

**KERERU NEWS No. 67 (2 October 2008)**

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

**1. Sex determination from kereru feather samples – Ralph Powlesland**

The Director of the Equine Parentage & Animal Genetic Services Centre is now Dr Jenny Cahill, who has replaced Ian Anderson. Her email address is [J.I.Cahill@massey.ac.nz](mailto:J.I.Cahill@massey.ac.nz) if you have any queries about the service.

If you would like to read a paper about the methodology have a look at:

Griffiths, R.; Double, M.C.; Orr, K.; Dawson, R.J.G. 1998. A DNA test to sex most birds. *Molecular Ecology* 7: 1071-1075.

**2. Kaupapa Kereru's book, 'E kuku te kereru – Heidi Stevens**

Kaupapa Kereru's book, 'E kuku te kereru: Oral histories and recent research into the Banks Peninsula kereru', has recently been published and launched. This book records the stories, observations and memories of a number of current and former Banks Peninsula residents with regard to kereru. The 14 interviewees represented a wide geographical mix from around the Peninsula, being from Rāpaki, Pigeon Bay, Menzies Bay, Okains Bay, Stony Bay, Otanerito Valley, Akaroa, Peraki and Little River, with most being long-time residents of the Peninsula. Four of the interviewees were Māori, being either Ngāi Tahu or having strong Ngāi Tahu links. The main aim behind this project was to collect a series of interviews that would crystallise the community's feelings towards the native pigeon and to roughly ascertain the numbers of birds on the Peninsula.

Since 2000, Kaupapa Kererū has led research to increase knowledge of the ecology of kererū on the Peninsula. This has included three masters theses and a number of other projects on the feeding ecology and foods of kererū in a fragmented landscape, habitat use of kererū in rural/urban remnant forest habitats, the impacts of predation and the activities of tagged and non-tagged kererū. This research, completed in 2006, is now being used by Kaupapa Kererū to develop recommendations on predator control, feeding and habitat requirements into the future. Summaries of the results of the above research are included in this book. The results of the first ever bi-annual Banks Peninsula Kereru Community Count Day are also found in the book.

Published July 2008, \$19.95, 61 pp, paperback, 150 x 210 mm, ISBN 1-877392-99-3

Those people who would like to purchase a copy of the book should contact Heidi Stevens at [info@kaupapakereru.co.nz](mailto:info@kaupapakereru.co.nz) or 03 3224714

**3. Lowry Bay (Wellington) kereru fighting back – Warren Thessman**

We have our kereru and tui back in the garden after the wet winter. The kereru have now found the nikau berries of late and are often found adjacent to our kitchen some 1-2 m away when the berries are ripening. With the kowhai starting to flower, both tui and pigeon frequent our trees. The change this year is that although the tuis' natural aggression still prevails and they dive bomb the kereru, this year the kereru are fighting back. It is common to see the tui trying to get the kereru to leave the tree but the kereru is pushing the tui out of the way. Maybe it is Olympic year and the kereru have been to martial arts training! We have ended up with about five kereru, but we had a flock of about 20 fly in one day and then retreat. We await our normal contingent of about 30 tui.

**4. Kereru eggs – Ralph Powlesland**

As indicated in Kereru News 62, I'm keen to get hold of unwanted kereru eggs in order to document some of their characteristics (yolk weight, albumen weight, egg shell weight) and

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chemical composition (water, protein, lipid, carbohydrate). Since captive and wild kereru occasionally lay an infertile egg, abandon an egg early in incubation, or an egg falls through a poorly constructed nest or gets rolled off the nest in windy weather and ends up on the ground unbroken (yes, a rare occurrence), I'm keen to receive such eggs for such a study and to document any differences between eggs from captive and wild birds. They can be recently laid but unincubated, abandoned after early incubation (less than a week), or even infertile and have received full incubation. So if you happen to obtain or know of such an egg and have no use for it please get in touch. (DD 04-4713226, email [rpowlesland@doc.govt.nz](mailto:rpowlesland@doc.govt.nz))

### **5. Radio-tagged kereru seen on Little Barrier Island – Ralph Powlesland**

Recently while on Little Barrier, Liz Whitwell and Shane McInnes, present caretakers, mentioned having seen radio-tagged kereru on the island. Not being aware of any studies of kereru on the island that involved radio-tagging, this observation was of interest. They have seen tagged kereru since 2000, with 2-3 seen last year. Thelma Wilson saw a tagged kereru in about 1997 during her time on the island. Liz and Shane are keen to report dates of future sightings so that it can be determined whether the birds are present in the breeding season or non-breeding season.

The closest mainland to Little Barrier is Cape Rodney, near Leigh, and it would entail a 21.5 km flight over the sea for a kereru to reach Little Barrier. Kereru are known to cross Foveaux Strait between Southland and Stewart Island, a distance of about 32 km (Harper 2003), so the flight between Cape Rodney and Little Barrier is well within their flight range. In that publication, Grant Harper reports seeing "a single kereru depart Little Barrier towards Leigh..."

The closest radio-tagging of kereru to Little Barrier Island has probably occurred at Wenderholm Regional Park, north of Orewa. Mick Clout and students (Roger James, Rachel Bell) radio-tagged kereru there during the 1980s and 90s, and subsequent students (Hokimate Harwood, Heidi Stevens) tagged kereru mainly in Birkenhead, Auckland, during c. 1999-01. The distance from Wenderholm to Cape Rodney is about 30 km, so the entire flight to Little Barrier would be at least 50 km. If birds travelled from Birkenhead to Little Barrier then the flight would have been a further 30 km. Another possible source of the tagged kereru is Maungatapere, near Whangarei, where Pierce & Graham (1995) radio-tagged 11 kukupa in 1992. However, most of these birds seemed to remain in the Maungatapere area year round, and so are unlikely to be any of the tagged birds seen on Little Barrier.

### **6. A kereru taking food supplements – Thelma Wilson**

I live on Tawharanui Peninsula, near Auckland, and have been providing food supplements to a kereru for the past 3 weeks (since mid August). Given that the kereru had eaten nearly every leaf off my kowhai tree and all the leaves off my hibiscus, I figured food was a bit short. I started by offering her peas and corn by attaching a plastic pot of kernels to a branch in the kowhai tree with a bulldog clip. She ate only the corn! After a few days of feeding, she was waiting in the adjacent plum in the mornings, but was still a bit jumpy when approached. Then I got industrious and made a holder for a long shallow dish on a pole off the deck with good visibility all round and where the pigeon poo falls to the ground (not on the deck). I put food in both containers for 2 days, then stopped putting it in the one in the kowhai.

There is a pohutukawa tree just off the deck where she usually waits (unless I'm late), and suns herself while digesting food afterwards. She doesn't seem to move around much at all now. I only notice her on the windowsill when I'm at home on the weekends, but there is a reasonable pile of poo underneath, so it may be a more favoured perch. She normally gets fed at 0720. Last Saturday and Sunday I was roused from a sleep in by the Pidge perched on the front window tapping on the glass with her beak!! I have had a couple of injured kereru that I've re-habilitated at home, and did let one go locally about 10 yrs ago because the vet didn't know where it came from. I did wonder if it was the same bird but I think they are all bright enough to know when they are on to a good thing.