



BRING BACK KOKAKO

For more about bringing back Kokako to GBI, see our website: <http://www.gbiet.org/kokako>

The Kaka



Photo: K. Stowell

BANG! What was that? Gunshot maybe? No it was a bird hitting the window and what a bird it was! The Kaka was stunned and lifeless. Lying on our deck, its sunset yellow feathers facing upwards, tail sprawled out like a pinkie-brown fan standing out against our bare wooden deck. Of course we have no idea what to do so we head inside and watch from the window blatantly waiting for the slightest movement, and after many anxious minutes RRRRAAAAKKK!!!!!!! And she's off but not in the air on the ground running across our lawn into the harakeke we all grab gloves and towels and sprint across the lawn I try to grab her but she switches to attack mode, claws and beak facing towards me and after a few seconds she hobbles deeper into the bushes, eventually after a few minutes we manage to catch her and put her into a box to rest.

The next day I hear scratching in the garage so I head in to check on her and drop some apple in the box with a container of water.

Later on in the day we take her box outside to see if she can fly but it doesn't look good,

again she just hobbles and we end up catching her and back in the box she goes.

After endless squawking we decide we should take her to Karen Walker to see if she will be ok so we pile into the truck and head down the island to deliver this bundle of squawking colours and feathers and Karen says that she should come right after 2 or 3 weeks and she will be set free back in Okiwi in no time.

Evie MacMahon, Age 11

Free Movie Nights

In the past couple of months the Environmental Trust has supported a series of conservation documentary evenings run by Sam Rodney-Hudson in the Okiwi School Community room.

"River Dog" by James Muir, a beautifully filmed doco about a man and his dogs' attempts to save the Pahaoa River.

"Pest Free NZ" followed three Fiordland DoC Rangers in their fight to eradicate pests from our uninhabited islands. It looks at what is currently being done on Stewart Island and where the future is heading.

"The Last Ocean" is a powerful film about protecting the Ross Sea where commercial fishing is destroying what is one of the most pristine ecosystems on earth.

Films were followed by discussion and refreshments.

Some of these excellent documentaries are available for groups or individuals to borrow from the Trust. Phone or email to enquire about this.



LOOK OUT

Black Petrels Crossing

It's that time again. Black petrels or taiko are fledging. Their parents give them tough love and stop feeding them once they're ready to fly. So they're keen to get to the sea for a feed once they're off the launch rocks up on Hirakimata Mt Hobson, where most of them nest in the roots of big old trees. Unfortunately some taiko will come up short of the sea and end up on the road at night. If you find one, cover it with a clean towel, blanket or jersey, taking care of the wings and beak, and take it to a windy open spot or flat water. It should be able to take off from there. Spare a thought for how far these wee birds have to go though - all the way to Ecuador. Our winters aren't that bad are they? by Kate Waterhouse



Photo: Antti Peuna (Flickr)

Feed for Native Birds

I have heard it said that the solution to feeding native birds is to grow exotic trees. Okay. So how to explain that the mainland is awash with exotic trees but not with native birds which are mostly to be



found in remnant pockets of native bush, national parks and sanctuaries. I'm not talking about our incredibly adaptable tui, fantail, kingfisher or morepork. This is about birds found nowhere else in the world, which over millions of years, along with native reptiles and insects, have evolved together with our native trees and plants. In working together they have covered all bases throughout the year. They know the trees, instantly recognize them from the air, will travel many kilometers at the right time of the year for a feed and plan their nesting and flowering and fruiting.

Although native birds may partake of the seasonal goodies from exotic trees those trees will not sustain them through the year. There is also the risk that exotic trees will grow fast and spread prolifically at the expense of native trees, another common theme throughout the country.

It is an arrogant assumption to think we can do better than evolution but it is a perfect time of the year for tree planting. So go plant some native trees. by Karen Walker



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The Awana Stream Weir Has To Go!!

by June Brookes & Bill Carlin

At a seminar on freshwater fish Bill and I became aware that our local stream, the beautiful Awana, had a problem – a 820 mm high weir. Built by Ministry of Works around 30 years ago as part of a national freshwater resources project to assess the freshwater resources on Great Barrier the weir and the water measuring project were run by NIWA until about 2002 when the project was abandoned.

