



# THE ISAAC CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE TRUST

A study in conservation

Issue #25 Spring 2020

## CONSERVATION

## NEWS

*ICWT Wildlife Manager, Anne Richardson ONZM, was presented with her medal by Dame Patsy Reddy in Sept 2020 for services to wildlife conservation. Anne has worked at ICWT for the past 28 years, assisting the Trust to carry out the visions and legacy of the late Sir Neil and Lady Isaac in conservation, including the captive breeding of some of New Zealand's endangered species .*



*NZ Shore Plover/Tūturuatu fly in from the Chatham Islands to boost the genetic diversity of this endangered bird.*

NZ Shore Plover, tūturuatu, came into captivity in the form of wild eggs off the Chatham Islands in 1991. However, it was not until 1993 that wild eggs were hatched and chicks successfully raised to commence the recovery programme for NZ Shore Plover.

Due to unforeseen circumstances there has not been a wild genetic injection to the captive population since that time. This has resulted in the captive population approaching a dire state of inbreeding if they don't receive new stock (genes) soon.

Last year discussions started between DOC, Ngati Mutunga o Wharekauri Iwi Trust and the Hokotehi Moriori Trust, to allow another wild egg collection to boost the captive population.

*Continued on page 2*

### *The Isaac Group expands.*

As from 1 December 2020, the Greymouth business of G T Liddell Contracting Limited becomes part of the Isaac Group. The business and its name has a proud history over a long period of time in the West Coast region as well as the wider South Island. We are very fortunate that Graham and his daughter Anna and the great team of Liddell Contracting, have stayed with the business to become part of the Isaac Group as "Liddell Contracting, a Division of Isaac Construction Limited". Graham and Anna, alongside Rob Kinney, will lead the Liddell team into the future, which is looking very bright, with several large bridge contracts lined up in 2021 to keep the team busy.

**Christmas Closedown;** The office will be closed from Friday 18th December 2020 and returning on 11th January 2021



Wildlife



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Maintenance



News in brief



## Wildlife News



### *Tūturuatu story continued from page 1*

DNA blood work carried out on the wild population previously, has found that the genetic diversity between captive and wild tūturuatu is now separate. This is a very important factor in the future survival of the species and for new release sites. This development is also in the interests of those concerned with the Chatham populations, because if there was ever a pest incursion (e.g. rats) they would potentially lose most, if not all of the tūturuatu.

Our Assistant Manager Leigh Percasky, who has experience in collecting wild eggs plus transporting the eggs in incubators, has joined the DOC team on the Chatham's to locate nests and collect 21 eggs (7 clutches of 3 eggs each) during November.

Rangatira Island (South East Island of the Chatham Island Group) holds around 60 pairs so the 7 clutches are not a large proportion of the breeding population. The reason for taking full clutches is to encourage the adults to immediately re-nest as tūturuatu can re-lay up until January.

*Leigh returned back with the 21 eggs in a portable incubator. These precious eggs will be hatched during December and raised here in our captive breeding facilities.*

*This important development for the tūturuatu, one of the world's rarest shorebirds, may prevent the species from becoming extinct.*

### *Black Stilt / Kakī*

After a slow start, the black stilt / kakī breeding season has now exploded in the wild. To date this season, the DOC team in Twizel have collected upwards of 90 eggs from 27 pairs in the wild.

This significant increase of collected wild eggs allows for a reduction in holding captive breeding pairs, providing more aviary space to house juvenile kakī. Therefore, we have reduced the breeding pairs held in captivity to 2 here at ICWT and 2 at the DOC captive breeding centre in Twizel.

Traditionally kakī chicks are sent to us at about 2 months old, and due to the increased number of wild eggs collected, we will be busy hand rearing here at ICWT, which is exciting.



Our 2 pairs of kakī have both successfully started breeding this season. Usually our captive pairs have up to 4 clutches and are allowed to raise their last clutch. Tekapo and Tasman are currently incubating their 4th clutch, while Manson and Mackenzie have just laid their 2nd clutch.

