



THE ISAAC CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE TRUST

A study in conservation

Issue #23 Autumn 2020

CONSERVATION

NEWS

Anne Richardson ICWT Wildlife Manager, has been awarded an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for Services to Wildlife Conservation, in the Queens Birthday Honours List for 2020.

Anne has worked at ICWT for the past 28 years and during this time has assisted the Trust to carry on the vision and legacy of the late Sir Neil and Lady Isaac in conservation, including the captive breeding of some of New Zealand's endangered species. While working for the Trust, Anne has developed and managed the only captive breeding facility for kākārīki karaka/orange

fronted parakeet, pioneering methods to incubate eggs and



raise chicks, to re-establish kākārīki karaka populations back into the wild. Anne has also made significant contributions in developing captive breeding programmes and holding protocols to support ICWT conservation efforts for the kakī/black stilt, who/blue duck, pāteke/brown teal, tūturuatu/shore plover and many others, playing a key role in their preservation from extinction.



Heritage Village



Landscape



Scholarships



Wildlife



News in brief

Thanking Our Essential Workers

Thank you to all our staff who worked through the lockdown, caring for the endangered native species here.

One cannot underestimate the level of responsibility our staff have in caring for the endangered species.

It was not just our wildlife staff who were deemed essential workers, but other divisions too, who indirectly assist the Wildlife staff to

undertake their daily operations.

Fortunately, we were able to carefully manage the release of juveniles from two species during the lockdown period.

Stricter bio-security measures were implemented, both for the safety of the birds and people alike.

The timing of any release is critical. If juveniles are held back too long, social stress caused by aggression within the group may lead to a higher chance of mortality.

Also as birds age, they risk becoming habituated to easy aviary life. No predators and food provided daily, may deem birds less capable to survive in the wild. An early autumn release is preferred to allow acclimatization before freezing cold wintry conditions arrive that also reduce the food supply.

Now with Covid-19 restrictions easing, we have hit the ground running with a full quota of staff excited by our many and varied projects.



Heritage Village News

Built in 1857 this charming cottage, known as the “Coup House”, is receiving meticulous preparation prior to painting.

It’s remarkable to know that the very first house constructed on the Canterbury Plains was in 1843, only 14 years before this cottage was built.

The Coup House may look a little shabby now, but when freshly painted it will once again resemble the wealthy merchants home, as originally built.

We intend on using an oil based primer to protect the weatherboards over winter, then apply the top coat in spring.

This cottage (relocated from Kaiapoi) was built by William Coup who arrived with his family from England to establish woollen mills - and was surrounded by 8000 acres of farmland.



ICWT sponsors Te Ara Kākāriki to award the “Diana Isaac Cup”.

This biennial award is to acknowledge outstanding efforts in weaving native plants into the working lands of the Selwyn District of Canterbury. You can read more about this award on www.kakariki.org.nz



Landscaping News

The Isaac Construction Main Office lawn has been cleared and levelled for grassing in the spring, now all the construction work there has been completed.

Regrettably, the Isaac Family Day was cancelled for March 22nd 2020 which was a disappointment for everyone, but completely understandable given the Covid-19 situation.

Our landscaping team worked intermittently through the lockdown period to support the wildlife operations and are now full steam ahead, focusing on the planting programme.

Their attention is now on the triangular shaped piece of land at Isaac’s McArthurs Road entrance which has been fenced from stock and set aside for native plantings.

This ambitious project has taken a great deal of preparation and planning and will emulate the native plantings that grow on the opposite side of McArthurs Road.

Mulch and meadow hay have been placed onto the garden beds for water retention and weed suppression. Rocks have been brought in for textural effect.

Over 2,000 native plants have been contract grown and are now ready for late autumn planting.

During lockdown the Isaac site was extremely quiet. This emboldened the feral cat population which were targeted, with 16 caught in 8 weeks!

“The sustainable conservation of our environment for perpetuity .”



Wildlife News.

Blue Duck - Whio

Only 14 weeks after hatching, Ruby and Cobb's 7 fledglings were released into the Kahurangi National Park. Upon release they casually stretched their wings and legs, enjoyed a quick bath, then commenced foraging for food amongst the rocks, completely unfazed and with an attitude of a "homecoming".

