



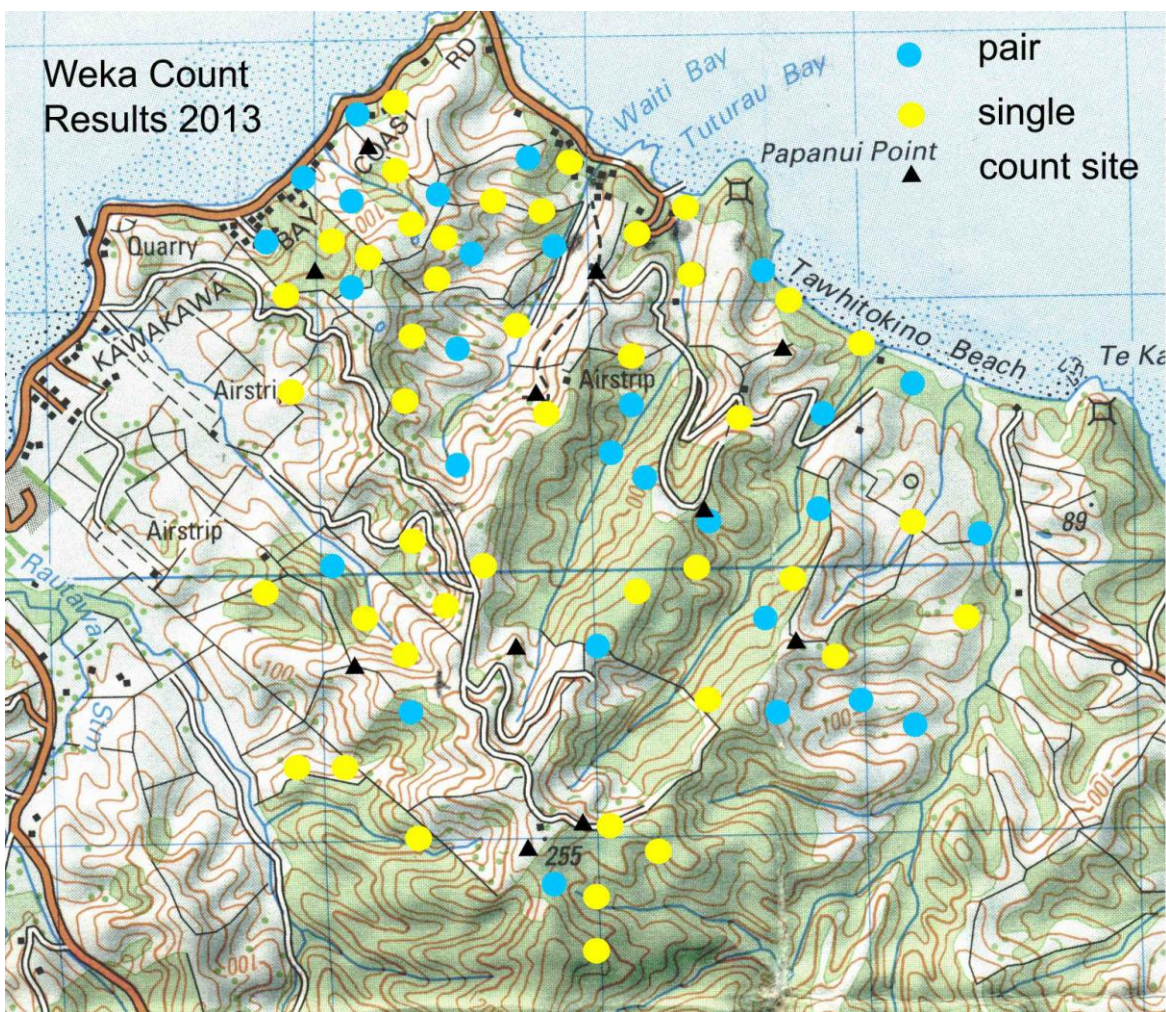
## WekaWatch Kawakawa Bay Inc

### Report on Weka Surveys 2013

#### Tawhitokino block (core study area)

In this, our 9<sup>th</sup> year of monitoring the Kawakawa bay weka population, the usual series of three counts was carried out on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, and April 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. All 3 counts were carried out in good weather with little wind. A good turnout of counters allowed all of the count sites in the core blocks to be monitored each night.

When the results were collated there were weka heard calling from just 71 positions, 43 of them were single birds and 28 (39%) of them were paired giving a total of 99 birds as shown in the map below.

