



# THE ISAAC CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE TRUST

A study in conservation

Issue #24 Winter 2020

## CONSERVATION

## NEWS

### *Wild Black Stilt/Kakī boosted by over 100 birds*



3 Kakī in juvenile plumage with one adult.

*This winter the Department of Conservation (DOC) released 104 juvenile kakī/black stilts - the world's rarest wading bird - into the natural environment within the Mackenzie Basin. Of these birds 24 were raised here at our facilities.*

In 2020 the adult kakī population increased by 30% from 2019, to a total of 169 adults. This was the population's most significant increase since the recovery programme began over 40 years ago. "It's certainly a collective effort with the population increase the result of both an intensive captive breeding programme and an increase in predator control throughout the Mackenzie Basin where they live in the wild." says DOC Senior Biodiversity Ranger, Dean Nelson.

Kakī, breed in braided riverbeds leaving them and their eggs exposed to severe weather events and introduced mammalian predators - predominantly feral cats, stoats, weasels, ferrets and hedgehogs. "Kakī are tough birds who live in extreme environments but they need a helping hand. Te Manahuna Aoraki has increased trapping networks to now protect 80% of the kakī range, we have high hopes kakī numbers will continue to increase with more and more predators being taken out of the landscape." says Fiona McNab, Te Manahuna Aoraki project director.

*Photos Dean Nelson*



Wildlife



Landscape



Heritage Village



Scholarships



Maintenance



News in brief



## Maintenance News

Winter provides an excellent time to focus on the wildlife division while there are far fewer young being cared for. Seismic strengthening combined with a pergola over the incubator room provides multiple benefits.



In one of our wetland aviaries, the soft interior netting has shown signs of wear in the wind. This soft netting is very important to prevent the kakī/black stilts from injury. We have re-stitched the soft netting back together as part of the repair which was a challenging job due to the height of the aviaries.

In addition, we have completed the conversion of the skinkery to now hold orange fronted kākāriki. The skinkery has been modified to create 2 enclosures that will hold 1 pair each for

breeding, but with the flexibility to remove two internal wall panels, creating one large area suitable for flock mating. Once the birds have paired off, the internal panels are re-instated, allowing the birds to focus on nest building and rearing young.



This winter one focus has been on roofing with improvements made to increase ventilation and reduce condensation within the quarry office and salmon factory. A warm dry environment helps productivity!



## Scholarship News

Katie Thompson, our Sir Neil Isaac Scholar at Canterbury University is studying a Masters of Urban resilience. Katie's research topic is the introduction of green infrastructure to Christchurch's three coastal environments, to help land water interfaces adapt to climate change

Katie reports that "Along with other assignments, I have just completed a presentation on how the coastal protection method of mangroves is impacting the wellbeing of coastal communities vulnerable to climate change in the Pacific."



When not studying, Katie volunteers to keep our beaches clean, demonstrating both community spirit plus a practical application to her theory and study.

Jodanne our Lady Isaac Scholar at Lincoln University writes "My recent move up to Nelson has provided an excellent opportunity for me to be both closer to my proposed fieldwork sites, but also explore the backcountry in an area of the country I haven't spent much time in yet. My thesis is titled Kea habitat use and feeding preferences in exotic plantation forestry block in Nelson, New Zealand."

A day hike I did up to Red Hills Hut. The Nelson Mineral Belt runs through here and it has the most beautiful red rocks.



*"The sustainable conservation of our environment for perpetuity."*





## Wildlife News



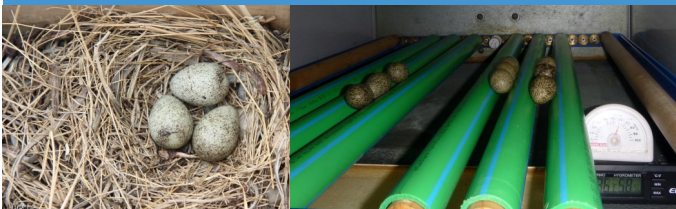
### *NZ Shore Plover / Tūturuatu.*

The NZ Shore Plover captive population has not had an injection of wild genes for about 20 years and therefore our breeding pairs are becoming quite inbred. Recently DOC collected blood samples from a number of wild birds on South East Island in the Chatham's group and the geneticists found the captive population is now very different to the wild population.

Over the last 2 years DOC has been working with the Chatham Island iwi and all residents, discussing the need for survival of this species. As a result, all parties have agreed to a number of nests this season being uplifted and taken into the captive population.

This November, Leigh from ICWT will be flying to the Chatham Islands with DOC to locate potential nests and once identified, 7 nests/21 eggs will be transferred to a portable incubator and returned with Leigh to Peacock Springs where they will be incubated and hand reared.

These chicks will be added to the captive population here at ICWT, Pūkaha Mt Bruce and also Cape Sanctuary. Their offspring will then in turn, boost the released populations already established on Waikawa and Motutapu Islands with earlier captive bred birds.



### *Blue Duck / Whio*

People walking alongside rivers now have an increased chance to see Blue Duck due to an increase in the breeding pair population at 8 security sites by 151% since 2011. There are now 748 pairs of whio across 8 sites (where intensive monitoring and pest control is undertaken).

We presently hold 2 breeding pairs, but may receive wild eggs from the Karamea area specifically collected by DOC for hand rearing. DOC is intending to collect from an area not previously sourced for eggs, to improve the genetic diversity of the both the captive breeding programme and ultimately the wild birds, once the juveniles are released.

### *Orange Fronted Parakeet - kākārīki karaka*

We have been flock-mating over winter in the newly converted skinkery plus the modified kiwi aviary and have formed 4 new pairs. 3 of the pairs are already laying so we are hoping for a better season than last year, which commenced unusually late.

