thanks also to the members who supported us through the process and who mentioned us in their submissions.

As part of the Conservation Hub network, we are regularly in contact with other hubs around the country. This gives a valuable opportunity to learn off others working in a similar space, sharing experience and best practice across the sector. If you would like assistance in any way, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Noho ora mai,

Andy Cronin
General Manager



ROKARE HOME TO MORE PĀTEKE

Rotokare Scenic Reserve is now home to 52 more pāteke after a successful release of the native ducks in May involving youth ambassadors, volunteers, Ngāti Tupaia hapū, supporters and sponsors.



Rotokare Trustee Allen Juffermans about to release a pāteke

The brown teal were reared at one of 14 captive breeding facilities and prepared for release at Peacock Springs near Christchurch. Since release, 20 of the birds have been monitored daily for six weeks using telemetry equipment.

Pāteke were first reintroduced to Rotokare two years ago, after 100 years of being extinct in Taranaki, with the aim being to grow a self-sufficient flock. Crucial to this has been trapping beyond the sanctuary to protect them from predation outside the pest-proof fence.

Rotokare Acting Manager Julie Larcom says the release event was a great day with lots of participation with young people, volunteers, ambassadors and sponsors.

"We are grateful for the amazing support and collaboration it has taken to raise and protect these special birds and their habitat. Halo landowners have been particularly helpful in allowing and encouraging trapping on their properties. Practical and financial support from TRC, North Taranaki Forest & Bird, land owners and corporate sponsors has contributed to the success of the project."

KORORĀ MONITORING UNDERWAY

More than 50 kororā, or little penguins, have been microchipped as part of a project to better understand the population in New Plymouth.

Ngā Motu Marine Reserve Society, working with the New Zealand Penguin Initiative, Ngāti Te Whiti Hapū and DoC, are monitoring the colony to shed light on their nesting and breeding behaviour and find out more about the species.

Richard Seed from the Dunedin-based NZ Penguin Initiative visited Taranaki in November to launch the project, capturing and microchipping an initial group of penguins. He provided training on penguin handling procedures, transponder insertion and use of a monitoring app.



While some of the penguins are in concrete nest boxes, many are in hard-to-access, if not impossible, rock walls.

Project coordinator Michelle Bird says the microchipping, which will be carried out throughout the rest of the breeding season, will enable the colony to be monitored – who is having chicks, how many eggs are being laid and how many return to their nests. She says it was surprising to microchip that many penguins and she is excited to see what the data will reveal.

The data is now being captured on a national penguin database, which will provide a picture of populations throughout the country. Several schools are also involved in marine learning and can access the penguin database.

The aim is to eventually extend the project with Ngāti Mutunga iwi, who will set up a monitoring programme for birds in northern Taranaki.

The NZ Penguin Initiative says although NZ is a hot spot for seabirds and hosts six of the world's eighteen penguin species, very little is known about them. Kororā breed all around the country and the Chatham Islands though it has been difficult to assess their status as there has been little information exchange across community groups involved with their protection.

TARANAKI KŌHANGA KIWI AT ROTOKARE

In early 2021 Simon Collins, Rotokare Sanctuary Manager had aspirations of translocating 50 plus kiwi from the Taranaki Kōhanga Kiwi at Rotokare.

This goal stirred feelings of horror, scepticism or laughter from the team of staff and volunteers from the two trusts, but no one was bold enough to challenge this statement.

When Simon died two days before a four-strong team of DOC dog catchers arrived, everyone was reeling, but made the call to attack the week of kiwi catching at the Kōhanga with gusto, in his honour. Local hapu representative Tāne Houston provided the inspiration and strength to do this on the first morning of catching with an emotional karakia and tribute to Simon. Five days later a whopping forty-nine



birds had been caught, getting the translocation season off to a cracking start!

Roll on ten weeks and the partnership between Taranaki Kiwi Trust and Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust somehow achieved Simon's target. It was a whirlwind of catching and release events, two on the Kaitake Ranges, two on the Mouna, four at the Tōtara Block and two at Sanctuary Mountain Maugatautari, a total of 50 kiwi. The team were elated, exhausted and somewhat surprised.

