

Kokako Report, Tiritiri Matangi Island, 2014-2015 Season



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Breeding

This was an unusual breeding season for several species on Tiritiri, including kokako. The birds started nesting later than usual and productivity was low. Although a record 11 pairs attempted to breed, we ended the season with just three fledglings surviving beyond the first few weeks. Predation, presumably by harriers, was a problem and some chicks died in the nest after failing to develop. We can only speculate that parents might have found it difficult to supply sufficient or appropriate food, despite wetter weather conditions than in the previous two years.

The 10 established pairs from 2013/14 remained together throughout the season and three new pairs formed, plus one or two shorter term alliances amongst the younger birds.

The fortunes of the pairs in 2014/15 were as follows:

Te Koha Waiata (Y-RM) and **Cloudsley Shovell** (M-O): Although Cloudsley Shovell built two nests this season she only used the second one. The three eggs were once again infertile. Over the past five breeding seasons they have only produced one chick, Miharo in December 2011.

Te Hari (YM-W) and **Phantom** (BW-M): They produced two chicks this season but one did not fledge. The other chick fledged but disappeared within a few days.

Chatters (RG-M) and **Te Rae** (OM-JO): Te Rae's first nest this season produced two chicks but they disappeared from the nest when only a few days old, presumably predated. Two more chicks hatched in their second nest, but the smaller of the two died when about two weeks old. The second chick fledged successfully, a male who was named **Kahu** (RM-YY) (without a macron, meaning 'cloak') by the students of Mimi School in Paranihi.

Parinihi (OM-Y) and **Koha** (BM-R): Koha only built one nest this season and the clutch of three eggs was once again infertile. We think that she is probably infertile as this is the fifth season in which no eggs have hatched.

Noel (OM-R) and **Rehu** (OM-J): Rehu built two nests this season. The first nest produced one healthy chick who disappeared around two weeks old, presumably predated. The second nest was abandoned round about the expected hatching time, and a later inspection revealed an unhatched egg plus the remains of a very tiny chick.

Crown (GM-G) and **Pureora** (GM-R): Having finally produced the first purely Waipapa bird on the Island last season they succeeded again this year producing another female called

Royal (GM-JY). A second chick who was much smaller and less developed died before fledging.

Kikorangi (OM-G) and **Mawhero** (GM-W): Mawhero spent nearly a month completing her only nest of the season. They produced one chick who after a very large storm left the nest slightly early. Unfortunately, the fledgling disappeared a few days later after spending a lot of time in the tree-tops where he/she was probably conspicuous to harriers.

Bariki (OM- RJ) and **Lucky** (unbanded): Once again Lucky was the first bird to nest this season and misled members of the kokako team by using an old nest from the 2013/14 season instead of building a new nest. One chick, **Freedom** (RM-YG), also named by the Mimi School students was hatched and she fledged around Christmas time. Lucky nested a second time but this nest was abandoned just after the expected hatching time.

Takara (OM-YB) and **Aria** (JM-Y): Despite finally being successful last season this pair had no success this time round. Aria abandoned her first nest after incubating for about 10 days. When checked the nest was found to be empty. She incubated for longer than the full term on her second nest. We are unsure if the eggs hatched but on inspection this nest was found to be empty. Predation is suspected in both cases.

Puoho (RM-Y) and **Terewai** (RM-G): In their second season together this young pair had two nesting attempts. The first nest was abandoned round about the expected hatching time. However, the second nest produced one chick who remained very small and eventually died, possibly through malnutrition. We cannot tell whether this was due to the inexperience of the parents or an inadequate supply of suitable food.

Miharo (JM-R) and **Mere** (RM-YJ): Miharo had been holding a territory around Bush 4 for over a year, so it was no surprise to find one of last year's young females, Mere, moving in with him. Despite her inexperience, Mere built a very good nest and incubated for eight to ten days longer than full term, but the eggs failed to hatch, as is common for young birds.

Sarang (W-M) and **Discovery** (GM-RY): The kokako team were delighted to find that Discovery, Crown and Pureora's daughter from 2013/14, has paired up with Sarang, a young and very eligible male holding a territory near Discovery's parents in Bush 22. Although the pair stayed together all season they did not attempt to nest.

Tupoki (RM-GW) and **Hinerau** (RM-JY): Tupoki and Hinerau paired up during the early part of the season. They made no nesting attempt, but this is not surprising given that Hinerau is only a year old. Their choice of territory might also have discouraged them; it is squeezed into Wattle Valley between Te Koha Waiaita on one side and Puoho on the other. It also overlaps with an area which Poutama, a confirmed bachelor, seems to have claimed as his own. Several brief fights between Topoki and Poutama were seen during the season.

