

## KERERU NEWS 77

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A brief kereru news today, but there are a few time bound items and requests for information.

#### ***Female kereru tail feathers***

We care for injured pigeons handling a dozen or so a year. We have a DOC approved aviary we built for the purpose. My wife Lois noticed that she could identify male from female by the tail. It is quite easy to look at a bird 30 metres away and sex it. The female has a slightly deeper V in the tail feathers.

Then she counted the tail feathers of female birds and found there were some females with 12 tail feathers [as per the records] but another with 14. She went down to the Auckland Museum and studied birds in their collection and one bird as far back as the 1930's had the 14 feathers. In all, of a small sample 25% had the extra 2 feathers.

Regards  
Warren Agnew

#### ***Help needed to distract kereru***

In Nelson and Golden Bay there seems to be increasing problems with large foraging flocks of kereru during winter and spring. With no miro fruit left in the bush these birds travel big distances to locally abundant nutritious foliage. This can be a problem for those with small stone fruit orchards where flowers, foliage and eventually fruit are particularly attractive. Branches are broken and if the tree survives defoliation the fruit is seriously plundered. Telling the tree owner that this is just another example of effective 1080 operations in the hinterland is not what they want to hear. Novel attempts to solve the problem have included spraying the trees with evil tasting stuff, streamers, balloons, taped falcon calls and even the threat to erect demolition windows around the trees. The latter to break their necks! A smart effective solution would be welcomed.

Peter Gaze  
[pgaze@doc.govt.nz](mailto:pgaze@doc.govt.nz)

Some related issues and suggestions here  
<http://www.wildlifemanagement.net.nz/index.php?topic=344.0>

***Kereru starving after last summer's Northland drought***

**By Bob McNeil**

<http://www.3news.co.nz/Kereru-starving-after-last-summers-Northland-drought/tabid/1160/articleID/170659/Default.aspx>

Some native birds are paying the price for last summer's drought in Northland.

Worst hit are wood pigeons, or kereru; they are now starving after the drought destroyed much of their traditional winter food.

While usually kereru are our bigger native birds; the drought has left them weak and thin, and one of them doesn't have the strength to fly.

Bird rescuer Sylvia Durrant says it is the first time she has seen pigeons starving.

"We had a very dry summer and the trees dropped their leaves and berries, and now in winter, when the woodpigeons would be eating them, they are not, because there aren't any there," she says.

Ms Durrant has been rescuing birds for 20 years and says kereru have been dying in all the areas affected by the drought.

"So they are eating grass and leaves, and whatever they can find. It's not very nourishing so they are losing half their body weight; just dropping out of the sky from starvation," she says.

Ms Durrant doesn't have a degree in ornithology – the study of birds – but she does have something else; a vast knowledge of birds, and a magic touch when it comes to handling them.

***Feeding starving Kereru***

<http://www.wildbirds.org.nz/Feeding-Kereru.html>

Try placing a platform in a tree that they frequent e.g. Kowhai or Puriri tree, making sure they can reach it from the branches.

We have nailed a plastic terracotta coloured pot base on the end of a plank and tied it to the tree. Place a small helping of thawed peas and corn on a clear glass plate. Although the presentation of the food is foreign, given time they should start feeding from the bowl.

Once the birds understand that food is available they will continue to come back and feed. When they do you can then start to add a variety of foods to the peas and corn:

Boiled brown rice

Diced apple

Grated carrot

Seedless grapes

Diced banana

Diced ripe pear

Grated spinach plants

Paw Paw

Broccoli

Diced orange

Peas and corn will be the base and you then add in some of the above foods but keep it varied.



Sponsor a  
Kereru



**What's important to remember is to keep the bowls clean and the food fresh.**

The birds should, once their natural food source has recovered sufficiently to sustain them, lessen their visits for handouts. This is when you must reduce and finally stop feeding them, as their natural diet is best, especially when they are feeding their young.

### ***Forest & Bird's Bird of the Year poll opens***

Musician Don McGlashan and filmmaker Taika Waititi will be trumpeting the virtues of their favourite bird in Forest & Bird's Bird of the Year poll which opens today (September 13th). Singer-songwriter Don McGlashan will be championing a bird that is better known for its sandwich-snatching abilities than its vocal talents – the weka.

“The weka wins the personality prize hands-down in my book. They're devious, diffident, gawky and prehistoric-looking. Plus, they're not gaudy scenery-chewers like the kea or the tui,” he says.

McGlashan is one of several celebrity campaign managers, including Grahame Sydney (black stilt), Dame Kiri Te Kanawa (kereru), and Taika Waititi (fantail) who will post blogs, musical ditties and videos on Forest & Bird's website over the next month imploring people to vote for their favourite tweeter.

One new contender in this year's competition is the barn owl (*Tyto alba* – pictured left) – a bird that has just started breeding in Kaitia. This stunning snowy white bird has been spotted on many occasions in New Zealand from Westland (1948) to Auckland (1985), but it's never gained a good enough foothold to be classed as a native (i.e breeding) bird.