1 pair of Blue Duck, together with 6 juveniles were released into the Motueka River, immediately prior to lockdown.

At level 2 of lock-down, 6 Blue Duck were released into the Hokitika region, that had spent time here in our hardening facilities after being hatched and raised at Orana Wildlife Park.

The Blue Duck have now finished their moult and are in very good condition to start breeding again this August.



Blue Duck travelling to their release site in a cat cage!

Brown Teal - Pāteke.

The last of the seasons Brown Teal releases went ahead smoothly with 49 birds now joining others in the Abel Tasman National Park and into the care of Project Janszoon.

The teal, some bred here at ICWT joined by others from breeding facilities around NZ, were being acclimatized to natural water ways and feeders that are also used in the wild.

Special compensation was given by Air NZ for these birds to be flown on limited flights to Nelson during the lock down period.

Brown Teal numbers are swelling in the wild and this delightful little dabbling duck is the "poster duck" for species recovery.

We are now able to focus on the annual maintenance of the "training aviaries" before teal start arriving again for the annual December release.



A male Brown Teal in breeding plumage.

Black Stilt - Kākī

The known adult population has increased this year by 31% to 169 adult kākī which is the largest population increase since the programme began, for the world's rarest wading bird.

This significant population increase is due both to extensive predator trapping and the very successful 2017/2018 breeding season when 184 juvenile kākī were released, which were raised in captivity.

Due to the harsh Mackenzie Basin environment where the kākī population remains, not all birds released make it to adulthood. However, this overall increase in the population shows that the programme is on the right track with numbers continuing to rise.

2 breeding pairs are held here in captivity as part of the Kākī Recovery Programme. This season, 25 eggs were produced by these 2 pairs, of which most were artificially incubated at the DOC Captive Breeding Facility in Twizel which also holds a number of captive pairs. All chicks are hatched and raised in Twizel and once old enough, many are brought back to ICWT to be held over the winter before being released in August.

Aspiration, Realisation, Conservation.



Wildlife Cont

Due to the increase in wild numbers for this species, there has been a shift in strategy from holding multiple captive pairs, to now focusing more on collecting wild eggs to be raised in captivity. This ensures those wild eggs/chicks have a greater chance of surviving and creates more aviary space for the captive breeding programme to hold juveniles, which in turn increases possible release numbers. Wild pairs that have their eggs taken are likely to re-lay just as the captive pairs do.



NZ Shore Plover - Tūturuatu.

With an estimated population of only 250 individuals, captive raised NZ Shore Plover are key to establishing new populations. DOC are attempting to start a new population on Mana Island, off the Kapiti coast, that will allow the species numbers to increase.

In a monumental joint effort by ourselves, Pūkaha (Mt Bruce), DOC and Air NZ, juvenile NZ Shore Plover were health checked, banded and released onto the island during the middle of level 4 lockdown. Biosecurity measures of the highest standards were implemented for both staff and birds alike, while coordinating the release, with all additional procedures carefully managed and achieved.

A soft release was undertaken, whereby the birds spend their initial 10 days in a temporary holding aviary at their release site, to help “anchor” them to their new environment. Unfortunately in this instance, this strategy was unsuccessful as many of the birds have flown off the island to the mainland and reported sightings are flowing in. Over the coming months meetings will be held to determine how to make future releases more successful and perhaps identify new release sites for establishing NZ Shore Plover populations.



Orange Fronted Parakeet- Kākāriki Karaka

A total of 43 juvenile Orange Fronted Parakeet bred at ICWT, Orana Wildlife Park and Auckland Zoo, were released into the South Branch of the Hurunui this autumn. Helicopters were again used to fly these birds into their new home, as the shortened travel time reduces stress upon the birds.



With a total population estimated at only 200 birds in the wild and all originating from captive bred birds, the Orange Fronted Parakeet has the same threatened category as the kākāpō and can be described as the rarest mainland forest bird.



1 of our new pairs, “Storm and Fern”, have raised their 1st clutch of chicks in the recently converted Tuatara Aviary that is now being utilized for Orange Fronted Parakeet. We are delighted with the immediate success within the newly converted enclosure and hope for the same results once birds are introduced into the recently converted skinkery. This enclosure (skinkery) is now a fully partitioned aviary for flock mating and breeding of Orange Fronted Parakeet.