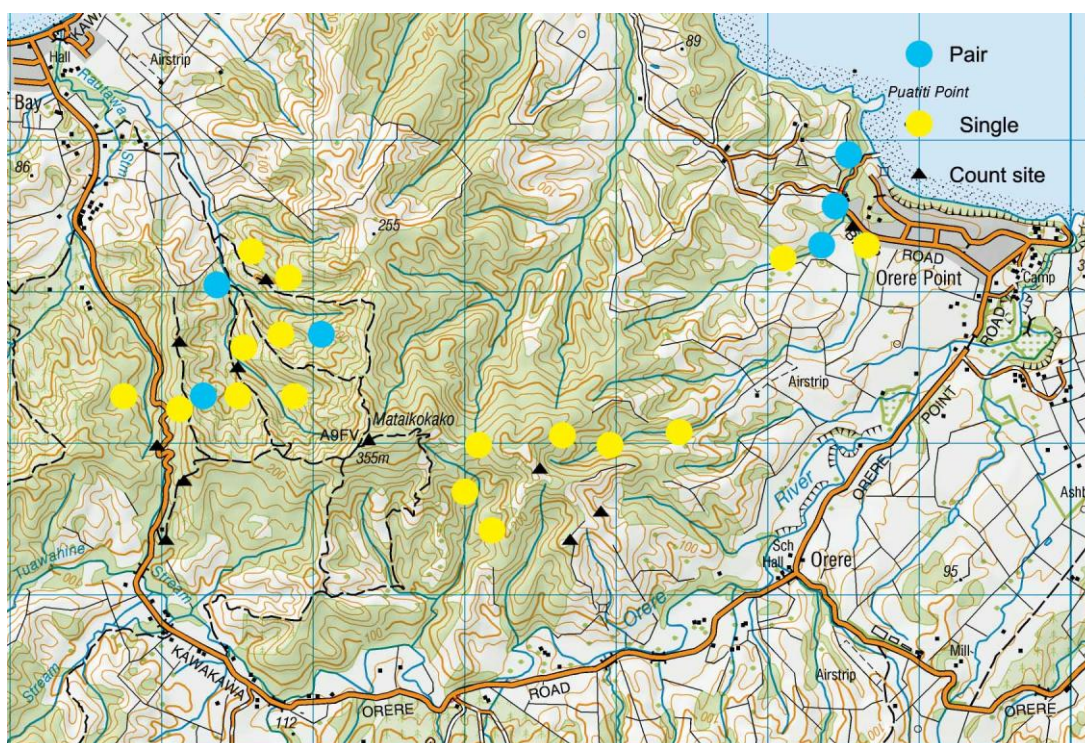


#### Orere Point and Richardson's Block

We are attempting to monitor progress of weka outside the core study area. We managed to cover three sites on the Richardson's block in good weather on April 6<sup>th</sup> as well as the core study area. Another count was organised on April 27<sup>th</sup> to covering six positions between Orere Point township back to the main road to the south of the main ridge with the high point of Mataikokako and another on the main road just north of the top of the hill. The four easternmost points had been counted last year but the western three were



new positions. The weather had deteriorated and was wet for much of the day but a good count was carried out in a gap between showers. The results of these two counts are shown together on the map below. The two single birds nearest the road were heard on the Orere survey.



In the Richardson's Block weka were heard from nine sites, six of them singles and three pairs. From the count point at Orere Point three pairs and a single bird were heard although one of these pairs was heard from the boat ramp prior to the count. This suggests that there is a good population around the town. There were three count sites on Sinclair's property and six single birds were heard from the northernmost site only. None were heard from two sites on Maddock's property but two single weka were heard from the main road just to the north of the hill top.

## Discussion

Last year we heard weka in 76 positions, only a few more than this year, but 57 (75%) of those were paired birds giving a total of 133. This year there has been a big reduction in the total number of birds and the results suggest that this has largely been from the break-up of pairs.

We counted Richardson's Block once in 2012, hearing just one pair and one single weka within the valley and a few more around the edges. Last year there were also two counters at Orere Point (five single weka and a pair) and five counters on Sinclair's farm (one weka heard just south of the high ridge) for a single count. Having counted these sites only once in each year and from fewer observation points this year, there is not a strong basis for comparison but there appears to have been an increase in weka numbers in all of these areas.

A decline in the numbers of weka recorded in the core study area has occurred only once before in this study and that was in 2008. What both of these years have in common is that the counts follow significant periods of drought and much of the decline comes from the apparent breakup of pairs. There is evidence from other places that weka do not do well in drought, sometimes becoming locally extinct rather than recovering, so our result is not a surprise.

At the same time as the numbers counted in the core study area declined, weka were recorded in much higher numbers on the Richardson's property than last year, and in places further south where they had not been found before. Here too there are parallels with 2008 when there was also obvious expansion to 2km further south than we had heard them before. In 2008 we detected weka, mostly single birds, calling from the edge of Richardson's property for the first time, and even further south on Maddock's. During periods of hardship such as a drought, weka have been known to remain on their territories until they die, but these results suggest that some move away looking for better habitat, more food. It will be interesting to monitor them to see their fate.

In the past we were not able to follow most of these birds but we had no further reports from Maddock's (until this year) and the birds that we could hear on Richardson's from the core study area seemed to do quite well for two years, but very few were reported in 2011 and 2012, and our first counts actually on the property last year revealed few birds. This suggests that the expansion after 2008 may not have been permanent and these birds were dwindling and may have all disappeared. With a predator trap line set out on Richardson's property in early 2012, we hope to report better success there in the coming years.

While this season may not have been a good one for the birds, it has been very informative for us. In future we will be trying to maintain the limited counts on Richardson's property and at Orere to see whether or not these birds manage to thrive and establish in these areas with and without predator control.

### **Acknowledgements**

Along with the regulars who have done good work for a long time there were a number of new faces at the counts this year. As the results become more interesting, there will be more counting to do and we'd love it if these new counters decided to come more often. We could then expand our monitoring efforts and also further enjoy their company.

The following people helped with the counts this year: Laurie and Ingrid Batt, Ella Brewerton, Nova and Phil Coory, John Cotman, Joyce Frost, Darron and Adelaide Gedge, Wendy Hare, Nathalie Irvine, Barbara and Helen Kay, Linda and Noel Knight, Luke Liddell, Nigel Milius, John Oates, Jeannie Preddey, Mags Ramsey, Barbara Strong, Dave and Ruth Reffin, Anne and George Richardson, Gerry Romley, Trish and Graeme Simmonds, Su Sinclair, Mark Smith, Ian Southey Janie and Kevin Vaughan, Gillian Vaughan, Vanessa Wood.

Our local hosts, and particularly Rosemary, deserve further thanks for dealing with the logistics and maintaining the supply of weka cake. We are especially grateful to the landowners and farmers who allow us access to count on their land.

Ian Southey