McGlashan says he is unfazed by this birdy-come-lately. “After I lay down the platform for my campaign, I plan to look out for empty boasting and downright lies. The weka has no need to be threatened by arrivistes like the barn owl. In order to have a genuine connection with a bird you must have nostalgic memories. Birds like this are going to have a hard time competing against long-term residents.”

The kiwi topped last year's poll. Other winners have included the fantail, kakapo, tui and the grey warbler. The Bird of the Year poll, run by independent conservation organisation Forest & Bird, closes on October 13.

Votes can be cast on-line at [www.forestandbird.org.nz/poll](http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/poll) from September 13.

### ***Tougher penalties for foreigners caught smuggling native wildlife***

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/55332/tougher-penalties-for-wildlife-smugglers>

The Conservation Minister plans to toughen penalties for foreigners caught smuggling native wildlife to block them from re-entering New Zealand.

The changes are planned for next year and follow several high-profile cases of people caught smuggling rare lizards.

Three men from Germany, Mexico and Switzerland were sent to jail for varying terms earlier this year for trying to take 15 jewelled geckos.

At their sentencing, Judge Jane Farish questioned whether the maximum penalty of six months in jail was enough to deter smugglers.

Conservation Minister Kate Wilkinson said on Friday she will lift the maximum penalty to three years' imprisonment and double the maximum fine to \$200,000.

Ms Wilkinson said after the recent shooting of native wood pigeons (kereru) by a visiting Norwegian hunting party, she will also lift penalties for shooting protected wildlife to match.

Any foreigner sentenced to 12 months in jail is routinely blocked from entering New Zealand.

[Listen to report on Checkpoint http://static.radionz.net.nz/assets/audio\\_item/0005/2389433/ckpt-20100827-1725-Wildlife\\_parks\\_welcome\\_tougher\\_smuggling\\_penalties-m048.asx](http://static.radionz.net.nz/assets/audio_item/0005/2389433/ckpt-20100827-1725-Wildlife_parks_welcome_tougher_smuggling_penalties-m048.asx)

***Thesis Title: Movements and predation activity of feral and domestic cats (*Felis catus*) on Banks Peninsula***

[Hansen, Cara M.](#) Master of Science, Lincoln University, 2010

Domestic house cats (*Felis catus*) are seen as a potentially damaging predator to numerous threatened prey species, especially those with access to natural environments that contain abundant native species. However, the role of domestic cats as major predators is controversial and the degree to which they negatively impact bird populations is debated. Natural areas, such as Orton Bradley Park in Charteris Bay on Banks Peninsula, are home to many native and endemic bird species, including the threatened kereru (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*). Charteris Bay is an urban to rural (including natural areas) gradient, and provides an ideal study site characteristic of much of New Zealand. Charteris Bay cat owners were enlisted to obtain data on their cats' physical characteristics, management and lifestyle and how this may be influencing hunting activity. Age was the only significant influencing factor on how often a cat was reported to hunt, younger cats hunted more often than their older counterparts. Sex, size, breed, type of food fed, frequency of feeding, restricting cat indoors, use of collars and bells, distance seen from the home-site had no significant impact on hunting activity. Cat owners were then enlisted to participate in a prey recording survey of the prey that their cats brought home. Mean prey items per cat was 15.6 ( $\pm 4.5$  S.E.). The number of prey caught by each cat ranged from 0 to 79 items over six months. Rodents were the prey item retrieved most often (48% of the total prey take) and Lagomorphs were the next most commonly retrieved prey item (38%). Birds, lizards and invertebrates made up the remaining 14% of prey items retrieved. Of the total prey retrieved 2.4% were native species. A sample of eight domestic cats participated in satellite tracking using GPS technology to investigate home ranges and movements. Home range sizes ranged from 0.7 to 13.4 ha (100% MCP). Maximum straight line distances travelled from the home site ranged from 80 to 301m. Nocturnal home range sizes were significantly larger than diurnal ranges. One feral cat trapped and tracked at Orton Bradley Park had a home range size of 415 ha (100% MCP). Digital camera traps were set up at 31 sites around the park, density estimates of 1.2 - 1.6 cats/ km<sup>2</sup> for feral cats were calculated using photographic recapture data from the camera traps. Domestic house cats in this study appeared to have little impact on native species populations of birds, lizards or invertebrate populations. These cats may provide a net benefit to these populations through removal and suppression of other pests and predators. Proximity to Orton Bradley Park was not a significant influencing factor for the movement or hunting behaviour for the cats in this study. Feral cats at Orton Bradley Park exist at low densities and, like their domestic counterparts, probably suppress pests and predators. A successful pest management plan at Orton Bradley Park would require removal of all levels of pests (i.e. cats, possums and rodents) and the prevention of immigration back into the site.