KERERU NEWS No. 55 (24 August 2006)

Snippets about kereru

1. Parea feeding in a rape crop - Liz & Bruce Tuanui

A flock of about 20 parea were feeding on the Tuanui's rape crop in July intended as stock food. The crop is adjacent to the Awatotara Gully of southern Chatham Island, so the birds have a very short flight to reach the crop. In July-August 2005, during a census of the parea population of southern Chatham Island, 28 parea were recorded living in Awatotara Gully (Adams, Fastier & Aikman. 2006. DOC unpubl. report), and so it seems that most have taken a liking to the crop. Bruce didn't realise the pigeons were making a meal of the crop until he went through the paddock on a bike and about 7 flew up. These days about 20 fly up from the crop and perch along the fence (what a sight) as Bruce goes through, and then go back down to continue their feeding once he has left.

It is not too surprising that the parea are feeding on the crop for a couple of reasons. Parea are quite used to feeding on the ground, eating the young leaves of some seedling shrubs and trees in under forest, and herbs, including clover, in open patches of forest or in paddocks adjacent. Also rape (also known as oilseed rape and canola) is a favoured food of the woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*) in England. Rape is of the Brassicaceae (mustard or cabbage family), and cultivated brassica leaves have been recorded making up 51% of this pigeon's seasonal diet.

2. Kereru invasion of rural Motueka - Roger Gaskell

I live on a lifestyle block on the west bank of the Motueka River (Brooklyn Valley). For many years now we have had 8-10 kereru inhabiting about 1 ha of land about our house. The food tree that they are most attracted to at this time of year (August) is undoubtedly tagasaste or tree lucerne. We have alot of it planted as a winter feed for horses and sheep. Kereru absolutely love the stuff. They gorge themselves on the foliage and have become so tame that they can almost be touched. Undoubtedly the proximity of the Brooklyn Valley to Kahurangi National Park accounts for such numbers but it seems they are happy to leave the park at this time of year to feed on leguminous vegetation. They disappear in early summer after wrecking all our stone fruit trees, especially the plums, and reappear again in early winter.

3. Bubs has returned - May Evans

See KN nos 48 & 53 for a bit of story about this kereru that was hand-raised after being found as a nestling on the ground after a storm. It was released from captivity when about 2 years old, and was soon in the company of a mate. Last breeding season, Bubs and her mate nested four times, and reared two fledglings. Since being released Bubs has turned up most days at the Evans home for a free meal, and sometimes more than once. Then on 22 May she stopped arriving for such meals. It wasn't till the 4 August that she returned, just as confiding as ever and keen for a meal. Where was she? If the findings of the DOC kereru study in Southland during 2002-2006 are any indication, she probably followed her mate to some distant forest patch from Invercargill to feed on various fruit sources, especially miro.

4. Kereru literature

Schotborgh, H.M. 2005. An analysis of home ranges, movements, foods and breeding of kereru (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) in a rural-urban landscape on Banks Peninsula, New Zealand. Unpubl. M.Sc. Thesis, Lincoln University, Christchurch.

Bits from the abstract

Aspects of kereru ecology were studied on Banks Peninsula, NZ, from Feb 04 until Mar 05. Telemetry equipment was used to locate 15 radio-tagged kereru. Characteristic of the human-modified landscape where this study took place was a mosaic of farmland, peri-urban areas, townships, native patches, and conifer plantations. Main study sites were at Church Bay and Orton Bradley Park.

The breeding season extended from mid-July 2004 to at least March 2005. 67% of tagged kereru bred, and 7 chicks fledged from 20 nesting attempts (35% success). Kereru nested in native forest patches and in areas frequently occupied by people.

Kereru ate 11 native and 12 introduced plant species. 2-8 species were eaten each field week. Introduced species were eaten solely during parts of summer and autumn, and made up at least 50% of the diet during these periods. Native species were eaten during winter, but made up less than 50% of the diet. Native species provided leaves, flowers and fruit. Introduced species provided leaves and flowers, except plum trees which also provided fruit. Before and during the first part of the breeding season, kereru were recorded eating leaves and flowers, mostly of introduced deciduous species and kowhai. The crop contents of one brooding female found dead indicated that her chick was partly raised on plum and willow leaves.

Home ranges, estimated using cluster analysis, were significantly smaller during the breeding season than the non-breeding season. Home ranges (1.8 - 22.2 ha) and core areas (0.01 - 0.28 ha) were significantly smaller than those found in Whirinaki Forest Park (13.9 - 704.2 ha and 1.1 - 26.7 ha respectively). Home range overlap was generally less during the breeding season than during the non-breeding season at both study sites. During the non-breeding season, six of 10 kereru moved away from Orton Bradly Park for about 2 months. Daily movements were mostly less than 500 m at both study sites.

Management efforts to enhance the kereru population on Banks Peninsula should first focus on predator control. Adult survival should be prioritised ahead of nesting success. Adult kereru were especially vulnerable to predation during summer and the breeding season when foraging on low scrub and nesting. 5 of 20 nesting attempts failed due to predation: 4 eggs and 1 chick. Secondly, management should focus on providing suitable nesting sites and increasing food availability before and during the breeding season.