

# BRING BACK KOKAKO

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

## Pāteke



### Some Facts:

Males are slightly larger and heavier than the females. Males average weight is 620-700g and females are 530-600g. Our main breeding season is from July to November. Baby ducklings leave mum and dad at 55 days. I live in Okupu and don't see many pāteke there. I sometimes see them in the Kaitoke Creek on the way to and from school but I don't remember seeing any chicks this year. Na Ayiana

### Declining Population

Pāteke are small brown duck that feed on insects and worms. They have webbed feet to help them swim and long wide beaks to help them dabble for food. The population of pāteke is slowly declining on our property because I believe the cat population is increasing in the Okiwi Valley. I am seeing more cats. We also have pukeko that eat chicks and eggs. Other pests on our property that compete with pāteke for food and habitat and display threatening action towards them are miners and magpies. Solutions are to control pests that predate on pāteke. We need to as a community do annual pukeko shoots and have access to rat and cat traps. If help could come to our community in this way we would have a stronger population of pāteke in the Okiwi Valley. Na Wiremu

### Membership

**Annual Subscription:** \$25

Senior \$20, Family \$35, Student \$15

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### Predators and Competitors

A pāteke is a duck that is becoming uncommon. It is also known as the brown teal. The numbers of the pāteke chicks is dropping because the pukeko attack and kill them. Other birds such as the miner compete with the pāteke for its food sources therefore taking away the food the chicks need to survive. The adult pāteke can usually survive because they have a bigger body mass. Na Magnus

### Counting

Pāteke ducks feed on the Okiwi Estuary and up the Okiwi River as well in places on the mainland where they have been released. Pāteke have been dying out since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are estimated to be between 2000 and 2500 ducks living wild in NZ. We do a pāteke count every year and sometimes we do it twice. DOC will choose 2 students from our school and they go to different sites to count birds. We have been counting less birds and need to find out why their numbers are declining. Na David



## Venomous snakes to a land of lizards

Trekking through the rocky outcrops of Hirakimata, botanizing, birding and herping (*herpetology*) is a far cry from tracking snakes in 40 degree, dry dipterocarp forests of Thailand and what a relief. I am a passionate conservationist with a love of Aotea, Great Barrier Island and all of its critters. Although I started my conservation career with a passion for plants I have found myself chasing ants in Nelson, Napier and Auckland, counting trees in plots of lush forest, trapping lizards along crumbly cliffs and chasing after spitting cobras in the heat of a Thai dry season. Although the reptile community on GBI doesn't contain any of my legless friends, (thankfully), the reptile community here is highly diverse, abundant and of interest to all those in the field of herpetology.

Aotea, Great Barrier was home to me two years ago and I left with great sadness, for the Hawaiian surf and the rocky mountain snow. However, I have found myself back in this beautiful part of New Zealand and am looking forward to making a positive environmental impact where I can. With so many unique ecosystems which have become rare on the main



non-venomous radiated rat snake

land, there is endless conservation potential. From the Kauri montane forests abundant in unique species including Parkinson's rata, taiko (Black Petrel) and the GBI endemic prostrate kanuka, to the freshwater catchment flowing from andesitic, rocky narrow waterways, inhabited by rare Giant Kokopu and the cryptic Chevron skink, leading downward into a vast flood plain of Raupo reedland's and tangle fern scrublands which are home to endangered pāteke (brown teal), Australasian bittern and banded rail. These are bordered by extensive dune systems that are lined with golden sand tussock, Pingao and nests of the NZ

dotterel. Looking outward we see the vast Pacific Ocean, providing locals with dinner and a home to penguins, dolphins, whales and crustaceans.

Protecting these ecosystems and species from the beastie rats, mice, plague skinks, weedy plants and Argentine ants that think they've found themselves an island full of dinner, will be an important focus for me, alongside raising awareness on what makes the environment on The Barrier so unique.

I am very excited by what the environment here has to offer and am pleased to start a new career where the species I'm trying to protect don't have a will to see me dead. I would like to thank the Local Board for their funding of my new position as the biodiversity/biosecurity advisor on Aotea, Great Barrier Island and I look forward to meeting the residents who can share with me their knowledge on the landscapes, species and history that make Aotea so special.

