

BIRD CALL

September 2019 Issue 49



oroikonui
ecosanctuary

What's New at Orokonui

Spring is upon us again, with beautiful blue days, clear starry nights and a frenzy of bird activity all around us! And to celebrate the arrival of longer daylight hours we're launching an exciting new way of experiencing the sanctuary - our new Dusk Tours begin on September 6th!

Taking place after our usual opening hours, these special tours are designed as a seasonal fundraiser for the sanctuary, allowing small groups to explore the cloud forest in the company of one of our knowledgeable guides. As the sun goes down, the birds come into roost, and the sights, sounds and smells the forest transform into something quite magical . . . for a taster check out the video on our facebook page.

The Dusk Tours run for a very limited time during September - including two special Kid's Dusk Tour nights. All proceeds from this exciting new fundraising event will support our ongoing conservation work. Booking is simple - just visit our website and book online!

Amanda Symon - General Manager



Enjoy a Dusk Tour at Orokonui Ecosanctuary this September!

Conservation Matters

Conservation isn't all about hugging rare wildlife. When I first started my conservation journey 25 years ago, I distinctly remember an old salt describing the basic conservation skills as catching, killing and counting. A number of years later I added cutting to this list i.e. the cutting of tracks. Did you know that Orokonui has over 64 kilometers of tracks to maintain? The majority of our tracks are low standard monitoring tracks but even they need periodic TLC as a well-maintained track is safer and more efficient for staff and volunteers to traverse. On a yearly basis we try and recut around 25 kilometers of track and this takes a team of 5 about a month to achieve.

We also have 5.5 km of public walking tracks and these are maintained to a higher standard to safely accommodate a wider array of humanity. Recently we had a helicopter stockpile 13 tons of gravel along the Robin Valley track and this will be slowly spread to upgrade this increasingly popular walking track. A big thanks to Blackhead Quarry who donated the gravel required for this important task!

Elton Smith - Conservation Manager



Helicopters Otago busy at work delivering gravel to the Robin Valley Track.

Forest of Knowledge

Feedback on a 'dancing kiwi' video that Green Party MP Gohriz Ghahraman shared on her Facebook page led her to visit Orokonui recently. Education officer Tahu Mackenzie invited the MP to visit after pointing out that the video was filmed at the Orokonui kiwi creche. Ms Ghahraman accepted the invitation and enjoyed a two-hour visit on August the 11th along with Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage. The MPs observed a health check on a Haast tokoeka kiwi chick conducted by conservation manager Elton Smith and ranger Kelly Gough.

Tokoeka kiwi are the rarest and most endangered kiwi in New Zealand, with fewer than 500 surviving. Orokonui rears 10-12 chicks a year on behalf of the Department of Conservation and Makaawhio Rūnanga, as part of Operation Nest Egg. The birds are released back into the wild when they are strong enough to fend off dangerous predators such as stoats. And now, thanks to Tahu Mackenzie's proactive use of social media, two influential MPs are able to spread the word about how a dancing kiwi has become a conservation icon!

Brendan Gray - Volunteer



Minister of Conservation Eugenie Sage and MP Gohriz Ghahraman (at right) observe a kiwi health check.

Volunteers' Voices

We are often contacted by corporate and community groups who want to assist us by volunteering, though we have been limited in our ability to accept such offers as there simply aren't enough staff to manage larger groups! However, we recently put a shout out to our volunteers and have successfully recruited a number of people who are keen to learn the ropes of volunteer leadership!

We are looking forward to being able to say YES to community groups more often and to increase the amount of work we can collectively achieve. Two of the main focuses for volunteer groups are the pā harakeke and operations volunteering. The pā provides an opportunity for visiting groups to learn about the importance of harakeke for tangata whenua and how to engage with, and protect, this resource. From the fenceline or weed control! Both groups enjoy a 'walk and talk' through the ecosanctuary and sometimes partake in morning or afternoon tea at Horopito Cafe. If you know of any community groups who would enjoy such an outing please send them our way!

Alice Macklow - Volunteer Coordinator



Lincoln University's Ecological Society tackling sapling control!



Open Daily 9.30am-4.30pm for Guided Tours and Self Guided Walks
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