

**October 2010**

**Our web site:** [www.etet.org.nz](http://www.etet.org.nz)

## **General update**

Well what can be said about the rain, except please someone turn off the tap. The winter months are always quiet times for the projects, which allow time for planning. We had planned on being part of DOC's Conservation Week activities, but these were rained off. Over the last month we have had a display at the Inglewood library. It had very good response with so many local faces in the photos in our display. Ratapiko School also made use of the theme and visited and produced some great artwork. The response was so positive we are working on having to displayed in other locations to promote the project.



*Display at Inglewood library*

Once the weather finally clears the stoat boxes in all areas will be sprayed for weed release. The warm weather has seen the long grass around the boxes grow furiously, and stoats need to see a tunnel type view.

A number of groups within Taranaki have been working towards developing a biodiversity strategy. Taranaki Regional Council has been facilitating and we have been actively involved. It is hoped this will be a platform for projects to help each other, share technical expertise, and help with funding opportunities.

## **Kiwi**

The weather does not worry the kiwi if anything having the ground soft means they can forage easier. Over the last month Bob has seen footprints of family groups

including juvenile prints. We are receiving plenty of calls from people who have noticed an increase in kiwi calls. This is promising and we hope to have a similar response during the survey in May next year.

There is growing awareness of stoats in the kiwi project area, with plenty of people trapping them.

We are continuing with our ground possum control over summer. Roger and Harry have been waiting for some kinder weather so they can get out in the field. We have been advised of some landowners who are doing their own possum control. It certainly helps the project. If you are within the kiwi project area and do not have time to do possum work please let us know and we will see if we can help.

On a small scale we are targeting feral goats. These do a lot of damage to the bush especially the under story where we need good habitat for kiwi to thrive. Many tend to head out to the open paddocks. We have done autopsies on a number of the feral goats and found them to be full of liver fluke. The problem is that because they are grazing in paddocks where sheep are they re-infect sheep with liver fluke. We know many landowners have been rounding them up and selling them. A great idea. I understand there are a number of people who now do this professionally and split the proceeds with the landowner.

There has been quite a bit in the media recently of dogs being loose in kiwi areas in Northland. This is a major problem up North where the average life span for an adult kiwi in 14 years compared to 40 to 50 years in other parts of the country. A number of new suburbs being developed are dog free zones to try to combat the problem.

The Department of Conservation is bringing in new regulations in Taranaki that anyone hunting on DOC land with dogs must have had the dogs through an avian aversion course. This is common practice in other areas. It is not that dogs deliberately go out to hunt kiwi, rather the kiwi scent is strong and irresistible to dogs.

### **Guided Walk**

In early September we had a group from South Taranaki Forest & Bird enjoy the walk. We were lucky to have a fine day, and the group all enjoyed hearing about the project. At the start of the walk kiwi tracks and probe holes were seen. They tested the new ladders and bridges and provided us with good feedback.



*Members of Sth Taranaki Forest & Bird*

### **Whio**

We have recently received the bi-annual report on project with the whio project. A number of milestones were achieved during the last year

- Population numbers in and out of the Park were confirmed.
- Numbers of females present remained stable.
- Numbers of territorial pairs remained stable.
- A high proportion of females that were adequately monitored attempted to breed.
- Nesting success was high and several ducklings were observed.
- Operation Nest Egg from two nests was successfully implemented resulting in a new cohort of six juveniles recruited into Taranaki population.
- Pairs formed on protected waterways outside the National Park.

The report noted that the Taranaki whio population has reached significant milestones in the last two years with increasing capacity for natural growth and evidence of nesting and recruitment on the mountain. Increased number have also been observed in streams outside the Park boundary.

It is good to see the change, but also highlights the challenge of trying to re-establish populations.

We have noticed the stoats are on the move and are recording increasing catches in the stoat boxes.

### **Kokako**

Planning is progressing for the re-introduction of kokako. Bob spent a week over in the Urewera's as a volunteer to learn how they manage their kokako project.

An interesting feature with kokako is that they spend quite a lot of time on the ground. This highlights the importance of having good quality habitat and secondary growth.

### **Our possum programme**

We have been doing a lot of work investigating the best way to manage the possum part of our project. We have been in contact and visited a number of other similar projects around the country to investigate their methodology. Together with DOC and TRC we have confirmed how we will target the possum control in our project.

The project has two parts; the kokako area called the core area; and the kiwi/habitat area known as the background area.

The core area needs possum and rat control annually to have a residual trap catch of less than 5% at the beginning of November. This is the target to allow kokako to breed successfully. In our case this is in the 1,000 hectare block. With the help of TRC and DOC we will monitor the core area annually.

The background area is now split into three areas and will be on a three year cycle. The target is to have the area having possum control to have the residual trap catch to 5%. This will increase over the next two years to be up to 20%, when it will receive treatment again. These targets will mean the habitat remains in good condition which is needed to provide the kiwi with the right conditions. With the help of TRC the area having the possum control will be monitored for results annually. This means one third of the background area will be managed and checked annually on a rotational basis.

This is the first year of the above strategy, and we will be keen to see the result.

Don't forget to check out the web site for trap data updates.

***Cheers Karen & Bob Schumacher***