

KERERU NEWS No. 72 (21 July 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 by Ralph Powlesland

1. Breeding of kereru at La Trobe Mainland Island, Waitakere Ranges, Auckland – Peter & Jean King

Our kereru are still doing display flights (neighbours have commented about the frenzy of display flight activity), and on June 6th we observed a pair doing courtship rituals (twirling around and bouncing up and down). I think that the pair with a territory around our house have fledged three offspring so far this breeding season. It seems like there has been no break in breeding activity since the kereru started their display flights in October 2008.

We have vast numbers of taraire which produce fruit in winter. We also have large numbers of nikau that seem to always have fruit on them. Puriri is also present, although not in large numbers. At the moment kereru are feeding on lancewood which is very plentiful. Coprosma robusta still has fruit on it, and mahoe supplies fruit through autumn. This year kahikatea had a mast year and in some parts of the ranges is fairly common, although in our area the numbers are sparse. So overall there always seems to be plenty of fruit for the kereru. Usually the kereru start displaying here in June/July, and finish breeding by late summer. However this season they started displaying in October and are still going strong. Are other people observing that kereru are still in breeding mode?

2. A couple of publications that may be of interest

Wotton, D.M., Ladley, J.J. 2008. ***Fruit size preference in the New Zealand pigeon*** (Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae). Austral Ecology 33: 341-347.

Abstract: We investigated whether the New Zealand pigeon (Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae) (Columbidae) exhibits size-based preferences for fruits. We tested the hypothesis that in small-fruited species, pigeons would prefer larger fruits, but in larger-fruited species, this preference would reverse as the pigeons become increasingly limited by their gape size. We collected undispersed fruits and bird-dispersed seeds of 10 plant species, some over several sites or years (13 datasets in total). We estimated the fruit size of dispersed seeds by fitting regressions of fruit diameter to seed diameter in intact fruits. We were able to predict fruit diameter from seed diameter in 12 of the 13 populations, although the relationship was stronger in single-seeded species than in multi-seeded species. Seven of the 12 populations tested showed a significant difference in seed diameter among undispersed and dispersed seeds. However, our results showed no consistent pattern in fruit size preference by the New Zealand pigeon and did not support our hypothesis. The large-bodied New Zealand pigeon is generally not gape limited and fruit size preferences appear to be independent of mean fruit size.

Alley, M.R., Youl, J.M. 2009. ***Mycotic osteomyelitis and hepatitis in a kereru***, Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae. Kokako 33: in press.

A nestling kereru that had fallen from a nest, sustaining a broken leg and clavical, was handed to the Wildlife Health Centre at Massey University. The bird was also found to have a firm immobile mass on the pelvis. It was euthanized, and an autopsy revealed a mycotic lesion (fungal infection) on the pelvis plus cream-coloured nodules on the liver. DOC staff can read the manuscript and see pictures at docdm-451464; non-DOC readers that would like to read the manuscript please let RGP know.

3. Project Kereru trailing window decals– Liz Green

We thought you might like to hear about something we are about to trial here in Dunedin. With many birds being the victim of window strikes, not just our beloved Kereru, we have found something really simple to act as a warning. Birds fly into windows for many reasons. Firstly, a new house may have 'sprung up' in a long-used flight path. The windows may appear to provide a thoroughfare if they are significantly in line with one another. Also, windows can reflect trees, giving birds the impression that there is something for them to land onto safely.

This being the case we have found some really attractive window decals. They are placed on the outside of the window, the top surface out toward the atmosphere. From the inside they just appear to be a small area of frosted glass. To the birds, they appear much larger and provide a warning, reflecting ultra violet light back at them.

If you are interested in acquiring one or more of these stickers, please contact us, Nik or Liz, and let us know. They have to be imported, but hopefully we can get them out to you in good time. We have to recoup our expenses, so a charge of \$5 per sticker will be passed on to anyone who is interested. We have encouraged members of the public who have had window strikes this season, to consider placing one or two, to attempt to prevent a recurrence and to date, we have had a positive response.

The designs are attractive; a butterfly, a hummingbird or a snowflake. They last for about 18 months and are easy to remove. They measure approximately 10cm at the widest point and really are unobtrusive. If you are interested in having one or more of these stickers for your home please email us and we will send them, with full instructions for use and details of how to pay.

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