“A Study In Conservation”



Scholarship News

Sir Neil Isaac Scholarship in Environmental Science at Canterbury University

Our new Isaac Scholar, Katie Thomson is undertaking a Masters of Geography. Katie's thesis topic investigates green infrastructure applications focusing on Christchurch's three main coastal environments (harbour, open coast and estuary).

Green infrastructure is a "softer" way of providing solutions from coastal risk by applying engineering, biological and/or structural management components that additionally enhance habitat, biodiversity, community benefits plus improvement of water quality.



Katie is scheduled to visit the Trust's facilities in early July as her studies are presently being undertaken remotely from her parents home in Nelson, as Canterbury University is not yet fully open for lectures.

We wish the previous Canterbury University Isaac Scholar Ariana Painter, all the best in her role as a Freshwater Ecology Scientist with EOS Ecology and congratulate her on being recently awarded a Masters of Water Resource Management with Distinction.

The Lady Diana Scholarship in Nature Conservation at Lincoln University

Congratulations to our new Lady Diana Isaac Scholar in Nature Conservation Jodanne Aitken, who is studying towards a Masters of International Nature Conservation.

Jodanne's thesis topic is the close examination of Kea and their diet, specifically focusing on their source of protein within exotic forests. Kea are a notoriously difficult bird to study in their natural environment, due to the alpine nature of their habitat. However, Kea's charismatic and cheeky personalities



exhibit fascinating behavioral tendencies, which will make up for any observational discomforts!

Jodanne was fortunate to visit our captive breeding facilities prior to lockdown to learn more about the Trust's operation and was particularly delighted to observe the Orange Fronted Parakeet.

We farewell Kathryn Bugler, the departing Isaac Scholar, who will shortly hand in her thesis for final marking, thereby completing her Masters.

A Study in Conservation

These words, recently repainted on a water tank, embody Sir Neil Isaac's founding principle for Isaac Construction's rehabilitated quarries (now owned by The Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust).

This water tank stands near the entrance of the rehabilitated quarry (known as Peacock Springs - which now is the location for the captive breeding programme for 5 endangered NZ native birds.



"To fulfil the legacy of Sir Neil and Diana, Lady Isaac."



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News in Brief

The annual Take A Kid Fishing event aims to introduce children to fishing and the natural environment, with last year's event attracting approximately 6,000 people.

Ironically, due to the success of this annual occasion, the event scheduled for September 2020 has been cancelled due to the uncertainty of the timeline for Covid-19 restrictions.

Mr. David Denton, Chair of Trustees and Foundation Trustee of the Kids Fishing Charitable Trust was awarded the Queens Service Medal this year for his tireless energy, enthusiasm and organisational skills that have contributed significantly to the success of the annual Take A Kid Fishing event, which has been running for over 31 years!

ICWT donated \$5,000 to the Te Whanau Hou Grovetown Lagoon Society Inc to contribute towards their planting programme. The Grovetown Lagoon is located near Blenheim and a recently completed boardwalk now enables people to walk around the loop track and comfortably enjoy the wonderful outdoor environment this lagoon offers.



Who's who?

ICWT Administration

Rob Clarke—Executive Trustee

Bill Luff—Trustee

Alister McDonald—Trustee

Bruce Rule—Operations Manager

Catherine Ott—Administration Manager

Building/Maintenance Division

Hamish Milne—Builder

Bill Waterman—Apprentice Builder

Peter Jones—Painter/Handyman

Wildlife Division

Anne Richardson—Wildlife Manager

Leigh Percasky—Assistant Wildlife Manager

Olly Gooday—Wildlife Keeper

Emma Cournane—Wildlife Keeper

Fran Johnson—Wildlife Keeper

Chloe Jackson—Wildlife Keeper

Kate Barclay—Wildlife Keeper

Landscape Division

Lee Cheneler—Landscape Gardener

Ian Gebbie—Landscape Gardener

Rob Smit—Landscape Gardener

Pryderi Hughes—Landscape Gardener

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