There were also signs that **Bandit** (JM-G), Te Hari and Phantom's son from 2013/14, might pair up with **Aquarius** (RM-GJ), Kikorangi and Mawhero's daughter from 2013/14, but by the end of the season he appeared to have transferred his attention to **Tiara** (RM-WJ), Takara and Aria's one-year-old daughter. It will be interesting to see whether these relationships change further before the 2015/16 season begins.

Two of the three 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

All of the 2013/14 fledglings have been seen this season apart from **Whakatere** (RM-GY). In addition all of our other single birds were seen except for **Hunua** (WM-W), our special egg-swap bird who fledged in 2012/13, **Rangikata** (RM-R), **Rangiohua** (RM-O), and **Rimu** (GM/-). We suspect that all of these birds are now dead, except for Rimu who is more secretive and harder to see than most; he disappeared for two seasons before being seen again in 2013/14.

Flieder (male, RM-W) still holds a territory at the north end of the Island and has so far failed to attract a female to join him there.

The two Waipapa males, **Slingshot** (GM-WR) and **Tawa** (GM-J) remained together in Bush 21 and **Waipapa** (GM-Y), the only single Waipapa female, spent a lot of time in and around Lighthouse Valley. Towards the end of the summer, the young female **Awatea** (RM-YW) also frequented Lighthouse Valley and has been seen with Waipapa.

Poutama (male, OM-W) is usually found in Little Wattle Valley and around the Firebreak area although he does sometimes go for a wander around the Island.

Of the 2013/14 fledglings, **Narangi** (female, RM-WG), **Taitoko** (male, RM-JG), and **Hotu** (male, RM-J), were seen from time to time during the season.

We have at least 41 kokako in residence, 21 males and 20 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 2015)

Males	Bands	Females	Bands	2014/15chicks	Bands
Pairs					
Te Koha Waiata	Y-RM	Cloudsley Shovell	M-O	Freedom (f) (T2)	RM-YG
Kikorangi (T2)	OM-G	Mawhero (W)	GM-W	Royal (f) (W)	GM-JY
Te Hari	YM-W	Phantom	BW-M	Kahu (m) (T2)	RM-YY
Chatters	RG-M	Te Rae (T1)	OM-JO		
Parininihi (T1)	OM-Y	Koha	BM-R		
Crown (W)	GM-G	Pureora (W)	GM-R		
Noel (T2)	OM-R	Rehu (T2)	OM-J		
Bariki (T2)	OM-RJ	Lucky (T2)	Unb.		
Takara (T2)	OM-YB	Aria	JM-Y		
Pouho (T2)	RM-Y	Terewai (T2)	RM-G		
Miharo	JM-R	Mere (T2)	RM-YJ		
Sarang	W-JM	Discovery (W)	GM-RY		
Tupoki (T2)	RM-GW	Hinerau (T2)	RM-JY		
Single Birds					
Poutama (T1)	OM-W	Waipapa (W)	GM-Y		
Slingshot (W)	GM-WR	Narangi (f) (T2)	RM-WG		
Tawa (W)	GM-J	Awatea (f) (T2)	RM-YW		
Flieder (T2)	RM-W	Tiara (f) (T2)	RM-WJ		

Males	Bands	Females	Bands		
Hotu (m) (T2)	RM-J	Aquarius (f) (W/T)	RM-GJ		
Bandit (m)	JM-G				
Taitoko (m) (T2)	RM-JG				

(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.

Once the levels of pest species at Parininihi, in Taranaki, are sufficiently low, we shall start moving kokako of Taranaki descent to that site. We anticipate this being within the next two years, preferably the winter of 2016.

There has been no progress with the captive programme proposed by the Zoo Association, under which the island/captive population will be managed as a single unit. Consequently, any planned actions relating to that programme are currently on hold.

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 but at the moment it is probably better to wait until we are in a position to move birds off the Island and thus create more space. 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 and banding of chicks.

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, Val Lee, Karin Gouldstone and Mary-Ann Rowland. Getting out of bed before dawn to follow 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 produce fledged chicks.

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 appreciate having Conrad and Kirsten O'Carroll and their whanau from Ngati Tama, Taranaki provide us with a list of the names we use for naming the Taranaki chicks. In addition this season Mimi School from Parininihi named both of our Taranaki chicks.