

KERERU NEWS No. 74 (17 December 2009)

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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. Compiled by Ralph Powlesland

1. A publication that may be of interest

M.T. Emeny, R.G. Powlesland, I.M. Henderson and R.A. Fordham. 2009. Feeding ecology of kererū (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) in podocarp–hardwood forest, Whirinaki Forest Park, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Ecology* 33: 114-124.

Abstract: The diet and food preferences of the kererū (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) were studied in Whirinaki Forest Park, central North Island, New Zealand, during February 2000 – March 2001. The study was carried out in two areas of podocarp–hardwood forest, Oriuwaka (1750 ha) and Otupaka (1830 ha). Fruit dominated in the diet at both sites (65% in Oriuwaka, 87% in Otupaka), but there were seasonal changes. Foliage and flowers were more important in the diet in winter and spring, but the timing of the switch from fruit to foliage differed between the areas. The main fruit eaten also changed seasonally from tawa (*Beilschmiedia tawa*) in early summer to miro (*Prumnopitys ferruginea*) in late summer and autumn. Variation in diet partly reflected seasonal phenology of the plants and differences in vegetation between the two areas, but when food-type availability is considered, kererū showed selective preference for some food types at some times. Miro and tawa fruits were highly preferred food types in both areas. This study highlights the likely need of kererū to have access to various vegetation types in order to meet their seasonally changing nutritional requirements in a podocarp–hardwood forest where the availability of food, especially fruits, can differ markedly both in time and space. Thus, large forest blocks that contain a variety of habitat types, or landscapes containing patches of various habitat types, are needed for the long-term conservation of kererū populations.

2. Sept 2009 kereru counts at Kaitoke Regional Park – Owen Spearpoint

These annual counts each September involve walking slowly along a transect and counting the kereru evident within a fixed area of approx. 500 square metres about the ranger's residence. The kereru gather in this area to feed on the emerging leaves of tree lucerne, broom, ribbonwood, poplars, willows, and kowhai. Possum control was carried out in the catchment area in 2002, 2003 and 2007, and further afield in 2005. The marked reduction in numbers counted in 2009 compared to numbers counted in the previous three years is of note. It is possible that a more preferred food source that was available elsewhere resulted in the low counts. 2009 was a good fruiting year for miro in the nearby catchment. Plentiful fruit was still available on trees during surveys in both August and October 2009.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Mean	29.2	54.6	57.5	77.8	84.2	142.2	48.8
# counts	5	5	4	5	5	5	5
Range	14-36	44-73	29-77	72-82	51-109	102-168	25-71

3. Kereru in captivity – Edward Cheadle, kereru stud book coordinator

Currently there are 58 kereru being held in captivity indefinitely. No doubt there are many others that are being held temporarily in captivity while they heal from injuries and that will be released once they are in suitable condition. Hamilton zoo regularly removes eggs from its captive kereru because it already has surplus kereru. It is possible that some other institutions also remove eggs to prevent surplus kereru from being raised.

Farewell

This is the last edition of Kereru News from me. I've really enjoyed sourcing snippets of data and sending them on to you all; I've learnt a lot more about our special pigeons in the process, especially about the plasticity of their ecology through the country. Astrid van Meeuwen-Dijkgraaf has offered to continue the production of the newsletter, and I'm sure she will be in contact before long. All the best for a relaxing Xmas-New Year break.

Ralph