Seven conservation groups were involved, and the catching and support people behind the scenes numbered 73, all contributing in some way shape or form. Everyone is still celebrating "kicking arse" to quote Simon, but there is no rest for the weary as the two organisations now have the joint responsibility of monitoring a total of 55 kiwi, many of which are rushing around checking out their new homes!

LONG-LOST KIWI LIVES ON

Finding a long-lost kiwi in Tōtara Reserve and having it pair with a relocated kiwi is like 'hitting pay-dirt', says South Taranaki Forest and Bird Chair Jen Roberts.



Ella Robinson, Jen's granddaughter, learning how to monitor kiwi.

The 460ha privately-owned bush area, about a 20-minute drive inland from Eltham, has received 30 kiwi – 10 last year and 20 since May – as part of the Taranaki Kōhanga Kiwi project. The project is a kiwi-breeding partnership with the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust and Taranaki Kiwi Trust, which then relocates kiwi into suitable wild areas.

South Taranaki Forest and Bird members have been carrying out trapping in the Tōtara Reserve and nearby, in what is known as Collier's Block, for more than 20 years.

It was believed there were three resident female kiwi left within Tōtara Reserve, but less and less bird calls were heard over the years and they were presumed dead.

Jen says sometimes the group would wonder what they were doing all the hard trapping work for. "But then this old girl turned up after being 20 years on her own. We've helped keep her alive, so it was real pay dirt for us. We

are pretty sure we have another one of the old ones there but she is proving more elusive."

The bird, named Kuia, paired up with a relocated kiwi, Kohunui, shortly after his arrival last year, and has produced two chicks.

"You can release them as a pair, but it doesn't mean they stay a pair – we are discovering new things about them all the time. The monitoring tells us who they are mating with, when the male is incubating the egg and when the egg is hatched. After June they pair up and get their burrows sorted and we leave them alone," she says.

The introduction of 30 new kiwi has also meant South Taranaki Forest and Bird is taking stock of how they continue managing the area and keep it free of pests, of which feral cats are a growing problem. Jen says there is a core group of 5 volunteers trapping on average 5 hours a week and they are always on the lookout for more helpers. "We don't want to lose our focus. At the end of the day we are trappers and we love trapping. And we love our kiwis and come hell or high water we will keep them safe."

For more information go to www.forestandbird.org.nz/branches/south-taranaki



BETTER ANCESTORS



Check out the Better Ancestor videos on Taranaki. They cover the work of Waitara Taiao, which is monitoring and maintaining more than 200 traps in Waitara, Tiaki Te Mauri O Parinihi Trust, on bringing back the Kōkako to North Taranaki, and about how artificial intelligence is being used to help species. Better Ancestors is a film-making duo, who provide a weekly video series of people sharing their stories and actions on leaving the earth a better place – to be a good ancestor to future generations.

www.betterancestors.org

SAVE THE DATE

9th September 2021

Taranaki Biodiversity Forum. More details to follow about what will be an exciting day of inspiring talks, problem solving and networking!

WEEDBUSTERS HUI

'Never walk past a weed' was the catch-cry at a recent hui connecting people in North Taranaki working to control pest plants.

Iwi, community members, council and Department of Conservation staff, contractors and community trusts gathered for the first time to learn about pest plants and what is being done to manage them. They also shared ideas on how to overcome the challenges faced as we work to create a weed-free Taranaki. Key themes were the need to get young people involved, the potential to reduce the amount of herbicide being used and opportunities to up-skill. The hui was facilitated by Weedbusters and Taranaki Regional Council with the support of New Plymouth District Council.

For more information on pest plants go to www.weedbusters.org.nz or email weedbusters@trc.govt.nz.



TEAM PLANTING EFFORT

Staff from Powerco and vegetation management contractors, Asplundh, planting more than 1800 native trees at Omoana in Eastern Taranaki.

The Replant for Tomorrow initiative, supported by Wild for Taranaki, is part of a long-term commitment by Powerco to plant native trees in the region. Powerco Marketing Programmes Advisor Alicia Cameron says that volunteers have helped to create a native habitat at Omoana that will bring significant benefits to the local community.

"As well as contributing to cleaner air and water, these trees will provide a home for the reserve's wildlife. Replant for Tomorrow is an ongoing commitment for Powerco that will benefit generations to come. It's fantastic to be able to give members of our team the opportunity to be involved in making a difference through their volunteering leave."

