



WekaWatch

newsletter

January 2019



Tipene without his Sheila

In this newsletter you can read about:

- 2018 spring count and dates for 2019
- What's been happening in Te Papa Road
- Our traps and the forest some of them are in
- Looking back
- Community recognition for what we do

OUR FIRST SPRING WEKA COUNT

In our July 2018 newsletter we reported disappointing results in the autumn count so we decided to count again in spring as a follow up.

3 nights were chosen in September. Weather conditions were good and we were able to count on three consecutive weekends. The first two counts were on summer-like evenings with lovely sunsets. The ground was fairly dry and quite hard which would make feeding for weka a little difficult. The third night we had a strong westerly wind blowing and two sites were rather exposed. At some sites accurate counting could not start until the bleating of young lambs and their mothers ceased.

We had low counter numbers so we

concentrated on the sites where weka had been heard five months earlier. Sites 1 and 2 had similar results to autumn but sites 3, 4 and 9 showed some promising activity with a female heard down in the Tawhitokino Beach area as well as up on the hill by site 9. The total was unchanged - a total of 13 weka - no further decrease but then no increase either. As all our previous counts have been in autumn it is not possible to compare these spring numbers with confidence.

AUTUMN COUNT 2019

Dates have been set for the next annual count - March 16th, 23rd, and 30th. April 6th will be our rain date. If you are on our list of counters you will get further information but we would love it if you could pencil these dates into your diaries now and try to keep one or more of them free.

Our 2019 data will add to the information collected over the last 14 years by volunteers like you. We can only add to it if we have you out there on beautiful late summer evenings listening for these special birds.

TAWHITOKINO FOREST

Two of our trap lines and five of our count sites are on the Tawhitokino Farm Forest. WekaWatch has always had good communication with the land owners; we have always been able to check the trap lines and go to the count sites with the farm partners' permission and encouragement.

Work has begun in the last 2 months to develop access roads that will allow harvesting of all the mature pines over the next 2 years. Our longest trap line circles one large pine block; access during logging will be prohibited and after felling, the bare land will be poor habitat for weka. The future of Line C needs a big rethink.

Only count sites 2 and 4 are within the pines but access to them for the autumn counts in the coming year may be restricted.



Above: Out on Line C - Our favourite lunch spot is probably now a logging road.

Below: Count site 4 surrounded by pines.



MURAL #2

Work is at last progressing on our second weka mural on the toilet block on Rautawa Reserve. Getting permission from Council was an 'interesting' process and the weather man further delayed the start. Now that summer is here you can watch its progress as Natasha

King and her helpers bring this ambitious project nearer to completion. Thanks to Franklin Arts and the Manukau Beautification Charitable Trust for their support with this project.



TE PAPA ROAD POPULATIONS

In July we told you of the loss of Sheila one of the 2 breeding females in Te Papa Road; to date she has not been replaced so in the Te Papa Road valley and environs we now have just one female, Roxy, and 3 males - Kermit, Roxy's partner, and China and Tipene. Tipene is often heard giving the mate-seeking call, so

far to no avail. In this area in past years there have been up to 3 pairs of weka all successfully breeding.



A fleeting sighting of Kermit and Roxy's chick

In October the 'Crossroads' trail camera captured one sighting of a single chick with Kermit and Roxy at a water bowl. Over the next 3 days there were 75 mm rain and the chick has not been seen again. One cannot help wonder if the weather event played some part in its disappearance.

LOOKING BACK

It is interesting to look back at the story of our Kawakawa Bay weka population 14 years on. We know there was a hard release of weka here on one or more occasions in the early 2000s. The source population was almost certainly Pakatoa Island, which in itself was one of the islands onto which captive bred North Island weka were released in the early 1990s. This would mean that our weka passed through two genetic bottle necks within a short time frame.

Verbal reports of weka from Coast Road / Te Papa Road locals were confirmed with a positive identification of a North Island weka at a bird rescue centre in Manukau on November 20th, 2004. This weka had been picked up injured on the Coast Road. OSNZ investigated this report and held their first count in August 2005.

Tony Beauchamp from the DOC Weka Recovery Group made his first visit to assess our weka population in November of that year. Fourteen



Tony Beauchamp banding one of the 70+ weka he has captured over the years

years on it is interesting to reflect on some of his comments after that visit:-

There is no reason to believe that this population . . . will not survive for at least 20 years in the current location. Twenty years is the expected lifespan of a weka population in the upper North Island without some management intervention The risks posed to the population are very much tied in with human activities and [it] may be under considerable stress should increased urbanisation take place.

TRAPPING

Our trap lines are checked regularly; capture numbers are low. No ferrets and few stoats and even rat and hedgehog numbers are low. This does not mean we have succeeded, just that after a very wet spring our target species have plenty of other things they would rather eat than a lump of freeze-dried rabbit!

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION

While the weka do not seem to appreciate the work that our many WekaWatch volunteers do, others recognise our efforts.

In September, Conservation Month, WekaWatch Kawakawa Bay was chosen to be the Conservation Heroes for the Franklin Ward, a wide area with some fantastic projects being undertaken. At Christmas time WekaWatch received a very generous donation from the Franklin Local Board Services Group. Traditionally they have a 'whip round' at their Christmas party for a chosen local volunteer group and we were deemed worthy of their support! At the inaugural Kawakawa Bay awards night John and Rosemary were named the conservation volunteers for Kawakawa Bay.

AGM 2019

Our 11th Annual General Meeting will be held on the afternoon of Saturday 30th March 2019.

Full details closer to the time. If you would like to join our small committee please get in touch; we can find a great job for you.



Your committee hopes you have enjoyed this short update on the happenings at Kawakawa Bay!

COMMITTEE:

Rosemary Cotman - Chair
Barbara Strong - Secretary
Nadine Burgess - Treasurer
Trish Simmonds - Publicity
Denise Moyle - Website, Facebook
John Cotman - Trapline management
Michelle Hollings - Orere liaison
Lindsey Britton - Links us to the wider conservation world

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