The summit of Rangatira Island overlooking Pitt Island  
*photo credit Leigh Percasky*



*“The sustainable conservation of our environment for perpetuity.”*



## Landscaping News

Our Landscape Team have been continuing their work in removing plant pest species, particularly along the southern branch of the Ōtukaikino waterway. However, as summer approaches the focus will shift to reducing the fire hazard with keeping grass down, plus irrigating new native plantings.

Te Ara Kākāriki Greenway Canterbury Trust is working to restore Biodiversity to the Selwyn district of Canterbury. ICWT has provided sponsorship over the last 10 years and has recently committed sponsorship for an additional 5 years, to 2025.

The Diana Isaac Cup, facilitated by Te Ara Kākāriki, is awarded biennially and this year was jointly awarded to Tony and Mary Edwards from Hororata plus Kevin Dunn and Susan Hall from Kirwee. We recently visited their respective properties to view their extraordinary efforts in planting natives.



## Scholarship News

Jodanne Aitken our Isaac Scholar at Lincoln University writes “This is my first kea spotted as part of my thesis fieldwork. (Good luck trying to spot him!). My thesis is focusing on the habitat use and feeding behaviors of kea in plantation forests in the Nelson/Tasman region. For the next newsletter I should hopefully have some preliminary results to share about what these kea are getting up to in plantation forests, but until then I hope everyone has a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!”



Katie Thompson, the Isaac Scholar at Canterbury University has just completed her honours year and is currently working over summer as a coastal scientist for Jacobs Engineering. Katie says “This is a very exciting opportunity to broaden my practical and analytical skills. I have only worked for one week and have already gained a lot of valuable knowledge as well as gathering ideas on how to further develop my thesis topic. I am really looking forward to getting started on my thesis and the rest of the summer with Jacobs Engineering, working to protect the beautiful coastal environments of New Zealand”

We are delighted that Katie has secured a summer role so appropriate both for her studies and interests at heart.

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



## Heritage News

Sir Neil loved cars and two cars he previously owned (we recently became aware), remain in the care of two car enthusiasts.



The **Jaguar XJS V12**, originally purchased in 1984 by Sir Neil, has only clocked 40,000km to date, remaining in near new condition. This elegant yet sporty vehicle was the ultimate grand tourer with distinctive rear flying buttresses and a motor with the snarl, power and speed of its feline namesake!



*Time’s passage nor fashion changes have dimmed these svelte lines.*

The **Studebaker Silver Hawk** 4.72 litre (259 cubic Inch) V8 Engine, pictured below, was purchased by Sir Neil in 1960 and registered to “The Isaac Construction Company Ltd”, until sold in 1965 with 46,000 miles on the clock.

After several owners, from 2012 this Studebaker was predominantly utilised as a show car. With a new colour scheme of burgundy and grey, plus a reconditioned engine retaining all the old mechanical systems, it was a stunning looking car.

With a new owner in 2017 came modifications to upgrade the reliability, safety and driveability, such as power steering, air conditioning, power assisted dual circuit disc brakes, replacement wiring, remote central locking and reversing camera!

All these improvements have transformed the car for driving comfort and safety, yet it still retains all exterior originality.

*This sporty coupe must have been quite hard work to drive even when it was new.*

**Right** - the Studebaker now, freshly painted red and grey

**Below** - the Studebaker photographed in the 1960’s.



A very early Studebaker!

*“A Study In Conservation”*



## *Wildlife cont.*

### *Orange Fronted Parakeet / Kākāriki karaka*

Here at ICWT, we are in a transitional phase this kākāriki breeding season with many birds nearing breeding retirement and the formation of new pairs. We have also increased our aviary capacity through the recent renovation of our old skink enclosures and kiwi aviaries.

Many of our seasoned pairs of kākāriki are aging and becoming less prolific breeders, producing smaller and fewer clutches. These older pairs, such as our treasured Hone and Daisy, will be living their twilight years in other institutions on display. Older captive kākāriki pairs have strong pair bonds and are more resilient to human induced stress, allowing them to thrive in these potentially stressful environments.

