

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2019

OWHANGO ALIVE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT JUNE 2019

Hello to everyone and welcome to winter!

June 1st is officially the first day of winter and Mother Nature delivered us a minus 2.9 degree frost on 2 Monday June – BRRRR! Some of our trap checkers had trouble opening the trap boxes that day – after some investigation, they realised that the trap lids had actually frozen to the main body of the trap box!

Trap catches have been up in the last few months, as the trap data and ferret article will indicate below. It's certainly been a bumper season for lots of the flora and fauna – some good and some not so. I have never seen so much seed and fruit drop in the forest, in some areas there are little piles of tawa berries, miro berries, kahikatea, rimu and so on. Great for the birds, but also the rats, hence the bigger catches on some of the lines.

The Owhango Alive trap library, in conjunction with Danial van der Lubbe of DOC and Predator Free 2050, has been well received by locals, both in Owhango and also in Taumarunui – we try to have a stall at the monthly Owhango market, displaying the various traps available to borrow, information on using the traps and of course offering traps to borrow for a 3 month period. This is happening all over the country, so if you're not in our area, contact your local conservation group or DOC and they will point you in the right direction, so that you too can join the cause. I will leave you to read the rest of the newsletter now, but if you feel like contacting us for more info about what we do, borrow a trap or join us on the trap checking lines, we'd love to hear from you.

Warm regards,

Mark Fredericks

OWHANGO ALIVE CHAIRMAN

FERRET FRENZY

On 4 January this year we started catching what would end up being a frightening amount of ferrets. In 5 weeks a total of 16 had been trapped, caught or shot in and around the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve. And then another one was trapped on 22 May. In the preceding 7 years, a total of 4 ferrets had been caught, so we feel this is significant. Was it due to being such a good breeding season for many animals, especially rabbits? Or just a coincidence that we intercepted the juveniles leaving their dens in search of their own territories?



Mark, Jerome and Sally with ferrets.



Ferret in Lagoon Line trap 13

Lessons we have learnt :

Try to think like a ferret – follow the natural tracks and contours that a migrating young ferret may follow.

Trap accordingly, at the right time of the season. Research (The Handbook of NZ Mammals – Carolyn M. King) indicates that the kits will emerge from the natal den at around 6 weeks and then move out to find their own territory another 5 – 6 weeks later. In a good season the female may produce 2 litters of up to 8 kits. Given that breeding commences around October/November, early January is a good time to start targeting the ferrets on the move.

So, to summarise, be on the lookout for sign in late December and start trapping from then, in known tracks and habitat. Ferrets apparently like to climb a post in a corner, so as to have a look around and “survey the scene”. Given the ferret incursion on the Kiwi in Tongariro Forest Park last year, we hope that the despatching of 17 ferrets this season will help in some small way to halt the killing, by ferret predation, of our local Kiwi population.

Danial Van der Lubbe, DOC's Biodiversity Threats Ranger, has been a huge help and support to Owhango Alive in this endeavour, providing us with live capture traps, DOC 250's, fresh rabbit bait (in convenient bite sized pieces) and lots of advice and encouragement. Acknowledgement is also due to Mark Fredericks who put in many k's on his motorbike and hours of his spare time on trap placement, checking live capture traps daily, rebaiting, and trying to “think like a ferret”.

DOC have placed more than 300 DOC 250's in the Forest Park, which are being checked at least monthly, but often fortnightly.

TRAP DATA

As you can see from the data, predator numbers seem to be up on previous seasons, as we have had some pretty good hauls each week on the various lines. Given that it was such a good season for both flora and fauna, I guess this is to be expected resulting a very successful breeding season for all and sundry. We have certainly seen an abundant seed set in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve, so lots of tucker for all the species (the good and the bad) that reside in our piece of paradise. Although it is subjective, the walkers/runners/trappers that regularly visit the reserve all report more bird song and bird sightings. Which of course is always good to hear, and keeps the enthusiasm fired to keep on doing what we're doing.

