



WekaWatch Kawakawa Bay Inc

Newsletter June 2013

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WekaWatch picnic at Waiti bay

In early February, 18 members had a pleasant evening picnic at Waiti Bay. Despite being in the heart of weka country we did not hear any calls but the evening was a great chance to meet members who are not involved in the day to day running of our group. We plan to repeat the event at the start of 2014. Next time we will go to a spot where we cannot be missed, as we know 2 couples tried to find us in the midst of the day trippers and failed!

Our AGM

The 2013 Annual General Meeting was capably chaired by Kevin - all over in 20 minutes. We welcome Phil Coory to the committee. Recently retired and with his business skills seeking fresh challenges, he has set our finances on a firm footing. He will shortly be contacting those members still to pay their 2013 subscriptions.

After the business was over we enjoyed the talk by Mags Ramsey on her work to protect the NZ dotterel in our area. While our local birds did not have much success in the past breeding season, there were successful clutches raised at other sites she monitors.

Weka Count 2013

The 2013 survey of the weka population at Kawakawa Bay was completed over 3 fine calm evenings in April. We had a wonderful turn out of counters and were glad to welcome our first B&B guests, Nigel and Wendy from Cooks Beach who chose to come to us for a weka count in celebration of their wedding anniversary. We will repeat the offer of overnight accommodation for distant counters in 2014. We expected the drought to have had an effect on the results and this proved to be correct. In the core area where in the 3 previous years the numbers of calling birds had been over 120 and as high as 133, only 99 weka were detected. There was a significant drop in the number of calling sites too – down by more than 10%. Further weka, mostly single birds were heard outside the core area, along the Orere Gorge and towards Orere Point. Ian's full report is attached and makes interesting reading.

Our banded birds

We continue to watch the banded birds with great interest. After 3 full years of records from up to 6 recorders there is a huge amount of data available and so detailed daily records are not being as widely kept. Our pin-up boy this time is Barry who has visited John and Rosemary regularly, and though he is not searching for a female (judging by his calling) we have never seen a mate.

Tony Beauchamp visited us at the beginning of May and was able to colour band the 6 unbanded birds in the area. This



brings the totla number of weka he has banded to more than 40 though we never see more than about 8 of these. Would that we knew the fate of the other 30!

Our trap lines

Yes they are still there, more than 13 kilometers of them and 110 traps to check on a regular basis. Do send us an email if you would like to be put onto our 'occasional trappers' list and we will invite you on upcoming trap excursions.



Dave one of our trappers has written

"The traps have a powerful mechanism to instantly flatten predators. Sometimes checks can be up to three weeks apart so some victims are rather ripe and seem to be still moving under the power of maggots. Stay upwind."

Another visitor commented

"That animal looks like it has been in a Panini toaster!"

Some workers liken the DOC traps to George Foreman grills, so effectively are our victims flattened. The photo is of a 'grilled' stoat,

no longer a threat to our weka.

And our results so far in 2013 – 46 rats, 37 hedgehogs, 6 stoats, 2 ferrets, 2 weasels, and, surprisingly, 1 possum!

Further afield

A small group spent an evening listening for weka at **Waharau Regional Park** where weka have been reported. Nothing was heard.

We have photographic evidence of weka at the farm known as **Lismore** to the west of the Orica property which is soon to be Waitawa Regional Park. The residents were seeing 2 adults and 3 juveniles for a number of weeks.



The Lismore weka family

Committee member Joyce is doing a great job in keeping the **Orere Point** community in touch with what WekaWatch is doing; in particular her efforts in engaging with the local community association and getting our stories told in the local news bulletin have been valuable. She is also an excellent 'weka counter recruiter'!

The story of the one-eyed weka

Early in January we had a phone call from a bach owner from beyond Waiti Bay. He had found a juvenile weka near his nephew's tent site, very weak and looking like it had been abandoned by its parents. They brought it to us the next morning. We took it to Manukau Bird Rescue who took it to a



local vet. He said that it needed eye surgery at a cost of about \$1000, far more than either Bird Rescue or WekaWatch could afford! It was happy to take food offered to it in tweezers (as a parent bird would) but then it refused any offered food and wanted to feed for itself. A few days later the weka, in much better condition, was taken to a Mt Albert vet, Berend Westera, who likes working with wild life. He phoned an eye surgeon who advised surgical removal of the eye. This was done that day (for free) and by evening the weka was back with Bird Rescue and getting superb post-operative care. Ten days later the weka had gained weight, was competently searching for food, and getting rather

stropky and stressed about being cooped up. We collected the bird and released it back into the bush, close to the area where it had initially been found, and where we were sure it had access to a good

water supply in a stream. It was now in the hands of Mother Nature whether the bird survived or not. Should you see a one eyed weka at the end of the road we would be pleased to hear about it! Your committee discussed the value of intervening with nature in this way. While it may not have been successful for this one-eyed weka – we will never know – it was certainly a good story for publicising our group and its goals.

Spreading the word

Rosemary and John are taking their presentation ***There are Weka at the Bottom of Our Garden*** to a number of different groups, Birds New Zealand in both Bay of Plenty and South Auckland, Forest and Bird Waitakere branch, and to a local Historical Society. Please let us know if there are other groups who might like to hear about what we do.

Thank you all for your continuing interest and support!

Your committee – Kevin, Barbara, Ruth, Dave, Trish, Phil, Nova, Ian, Joyce, John and Rosemary

Please keep in touch

WekaWatch Kawakawa Bay Inc
C/- Kawakawa Bay Postal Centre
Kawakawa Bay 2138

wekawatch@paradise.net.nz

www.wekawatch.co.nz

Phone 09 2922 512

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