

Kokako Report, Tiritiri Matangi Island, 2013-2014 Season



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Breeding

The most significant event this year was the successful breeding by our Waipapa pair who finally produced their first chick, a female. It is hoped that this bird with her different genes will eventually be incorporated into the breeding population.

Another pair also finally successfully fledged a chick (mixture of Waipapa, Mapara and Taranaki genes), also a female.

Despite the very dry conditions experienced towards the end of summer, a record eleven chicks fledged successfully, four males and seven females. In addition to this, one chick died shortly after fledging and two more chicks were lost to predation while still in the nest.

We had hoped to repeat last year's successful egg swap with the Hunua Ranges Regional Park. However it failed at both sites. Unfortunately the two eggs we received proved to be infertile and although we sent off three fertile eggs, the Hunua female never returned to the nest to incubate these eggs.

The nine established pairs remained together throughout the 2013/14 season, and two new partnerships formed, giving us eleven pairs - the most we have ever had. However, in November, one of the females from the new pairings disappeared and we ended up with ten pairs for the remainder of the season.

The fortunes of the pairs in 2013/14 were as follows:

Te Koha Waiata (Y-RM) and **Cloudsley Shovell** (M-O): Once again Te Koha Waiata and Cloudsley Shovel failed to hatch any eggs from the three nests she built and used. It is assumed that the eggs were all infertile.

Te Hari (YM-W) and **Phantom** (BW-M): Their first nest in early November was part of the egg-swap experiment. Phantom completed the incubation but both eggs proved to be infertile. Shortly after this she built another nest and started incubating but abandoned this after about a week. By the first of January she was incubating again in a new nest which produced one chick, **Bandit** (male, JM-G) who fledged successfully.

Chatters (RG-M) and **Te Rae** (OM-JO): Te Rae built two nests this season. The first failed, but the second produced two chicks which fledged successfully: **Whakatere** (male, RM-GY) and **Mere** (female, RM-YJ).

Parininihi (OM-Y) and **Koha** (BM-R): For the fourth season running, Parininihi and Koha failed to hatch any eggs. At the start of the season Miharo, a single male, was seen with Koha having kicked Parininihi out of the territory. Shortly after this Koha left Miharo and

moved into Parininihi's new much smaller territory. Koha built a nest, but eventually abandoned it. She nested again and although we never found this nest it also failed.

Noel (OM-R) and **Rehu** (OM-J): Rehu built three nests this season. The first nest produced one chick but this was predated sometime after banding but before fledging. The second nest was predated at the egg stage. Harrier predation is suspected in both cases. The third nest produced one chick which fledged successfully: **Narangi** (female, RM-WG).

Crown (GM-G) and **Pureora** (GM-R): After four unsuccessful breeding seasons (first year, a failed nest, two seasons without attempting to breed and another failed nest last season) Pureora was discovered incubating at the end of December. We added a bit of extra vegetation cover to the nest. This much wanted chick successfully fledged in early February. She has been named **Discovery** (GM-RY) after 360 Discovery who transport all our kokako to and from the Island free of charge. It is hoped that she will be recruited into the breeding population and add more genetic diversity to our population.

Kikorangi (OM-G) and **Mawhero** (GM-W): Mawhero built two nests this season. Once again the first nest was predated, probably by a harrier and the chick was killed at around three weeks of age. We added extra vegetation cover to her second nest which produced two chicks. Although both chicks fledged, one had a severe injury which must have occurred in the nest and which resulted in the chick dying a few days later. The remaining chick **Aquarius** (female, RM-GJ) again will add new genes if she is recruited into the breeding population.

Bariki (OM- RJ) and **Lucky** (unbanded): Once again Lucky was the first bird to nest this season. She was found lining her nest on 27 September and this nest produced one chick which fledged successfully: **Hotu** (male, RM-J). Their second nest successfully produced two chicks: **Awatea** (female, RM-YW) and **Hinerau** (female, RM-JY).

Takara (OM-YB) and **Aria** (JM-Y): After two failed nests last season Aria built her first nest of the season somewhere over the cliff at the bottom of Bush 23. This failed and we were relieved when she built her second nest in a more accessible location. We added extra vegetation cover and the nest successfully fledged two chicks: **Taitoko** (male, RM-JG) and **Tiara** (female, RM-WJ).

Puoho (RM-Y) and **Terewai** (RM-G): Although these birds are last year's fledglings (Bariki/Lucky and Chatters/Te Rae's offspring) they have already set up a territory in Little Wattle Valley. Terewai built a nest and incubated but the nest failed.

Most of the fledged chicks are of Taranaki descent and so are destined eventually to be moved to that area once the predator-free site has been secured for them.

Single Birds

During the 2013/14 season all of our single birds were seen except for **Hunua** (WM-W) our special egg swap bird who fledged in 2012/13.

Sarang (male, W-JM) paired up with one of last year's chicks **Rangikata** (RM-R) in Bush 22. She built a nest but it was never used and she has not been seen since early November.

Miharo (male, JM-R) has taken over Parininihi and Koha's old territory but does not have a mate.

Flieder (male, RM-W) has been sighted occasionally at the back of Bush 22 and near NE Bay.

Rimu (male, GM-) who had not been seen for two seasons has been seen several times over this breeding season. Unfortunately our other two Waipapa males, **Slingshot** (GM-WR) and

Tawa (GM-J) have paired up and moved into Bush 21. **Waipapa** (GM-Y), the only single Waipapa female, has still not paired up with any of the available single males.