A Barrier to the Migration of Native Fish

The speaker at the seminar talked about the key role of “fish barriers”, along with habitat destruction, in the decline of many freshwater native fish species. Many native fish, including many declining or threatened species, are “diadromous” (they migrate from the ocean as juveniles to their natal freshwater habitat in order to reach adulthood and breed). As tiny juveniles incoming migrants do not have the ability to “leap” barriers like salmon or trout. Some of these species have limited “climbing” ability to overcome some obstacles but many do not.

The streambed below the weir has scoured and fallen away over time creating a significant vertical step which, when combined with high water velocity, presents an impassable barrier to many native fish species in the Awana Stream.

With photos of the weir we took our concerns to DOC who enlisted the help of Auckland Council freshwater biodiversity expert Matt Bloxham.



Photo: Lisa Carlin



Photo: Matt Bloxham

Auckland Transport representatives were called in to assess the problem and come up with options for removing the weir. It was agreed that the weir has to go. Torrent fish, smelt, common bully and redfin bully (all found below the weir but not above) have limited climbing ability to negotiate significant physical barriers like the weir. Many other non climbing species cannot negotiate the weir at all (eg, inanga and banded kokopu) and so have been prevented from reaching a significant length of unexploited fish habitat in the middle and upper reaches of the Awana, upstream from the weir. It has probably been like this for almost 30 years.

Responsibility for the Cost of Removal and Rehabilitation?

The weir is causing ecological damage to the Awana Stream and has been doing so for many years. Since the meeting with DOC and Auckland Council we have been advised that the cost of removing the weir will be much higher than expected and that DOC do not have any money in their budget to carry out this work.

One solution is that NIWA (a lead agency for fresh water science) and biodiversity, who operated the weir for years and then abandoned it when their research was finished, should meet the cost of removing it. We will keep you posted on progress.

If you know of any other fish barriers in Barrier freshwater streams please advise Auckland Transport (culverts and road reserves) or DOC if on conservation land.

Local Board Meetings:

13th July; 10th August; 14th September

Local Board Environmental Committee:

22nd June; 24th August

Predator Management—The key to saving our bird species

by Alison Walker - Photo by Roger South (Flickr)

Almost a third of bird species recorded on Gt Barrier Island are no longer to be found. Birds like the saddle-back, the stitch bird and kokako are thriving on predator-free off-shore Tiritiri Matangi and Little Barrier Islands. Kereru (native pigeon) and Kakariki are surviving but in much smaller numbers. The black petrel which currently nests over summer on Hirakimata (Mt Hobson) and the Cook's petrel which visits from Little Barrier are at huge risk from feral cats. This summer two black petrel were found dead, attacked by feral cats. Little trapping is done at present due to an ever shrinking DOC staffing and resources.

Recently I was asked to look out for the Whitehead (Popokotea) as we live near the eastern coastland looking towards Rakitu Island. We have made two possible sightings. This small song bird endemic to NZ disappeared from the north of the North Island including many off-shore islands in the late 1880s but survived on Little Barrier. They were



successfully introduced to Tiritiri Matangi in 1989 and presently number about 1000. Similar in size to a silver eye or sparrow the Whitehead has a distinct white head and underparts and black beak. Its song is like a canary twitter

Or viu viu viu zir zir zir zir.

In the North Island the Whitehead is the main host to the long-tailed cuckoo which lays its eggs in the Whitehead's nest. It is known to prey on the Whitehead's eggs and young – how's that for gratitude. The young cuckoo, on hatching, evicts the host's eggs and chicks and is then raised alone. The Whiteheads continue to feed the much larger cuckoo as if it was its own.

So if you hear the long-tailed Cuckoo's distinctive whistle maybe listen out for its little minder the Whitehead.

Sponsored by Auckland Council the GBI Environmental Trust is offering **FREE Cat Neutering** for island residents.

Contact the local Vet, Anne Kernohan, on 463



Auckland Council
Te Kaitiaki o Tāmaki Makaurau

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