TRAP DATA - Sponsor by Species

Count - Kill

| Sponsor | Rat | Stoat | Hedgehog | Mouse | Ferret | Weasel | Rabbit | Cat | Possum | Other | Total Result |
|------------------------------------|-----|-------|----------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-----|--------|-------|--------------|
| Anderson-Smith | 32 | 1 | | 8 | | | | 1 | 1 | | 43 |
| Claire Stevens | 12 | | | 2 | | | | | | | 14 |
| David Partis and Suzanne Wilkinson | 17 | 1 | | 5 | | | | | | | 23 |
| Derek & Ann Percy (Trap 1) | 33 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 1 | 37 |
| Derek & Ann Percy (Trap 2) | 33 | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | | 36 |
| Fa'i Pudney, Tauranga | 24 | 2 | | | | | | | | | 26 |
| Jacob Simmonds | 10 | 3 | | 5 | 3 | | 1 | 2 | | | 24 |
| Knowles Family | 24 | 1 | | 1 | 2 | | | | | | 28 |
| Margie Riley | 15 | | | 1 | 4 | 1 | | | | | 21 |
| Nan & Malcolm Pullman | 32 | | | | | | | | | | 32 |
| Ngakonui Valley School | 20 | 1 | | 6 | | 1 | | | | | 28 |
| Phil & Kate Taylor | 7 | | | 3 | | | | | | | 10 |
| Rachel & Marty Cashin | 26 | 2 | | 10 | | | | | | | 38 |
| Richard & Felicity Porter. | 23 | 1 | | | | | | | | | 24 |
| Sally & Mark | 18 | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | | | | | 24 |
| Simmonds family, Melbourne | 34 | 4 | | 1 | | | | | | | 39 |
| Stent Family | 27 | | | | | | | | | | 27 |
| Taumarunui Auto Centre | 26 | 3 | | 3 | | 4 | | | | | 36 |
| The Golden Family | 9 | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | | 12 |
| TMN Hort and Beaut Soc | 15 | | | 2 | | | | | | | 17 |
| Weir Family | 13 | | | 6 | | | | | | | 19 |
| Total Result | 450 | 25 | 7 | 62 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 558 |

WHIO DUCKLINGS

After a great breeding season for the whio, and lots of the other native birds, it is rewarding to regularly see up to seven whio hanging about on the river, just below the Whakapapa Bridge. I like to think that they are the whio fledglings that featured in the John Martin's video in the spring. Whio are also often spotted upstream at the Swimming Hole and downstream at the new bench site and The Boathole.

Old duck seen at the Swimming Hole - not a whio.



THE SLIP

We have no more news to report regarding "The Slip" on the downstream section of the Ohinetonga Loop track. It is now over a year since it occurred, and although it would seem there are a few folk who are prepared to take their chances over the narrow track, we would still like to think that some work will be undertaken so that the track may be used safely by all.

BARRY BOSTON



It is with sadness that I inform you that Owhango Alive volunteer, Barry Boston, passed away in January 2019, after a staunch battle with illness. As his wife Colleen says, "it was his hardest marathon". Barry, along with Colleen, became part of our Owhango Alive team back in 2013, after a chance meeting at the Whakapapa Bridge with Peter Lacy, an OA trap checker at the time.

Barry soon became an integral member of OA, with his commitment to weekly trap checking, weed busting (under the watchful eye of Colleen) and native tree planting along the Boat Hole Line and around the Whakapapa Bridge area. We were always kept on our toes by Barry, and if we hadn't spotted an invading thistle, privet or blackberry, he would let us know, or just get on with "fixing" the pesky weeds.

Barry was always up for a laugh, with jokes, stories and banter – it was Barry who coined our OA logo phrase "Protecting Our Own Back Yard", and he took this very seriously – all in all, he was very dedicated to the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve, Kakahi and Owhango Alive. He will be sorely missed by all who he came in contact with.

As it is said about some special Kiwi blokes, "He was a Good Keen Man".
Mark Fredericks

WORKING BEES

We have held 2 working bees over the last few months which included the usual toil – getting stuck into the blackberry, privet, broom and any other invasive weeds in our way. There was clearing around the newer native trees we planted over the last couple of years which, in the main, are looking and growing well. Many thanks to all involved in the working bees, and also to the dedicated folk who head into the Reserve and get stuck into the weeding/chopping off their own back. Every bit helps, and it's good for the soul to be in the bush and listen to the birdsong.