Poutama (male, OM-W) continues to roam around the Island.

Tupoki (male, RM-GW) has been seen occasionally throughout the season in various locations.

Rangiohua (female, RM-O) was last seen on 24 October in Wattle Valley.

The Island is now rather crowded, with at least 39 kokako in residence, so we hope to be able to move some birds off before the next breeding season. The increased number of female chicks fledged this season has given us a better sex ratio with 21 males and 18 females. Depending on how many survive over the next few months it will be interesting to see how many new pairs form and where they set up territories.

Summary of transfers to/from the Island

There have been no transfers to or from Tiritiri Matangi this season.

Birds present at the finish of the breeding season (March 2014)

Males	Bands	Females	Bands	2013/14 chicks	Bands
Pairs					
Te Koha Waiata	Y-RM	Cloudsley Shovell	M-O	Hotu (m) (T2)	RM-J
Kikorangi (T2)	OM-G	Mawhero (W)	GM-W	Aquarius (f) (W/T)	RM-GJ
Te Hari	YM-W	Phantom	BW-M	Bandit (m)	JM-G
Chatters	RG-M	Te Rae (T1)	OM-JO	Whakatere (m) (T2)	RM/GY
Parininihi (T1)	OM-Y	Koha	BM-R	Mere (f) (T2)	RM-YJ
Crown (W)	GM-G	Pureora (W)	GM-R	Discovery (f) (W)	GM-RY
Noel (T2)	OM-R	Rehu (T2)	OM-J	Narangi (f) (T2)	RM-WG
Bariki (T2)	OM-RJ	Lucky (T2)	Unb.	Awatea (f) (T2)	RM-YW
Takara (T2)	OM-YB	Aria	JM-Y	Hinerau (f) (T2)	RM-JY
Pouho (T2)	RM-Y	Terewai (T2)	RM-G	Taitoko (m) (T2)	RM-JG
Single birds				Tiara (f) (T2)	RM-WJ
Poutama (T1)	OM-W	Waipapa (W)	GM-Y		
Slingshot (W)	GM-WR				
Tawa (W)	GM-J				
Miharo	JM-R				
Flieder (T2)	RM-W				
Sarang	W-JM				
Tupoki (T2)	RM-GW				

(T1) = 50% Taranaki

(T2) = 25% Taranaki

(W) = Waipapa bird

Future actions

We shall continue to manage the population to optimise its genetic composition, for the benefit of the Taranaki birds and the long-term Tiritiri Matangi population. This will be done in association with the captive programme proposed by the Zoo Association, under which the island/captive population will be managed as a single unit. This will give us much greater flexibility and control in managing the population.

The future actions outlined below are currently on hold while we wait for the captive programme to get under way if this ever happens.

It has been agreed in principle that some of the Taranaki birds on Tiritiri Matangi could be taken into captivity as part of the proposed captive programme. For these birds, captivity would be a staging post prior to release in the Taranaki region.

The final decision on birds for transfer would be made in consultation with representatives of DOC, the Taranaki groups and the captive institutions (we envisage Auckland Zoo and Hamilton Zoo being the first to implement the programme). If the zoos are ready to receive birds within the next three-four months and the appropriate permits and agreements can be obtained, a catching trip could be undertaken before the start of the next breeding season.

In broader terms, it remains important to find ways of increasing the genetic diversity of the Tiritiri Matangi population. In our view, egg and chick swaps are the best way of doing this if they can be arranged. Although the egg swap was not successful this season we are planning to undertake another egg swap experiment in 2014/15. Translocations on and off the Island also remain a possibility.

Acknowledgements

It was a great help having our trained volunteers available again. At this stage everyone is keen to stay involved.

A special thank you to Kay Milton and John Stewart who have given up so much time, not only to do the field work and training of new volunteers, but to attend meetings and help with the paperwork.

Many thanks to all our volunteers who helped out on Tiritiri Matangi Island this season – Yvonne Clarke, Heidrun Schinke, Gina Wilson, Alison and Roger Bray, Alison Forbes, Yukiko Kojima, Hester Cooper, Sandra Whyte, Kirstin Foster, Jim and Chris Eagles, Maureen Lander and Mary-Ann Rowland. Getting out of bed before dawn in all weather conditions to chase these wonderful, if somewhat elusive, birds through the bush and scrub of the Island can be a challenge but it is rewarding when we do find those nests which sometimes lead to fledged chicks.

Once again, I would like to thank Hazel Speed from DOC. Her advice, support and practical assistance in the management of the Tiritiri Matangi Kokako Programme are invaluable. I would also like to thank Dave Bryden for finding suitable nests in the Hunua Ranges to use

for the egg swap programme. We are also grateful to Ian Fraser from Auckland Zoo who maintains the Tiri Kokako Studbook for us.

Thanks to our rangers, Dave Jenkins and Jason Campbell for the use of vehicles and equipment when needed and to Art Polkanov for his tree climbing skills.

We appreciated having Conrad and Kirsten O'Carroll and their family from Ngati Tama, Taranaki, visit us for a weekend in February. This gave them the opportunity to see some of the Taranaki birds which will eventually be translocated to the Taranaki area. They also provide us with a list of the names we use for naming the Taranaki chicks.