

Pukenui Forest Ranger Report Feb / March 2021

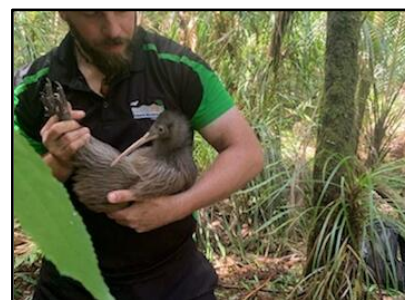
Summer has come to a close and already we are feeling the temperature drop. The forest canopy is becoming particularly busy as tui and kukupa flock to feed from the now fruiting kahikatea trees. This definitely adds to the atmosphere of the forest making this time of year a great time to go for a walk and explore Pukenui. We've as per usual had another busy month, this time firmly focused on our most recent kiwi translocation as well of course as keeping a close eye on our new arrivals while they settle in to their new environment. Read on for more detail.



Julia Brady releasing Forsyth into the forest.



A young weta found while kiwi monitoring.



Ranger Bevan releasing one of the birds as part of the translocation.

Trapping:

Pest numbers have remained low over the month of February, rats being the most frequently caught pest with only the odd stoat floating about. The number of pests seen over the last few months seems exceptionally low and we cannot work out why this might be. Out of interest we have set up baited trail cameras through the forest to see if there are any trap shy pests hanging about, hopefully this is not the case! This year to date we have caught a total of 68 pests which is considerably lower than this time last year with 125 pests' total. There is however some trap data yet to come in meaning this discrepancy may be smaller than it looks currently.

Trap data summary 2021:

Table 1: Trap data to date (some data still coming!).

MONTH	WEASEL	STOAT	RAT	CAT	HEDGEHOG	FERRET
JANUARY	0	3	34	4	6	0
FEBRUARY	0	1	18	0	2	0
YTD	0	4	52	4	8	0

Comparison to this time last year:

Table 2: 2021-2020 data comparison (some data still coming!).

PEST	THIS YEAR TO DATE	THIS TIME LAST YEAR
WEASEL	0	2
STOAT	4	12
RAT	52	98
CAT	4	0
HEDGEHOG	8	13
FERRET	0	0
TOTAL PESTS	68	125

Toxin/bait stations:

Ben has continued to work on our plan to change to Double Tap for our September operation and all is going smoothly. We have a few permissions to confirm and then it should be all go. The March toxin operation has been shelved to allow us time to maintain at least some of the bait station network in preparation for this new toxin.

Kiwi Translocation:

On February 12th the capture team headed to Motuora Island to capture kiwi overnight for Pukenui's last planned translocation. Before the hunt began, we fuelled up with dinner organised into teams, then we were off. It was a slow start as there were noticeably less birds than there usual which of course gives you less opportunities for capture. Nonetheless we eventually caught the first bird and they kept rolling in steadily after that. With a few birds now in boxes the processing could begin. This processing involves weighing each bird, measuring the bill length, injecting a transponder (microchip) and of course attaching the transmitters needed to monitor the birds after release into Pukenui.

Over the duration of the night a total of 14 kiwi were caught and processed (2 shy of our target) which was a great effort considering the lower density of birds. All birds caught seemed to be in good health with a few being exceptionally big and healthy birds which is great to see. I want to say a massive thank you to Julia Brady, Ayla Wiles, Emma Craig, Pete Graham, Chris Robertson, Colin and Carrol Beddow, Tace Wilson, Cinzia Vestena and Kelsie Hackett whom made up the capture team for a job well done!

The morning of February 13th the birds were brought back to Whangarei to be released in to Pukenui Forest. One group of 10 birds were taken to Wood Rd with a release team to be released near the Mangere stream whilst the remaining 4 were taken to a public event before being released near Karanui estate on Three Mile Bush Rd. These events are always great as they give the public an opportunity to see kiwi close up and ask professionals any questions they may have. A huge thank you to everyone involved in both the event and the

release teams, it certainly makes our jobs a lot easier to have so many keen and willing volunteers!

Kiwi monitoring:

The monitoring of our new arrivals started a few days after their release and has been conducted once a week since. At first, they all seemed quite settled staying nearby the release area much to our delight! The last few weeks however they've decided to get there move on, can't make it too easy for the rangers!

The monitored kiwi have been active for an collective average of 9.87 hours per night during their first month in the forest. Forsyth was the most active bird this month with an average of 11.11 hours of activity per night. On the other end of the spectrum yet to be named #5 was the least active this month with an average of 8.41 hours of activity per night.

Table 3: Average activity of each kiwi between 13/02/2021 and 08/03/2021.

KIWI	AVERAGE ACTIVITY (hrs)
Angitu	10.29
#5	8.41
Jeanette	10.58
Niwi	10.42
Kama	9.42
#44	9.83
Chris Humfrey	10.08
Atarau	9.37
Morrie	9.92
Ataahua	9.71
#69	9.25
#73	9.83
Forsyth	11.11
#78	10