This sums it up, I reckon....*Birds are.....A bundle of beauty, Light and strong, Wings, and feathers, Freedom and song.*

From "Birds New Zealand – beauty like no other." - Paul Gibson

Volunteers Colleen Boston, Hamish Weir, Heather Morrell and Tania Coles



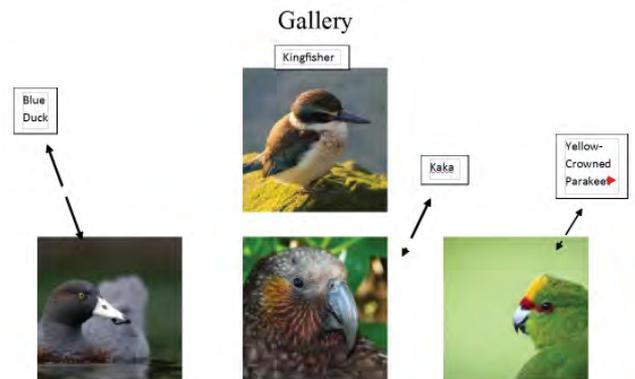
OWHANGO SCHOOL BIRD GROUP

Owhango Alive is thrilled that some Owhango School students have become involved with our conservation efforts in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve.

The school borders an edge of the Reserve, so is ideally placed for school projects and the newly formed bird club. The students also service a trap line through the bush with the help of Clive Gifford. Cody Bryan has written an informative piece for our newsletter. Thanks Cody!

Owhango School Birdwatching Club

At Owhango School Nairin Higgin and I (Cody Bryan) have set up a Birdwatching Club. What it is, is a club where people and students can get outdoors and admire and study our fabulous birds of New Zealand. These are the birds that I think are the coolest: yellow-crowned parakeet (kakariki), blue duck (whio), tui, kaka, and lots more. Anyone is free to sign up, but you have to go birdwatching sometimes, if you don't sign up you will not do birdwatching. Birdwatching actually important, because tells us if our bird population is dropping. Also, it's not boring like some people think, once you start doing it, its fun.



FEATURE CREATURE



The Nursery Web Spider

Given that the June photo of our Owhango Alive calendar features a Nursery Web Spider, I thought it apt to find some info about the little arachnid and share my findings with you. I'm sure you'll all be thrilled!

Scientific name: *Dolomedes minor*

Common name: *Nursery Spider*

Nursery web spiders are large and fast-moving with a leg span of six centimetres or more in adult females. Males are somewhat smaller. These spiders are typically pale brown or greyish in colour with yellow bordering around the cephalothorax (the frontal portion of the spider that bears the legs, fangs, and eyes).

The *D. minor* species typically has a substantial yellowish stripe running lengthwise from the front to the middle of the abdomen (the rear portion of the spider). The males are much smaller with thinner legs. *Dolomedes minor* can be found throughout New Zealand.

Nursery web spiders are known for their webs, yet they do not use them to catch prey. The webs of these spiders are a common sight on gorse and other shrubs and are, as the name suggests, literally nurseries for young spiderlings. During summer, the female nursery web spider can be seen roaming about carrying a large white ball underneath her. This is her egg sac and she carries it everywhere in her fangs until her young are ready to emerge. When this time comes, she takes the egg sac to the top of a tree or shrub and constructs the nursery web. The mother stays close, and during the day can often be found near the base of the plant where she has deposited her young. Secure inside the nursery web, the young spiderlings emerge from the egg sac and remain here for about a week or so before dispersing by ballooning.

Dolomedes minor actively hunts and scavenges for food at night. The prey spectrum of the spider consists of a variety of small organisms including locusts, other spiders, Dobsonfly larvae, earthworms, bees and other small insects.

Thank you to <http://www.terrain.net.nz/> for the above information.

So, what do you call a group of spiders??

1. A cluster 2. A nightmare 3. A web 4. A scuttle 5. A petrify Correct answer wins you a free katipo.....Nah, kidding.

Spider - Sally's mum (Betty Fry) wrote it and Sally read it at her final celebration of a life well lived.

Lying on my back I watched you crawl along my ceiling.
I wondered if you saw me, if you knew what I was feeling.
I watched you search, and find a corner in which to make your home.
I wondered if you would understand why I have no wish to roam.
I watched you form the most exquisite web that I have seen.
And wondered what your life and mine could ever come to mean.
And as I watched you run and work, my curious mind was fed.
Until I wondered if my heart could use your silken thread.
If only as a symbol that hope is relative
To what you have, or have not, or what you yet may give.
To know that dreams are gossamer, and life itself so brief.
That love can build a stronger web, support if there is grief.
And so I watched as you created beauty for my eye.
And then I wondered how it is when we all must die.
Leave behind the home we made of silk, or bricks and stone.
Are you then the same as I, a spirit, and alone?



