

BIRD CALL



November 2018 Issue 43

What's New at Orokonui

Spring is moving into summer at Orokonui, with a marked change in behaviour from our native birds (mating, nesting, fledging) providing a myriad of exciting viewing opportunities! Orokonui really is a photographer's paradise and this is reflected in the 2019 Orokonui Calendar which features the winners of our inaugural photographic competition.



*Giverny Forbes, keen photographer,
and receptionist at Orokonui*

The competition was the bright idea of our own keen wildlife photographer, Giverny Forbes, and she was responsible for creating this year's calendar as well. You'll see Giverny's smiling face at reception on a Thursday, and when she's not at Orokonui she's busy with her Masters in Environmental Science - which is focused on the other love of her life: Leopard Seals. It was these amazing creatures that brought Giverny to Dunedin in the first place - her passion saw her fly from Auckland to Dunedin to see Kana, a Leopard Seal pup born at St Kilda last year. She fell in love with Dunedin and the rest is history!

The Orokonui calendar is an annual fundraiser for our ongoing conservation work, and makes a fantastic Christmas 'stocking stuffer' - you can buy them at the ecosanctuary or from our website (www.oroKonui.nz). A big thank you to all those that entered the competition - what a talented bunch you are!

Amanda Symon - General Manager

Conservation Matters

Sadly a dead kākā was delivered to the sanctuary this week, highlighting the fact that this threatened species is still incredibly vulnerable outside of our predator resistant fence.

There are three main risk factors:

- **Death by misadventure:** Kākā are intelligent and curious and can get themselves into trouble. In one adjacent settlement at least 3 have died in the last year; one was electrocuted, another drowned and a third was found dead on a resident's lawn.
- **Predation:** While the Halo Project is still establishing, it is unlikely to be effective enough yet to protect kākā from predators such as stoats. Pets such as dogs and cats are also a threat.
- **Inappropriate diet:** Too much supplementary feeding, or feeding of inappropriate foods, has been linked to metabolic bone disease - fatal for kākā chicks. Feeding them can also cause kākā to habituate to humans, making them more likely to interfere with human-made objects.

Recently a flock of up to 12 juvenile kākā left Orokonui to take up residence just over the hill as they are being offered food that's more tempting than the specially developed diet we provide. Such a loss (around 30% of our entire population) is not good for the overall population, and coupled with known deaths, is a real set-back. Orokonui is still the safest place for kākā to be in the Dunedin district, and until predators are reduced to very low levels over a large area we would strongly recommend that kākā are not fed at all.

Elton Smith - Conservation Manager



Hemi, the dead juvenile male kākā - bred in the Te Anau Wildlife Park 2017/18. Such a loss is devastating news to the breeders and to Orokonui folk who have spent years in getting them established here.

Forest of Knowledge

Each year the Education department hosts amazing student volunteers from the University of Otago who earn an Outreach Certificate by working with our Education Groups. Vanitha Elangovan, a Masters of Zoology student studying the social behaviour of Otago Skinks at Orokonui, is our current outreach volunteer. Vanitha is using motion sensitive cameras and facial recognition software to identify each Skink and track their interactions with each other. Visiting school groups are given ID charts with photos of the skinks' faces. From this they are able to help Vanitha recognise who's who and help with her research! "I love telling the kids about my research and seeing them get so excited about helping the skinks. It's so fun" says Vanitha.



Otago University Outreach Volunteer Vanitha Elangovan with tamariki from Carisbrook School

Students like Vanitha bring Science to life for our visiting schools and inspire and empower children to pursue careers in Conservation Biology. This real life experience of communicating research to a diverse audience is also invaluable to students and attractive to future employers. The Outreach Certificate is awarded to students who complete 60 hours of work with the Orokonui Education Department. If you would like to join us as an outreach volunteer please contact me on tahu@orokonui.nz

Tahu Mackenzie - Head Educator

Volunteers' Voices

October has seen us welcome our first Haast Tokoeka kiwi chick of the season, Tiare, to the kiwi creche. Tiare is settling in well after a few road bumps at first - this kiwi has had a bit of trouble establishing the difference between food and dirt, but with some tricks and lateral thinking (covering the floor of his pen with mats so he can't reach the dirt) he seems to be getting the hang of this thing called life! Fun fact: The sex of a kiwi is not known until they reach maturity

We are currently recruiting volunteers to become regular kiwi feeders. This highly sought after task has two components: first, a morning job (Kiwi Mum/maid): taking a relaxing walk through the ecosanctuary to clean up last night's dinner which has been tossed around the kiwi pen, then preparing a fresh meal - a delicious mix of lean beef, ox heart, fruit and veges, cat biscuits, oil and vitamins. Next, an evening job (Kiwi Mum/butler) taking a beautiful walk through the ecosanctuary at dusk, surrounded by birdsong, and the sights and sounds of the forest at night - to deliver the kiwi food to the youngsters.

If you are interested in either of these amazing jobs please email me on volunteer@orokonui.nz

Alice Macklow - Volunteer and Membership Coordinator



Young Tiare, our first Tokoeka Kiwi chick

Wishlist

A fridge for the café - good working order, 370 litre capacity or greater

An upright freezer for the café - good working order, 370 litre capacity or greater

A big thanks to

The Valley Project - for the fridge for our volunteers to use!



Open Daily 9.30am-4.30pm for Guided Tours and Self Guided Walks
Orokonui Ecosanctuary, 600 Blueskin Rd, Waitati, Dunedin
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