Recently we installed internal walls within the kiwi aviary, to create separate enclosures made of tinted skylights, that prevent the birds from seeing each other once they have paired off. We avoid the pairs from seeing each other to reduce potential aggression between the males and provide privacy for breeding.

After flock-mating the skylight material is lightweight and easy to quickly reinstall. Flock-mating is the technique used to emulate the natural behavior in the wild that allows birds to familiarize themselves with each other to then select their own mates.



*“To fulfil the legacy of Sir Neil and Diana, Lady Isaac.”*

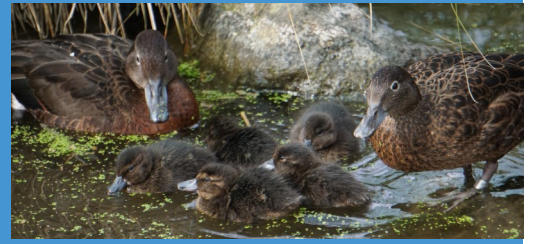


## Wildlife Cont.

### Brown Teal / Pāteke

Our Brown Teal pairs are already very busy, either sitting on nests or looking after their brand-new ducklings. Our newest pair also tried to breed but unfortunately the female was too keen and laid her eggs before her partner was ready to copulate. We are sure they will try again soon!

Brown Teal can breed through winter, as long as they are happy and have the right diet, and our best breeding pairs could not be stopped for long. The season has just begun, and we already have 4 clutches hatched and 4 more nests with eggs.



## Heritage News

In June 2020 the British Allied Forces acknowledged the 75th anniversary of the Normandy landing. Another WW2 amphibious landing in Greece, was recalled by Pat Clark-Hall the Lieutenant of the Torpedo Boat MTB651.

This Torpedo Boat was tasked with landing a platoon of British sappers (engineers) one of which was Sir Neil Isaac. The following excerpt is from a letter written by Lieutenant Pat Clark-Hall on 20 October 1944 from the Greek

Port of Piraeus.

"They had to be transported from the cruiser HMS Black Prince out in the bay. We pulled up alongside in the darkness. The cruisers side seem to go up and down in the dark sky above us. The sappers, with all their gear and weapons, climbing down a scrambling net which is foot square mesh like a mini rope ladders joined together.

Once underway, we left their gear on deck and took them below for ships

cocoa and a snooze. We invited their Officer onto the Bridge and he turned out to be "Torchy" Isaacs (Sir Neil Isaac) whom I had once met at a party in Timaru. He, a sophisticated 21-year-old, had pinched my girl off me (a shy 18-year-old). I reminded him of this and we yarned away for the rest of the night on the bridge."

*Thank you to the Clark-Hall family for permission to reproduce this excerpt from the book "Fire Sugar, Fire Pudding".*



Sir Neil's Dress Army Uniform that would be worn for special occasions and parades.

Rising to the rank of Major Neil Isaac within the New Zealand and British Army from 1941—1947, Major Neil Isaac (later Sir Neil Isaac) was commissioned into the Royal Engineers from the NZ forces during WW2.



## "A Study In Conservation"





## Landscaping News



Lockdown placed plenty of challenges in front of our landscape team due to a variety of reasons, including needing to delay our planting day at the McArthur's Road entrance to the Isaac site.

An autumn planting became an early winter endurance on a cold and exposed site. However, the whole team including our other departments together with some Isaac Construction staff, all donned their warmest clothing and bravest smiles to plant over 2,000 natives.

Following on from our success over the last 5 years particularly, winter was a time for planning our next ambitious planting project.

The collection of orange fronted parakeet / kākārīki aviaries is known as the contact area. Presently the grassed areas surrounding these aviaries are not managed easily, as mowing disturbs the birds and their young.

A decision has been made to replace much of the lawn with natives, which will have multiple benefits. Once mature enough, berries, flowers and branches can be harvested for browse for the birds. Significantly extending the native planting will be a sympathetic extension

to their aviary environment and assist to emulate their natural environment in the wild.

Te Ara Kākārīki Greenway Canterbury Trust is a Charitable Trust working with public and private landowners, ecologists, community and schools to restore biodiversity to Canterbury by planting native "Greendots" to create a native corridor linking the mountains to the sea, within the Selwyn District..

*At the Te Ara Kākārīki Greenway Canterbury Trust annual meeting, the Diana Isaac Cup was awarded for the incorporation of native plants into the working lands of Selwyn to bring environmental, ecological and aesthetic benefits.*

This year the cup was jointly awarded to Tony and Mary Edwards from Hororata plus Kevin Dunn and Susan Hall from Kirwee. Congratulations to both winners—we appreciate the significant contribution you have made to the natural habitat in your district.

*Aspiration, Realisation, Conservation.*





# THE ISAAC CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE TRUST

*A study in conservation*



## *News In Brief*

- ◆ The Ōtūkaikino walkway is back open following temporary closure over the lambing period. Stretch your legs and enjoy the natural habitat now that spring has arrived. You can park at the Groynes and walk upstream via Clearwater Golf Resort to reach the pedestrian bridge to convey you to the Isaac Walkways.
- ◆ Due to Covid 19 lockdown restrictions the Take a Kid Fishing event normally held each spring at the Groynes has been postponed for 12 months.
- ◆ The Christchurch City Council annual walking festival has been also postponed for 2020 and is now rescheduled for April 2021.
- ◆ Peter our painter has also turned his hand to assisting with the small flock of sheep that are maintained for grass control. He has even assisted ewes birthing at lambing time! Variety in the job-place is certainly provided when working for the Trust!
- ◆ Mt Cook Alpine Salmon and The Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust donated catch-able sized salmon to North Canterbury Fish and Game, for release into The Groynes children's fishing lakes in Christchurch, in time for the winter school holidays.



## 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 ONZM —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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