T42

On Saturday 4 May Owhango Domain was once again a mass of runners and cyclists participating in the annual T42 race. We borrowed the DOC Whio trailer, which is rather a cute little shed that opens up as shown in the photo featuring stall minder, Tim Holmes. Didymo Dave delivered the missing stuffed Whio central to a display covering not only the whio and native birds but information about predators and the push for Predator Free 2050. We were also able to display the enlarged paintings of Whio created by Jack and Nairin, and laminated by Harland Graphics. However the biggest draw was the table of traps and Sally's rat replacement. So much banging! A big thank you to all the helpers. To husband David for helping me get the trailer from Sally and Mark's to the Domain, to Brenda Martin for being on hand from early in the morning and for dealing with most of the trap demonstrations and trap resetting, to Lesley Aitken and Tim for making sure I had help and relieving the others, and to Alison for lending the DOC trailer and Serena for organising to pick it up again. It was a lovely day and very impressive to see the slick operation of the organisers and the excellent support work of the Owhango Community volunteers.

Marion Johnston



Tim (the bug man) Holmes and sometime rat trapper minding the stall

TRAPS TO GO and more

I guess it all started when last year DOC needed single traps in a hurry to deal with the ferret invasion in the Kiwi Sanctuary and swapped doubles for singles on our trap lines. Theoretically in a double trap when one goes off it leaves the other still primed but in practice this is seldom the case and so Mark Fredericks and David Johnston have been busy turning them into single traps and making a new box for the extra metal trap mechanism. Mark collects and replaces the traps and takes them to David who takes them to bits and remakes them single size plus new boxes. Mark then added the netting. A big thanks to Lee Tidman at Garry Kidd Engineering who has voluntarily done running repairs on the hinge pin of some traps.

As you can imagine the original traps are anything but sanitary and perfumed so a huge thank you to Mark and David for not only giving their time but dealing with the stinky things. DOC has just donated another lot of traps which are sitting on Mark's verge. Anyone passing will know what I mean by stinky.

At the end of summer our brochure holder at the start of the Loop track got broken – by a rather large camper van backing round I think and not vandalism – so we got another and David has very kindly mounted it on the post again. For a little while we were using a zip lock plastic bag as replacement and I was amazed how well it lasted and wasn't removed.

Marion Johnston



Top R - David Johnston dividing double traps.
Centre R - Repaired brochure holder
Bottom R- Mark and Bryony running trap library at Owhango market.

Above - Heather and Brenda showing off their weasel catches

Right-Danial demonstrating new instant kill and reset trap to Mark.

BIRD SONG RECORDING

Check out the Ohinetonga bird song [at this link](#). Tom Glen, a St John paramedic from Australia, walked the track to the Lagoon on one of his days off, and took several recordings on his way.

He was stoked with the amount of birds he could hear, and shared with us his favourite recording. We're also receiving comments from folk that walk the track regularly, on the amount of birdsong in the bush. We like to think this is, in part, due to the commitment of the regular trap checkers in the Reserve.

VISITORS

Quite often, especially in the summertime, there are several campervans parked up at the Whakapapa Bridge with visitors from all parts of the world and we have had many interesting conversations with them. One young man from New Caledonia was so interested that he came with Marion and I on our trap line check. Unfortunately it was one of the days when our catch was zero. David Robinson



Okay folks, that's all from us.

We hope the winter treats you well – if you have any photos or articles/writings you would like to share with us, for facebook or future newsletters, we'd love to hear from you.

Warm regards,
Sally, David and the Owhango Alive Team.

Photo Credits

Page 1 - Sally Lashmar; David Robinson, page 3 - John Martin (whio), Sally Lashmar; David Robinson (volunteers), page 4 - Mikayla Donnelly (spider), page 5 - Phil Bendle (spider), Marion Johnston (T42 stall), page 6 - Marion Johnston (David J), Sally Lashmar (rest)

Here are a few photos that Sally and David took of some of the fungi that were seen in Ohinetonga during the month of May.