The retirement of established older breeding pairs allows room for new pairs to form. Thanks to the excellent field work this year from the Department of Conservation, eggs from the wild population on Blumine Island and the Poulter Valley were collected. The birds from Blumine are 'returning home' so to speak, as the eggs collected are descendants from captive ICWT kākāriki released there over 10 years ago.

In other exciting news, the last remaining wild male in the Poulter Valley was located. DOC and ICWT organised targeted releases of captive bred females and a pair was successfully formed! DOC collected their eggs, and they were fostered in captivity for flock mating to increase the genetic diversity of the captive population.

Flock mating was conducted earlier this year with the offspring of Blumine, Poulter and valuable captive birds. Pairs such as Lupin and Sophia paired up instantly and we are excitedly waiting for their first clutch to venture out of the nest box. Mooncake, a pickier female eventually paired up with Manuka, an ex-Orana Park bird. They are currently feeding their freshly hatched chicks.

Though the kākāriki breeding has been slow to start, our newly formed and young bird pairs are getting settled and have either begun breeding or are showing promising signs of pairing up.

### *Blue Duck / Whio update*

The endemic Blue duck, or whio, is an ancient taonga species that are nationally threatened by predation and habitat loss, and with less than 3,000 left, they need a helping hand.

ICWT now breed only the South Island whio, as their populations have been struggling even more than their North Island counterparts. The South Island whio are often larger than their North Island relations; roughly 200g heavier. They are also paler in colour and appear to be slightly more aggressive, particularly towards their keepers!

While the North Island birds frequently breed successfully in their 1st summer, the South Island birds take longer, usually starting in their 2nd breeding season. For example, our resident pair from Motueka are both 3 years old (hatched at ICWT in the 2017/18 season) and after successfully laying their 1st clutches last year, they have now laid a whopping 3 clutches this season! The 2 pairs from the Karamea area seem to be struggling with infertility, which could be due to the geographical isolation and therefore a potentially smaller genetic diversity in that area.

To counter this effect, this season DOC will be releasing whio of both Karamea and Motueka descent, into the Janszoon managed area of the Abel National Park and Motueka areas, to increase the genetic diversity. In general, the populations country-wide are kept separate (as they would naturally when breeding in the wild, where they are thought to only disperse approximately 25km from their parents), Another way to increase the genetic diversity of the South Island whio and ensure greater species survival would be to collect eggs from areas which have not yet been explored, such as the Paparoa National Park on the West Coast, which DOC will be looking into in the (hopefully) not too distant future.

*Aspiration, Realisation, Conservation.*



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## *News in brief*

Both the Christchurch Cathedral Girl and Boy Choristers each spent the day here onsite at the "Lake House" for a full day of singing practice and musical development. Lady Isaac was a Canon Almoner of the Cathedral and took great joy in supporting the choristers with the Trust continuing this tradition of hosting the choristers one day per term.

## *Maintenance News*

*Through spring our maintenance division focused on improvements to the roof on the Salmon Factory. The staff kitchen was also upgraded in time for their busiest period leading up to Christmas. Look for Aoraki Salmon in your supermarkets or purchase online at [www.aorakisalmon.co.nz](http://www.aorakisalmon.co.nz)*

The Spring Challenge is the worlds biggest all women's adventure race, where up to 480 teams of 3 take part in a thrilling adventure that includes rafting/kayaking, mountain biking, hiking and navigation. One section of the South Island event held in September 2020, incorporated the Isaac Walking Tracks for the advanced category.



## 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  
Graeme Ford—Wildlife Keeper  
Elsie Anderson—Wildlife Keeper

### **Landscape Division**

Lee Cheneler—Landscape Gardener  
Ian Gebbie—Landscape Gardener  
Rob Smit—Landscape Gardener  
Pryderi Hughes—Landscape Gardener

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