Shanti Morgan

## Thank You DOC

Every year the Trust is generously supported by a wide range of people, organisations and funders to whom we are very grateful. In this Bush Telegraph we acknowledge the local DOC office for the books they regularly donate as prizes for competitions run by the Trust. Environmentally focussed books are a precious resource to put into the hands of a child, adult and family. Thank you.

Our newsletters are supported by funding from



## Hirakimata Spin-Off

by John Ogden

One of the compensations for walking up Hirakimata ten times this summer checking on the GBIET rat-traps has been all the other things I've seen apart from dead rats. Birds include tomtits, kakariki and robins. A few robins are now breeding on the summit after leaving their sites of introduction at Windy Hill and Glenfern Sanctuaries. In April the fungi were spectacular and a climbing rata (Metrosideros fulgens) was in flower near Windy Canyon. Another much rarer species of Metrosideros occurs on the summit. The ratas are one of the species potentially endangered by the newly arrived Myrtle Rust disease.



Photos: Colourful fungi on Hirakimata. Blue (Enteloma virescens). Red and orange (Hygrocybe rubrocarnosa). Yellow. Cortinarius spp. Palatability of all three unknown!

(2) Metrosideros fulgens in flower at Windy Canyon steps in April. All climbing ratas are at risk from introduced Myrtle Rust.

**PS:** There will be more to come on the rat-trapping results later! Anyone wanting a copy of the detailed report please email: [contact.gbiet@gmail.com](mailto:contact.gbiet@gmail.com)



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## Native Orchids

by Emmy Pratt

It is always a pleasure to get a chance to walk our island's great tracks. There is so much to see; the trees, ferns, mosses, lichens, birds and the geology. At the moment my passion is spotting the little native orchids. You will find them perched on branches or tree trunks, shady or sunny banks along or on the edges of the tracks. Some are even sprouting out of the bare clay track. They come in all shapes and sizes. Some as small as 2-3 cm to those reaching 30 cm plus and all sizes in between. Flowering at different times during the year.

On the Hot Springs track you will likely have seen the species of Thelymitra (Sun orchid) shades of white to blue. Or Orthocera (Grassland orchid) erect with several alternate dark maroon, hooded two whiskered flowers. Or maybe Microtis (Common onion leafed orchid) pale lime green, many small flowered plant with an onion shaped leaf.

In the bush you may have seen Winikia Dendrobium Cunninghamsi (Lady's Slipper orchid) a long cascading, many branched plant with white flowers drooping downwards. Erina autumnalis (Easter orchid) with white,



Acianthus

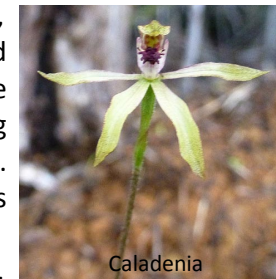


Corunasstylis

yellow centered flowers. The flower clusters are upturned and highly scented. E. mucronate (Bamboo orchid) greeny coloured with orange centered flowers. Looking around a bit more carefully you may spot the species Pterotylis (Green hooded orchid), a green hood with two whiskers, growing on the ground. Then carefully looking down there is Acianthus, standing about 4-5 cm high with a spike of 3-6 pale green, with maroon tinged flowers. The lower petals of the flower cross like a tail.

Another is Corunasstylis with spikes of 20-30 cream green flowers with a maroon blush. About 9-12 cm tall. The delicate single flower of Caladenia is a nice find. White to pale pink flowers on a 6-12cm stem.

So next time you are out and about take a closer look at what is around you on the tracks. You will be pleasantly surprised. Happy looking!



Caladenia

### Trust Contact Details

PO Box 35, Okiwi, Gt Barrier Island, 0960

**Phone:** 02 234 GBIET (022 34 42438)

**FB:** Great Barrier Island Environmental Trust

**Twitter:** GBIET@GBITrust **Web:** [www.gbiet.org](http://www.gbiet.org)