

# Pigeon Post

December 2013

The Tui have been busily dining out nectar from the flax flower currently in full bloom across the island. This leaves their foreheads covered in bright yellow pollen, cross pollinating the flax as they quickly move from plant to plant.

The air is filling with the sweet smell of manuka flowering, a favourite haunt of our nocturnal gecko friends who also help the pollination process as they help themselves to the nectar on these warmer summer nights.

This ecosystem of pest free native species add their own bent to the small fruit and vege garden we try to maintain also. The geckos also help to cross pollinate to two well established fejoa trees beside the deck, well at least those that the Kakariki (yellow crowned parakeet) haven't already eaten. The Takahe and Pukeko have got into the garden again and pulled up half of my carrots. Home grown carrots might be off the menu for Christmas dinner this year it seems.

We have few 'normal' garden pests like snails and white cabbage butterflies to contend with, it is with some irony that the very species we strive to protect out here have become pests themselves. It's just lucky for them they are a little more charismatic than the humble garden snail.

Imagine my surprise the other day to find some uninvited guests living in my favourite pair of waders. Before I was able to set about clearing weed on the boat slipway I had first to evict a pair of large Cook Strait Giant Weta and about ten Geckos, before gingerly stepping into them hoping for no more surprises (*picture attached Mary*).

To date, Takahe nesting has gone very well this season, most nests have successfully hatched. We've already seen 4 separate pairs with their chicks and the remaining others are showing the behaviour and sign that indicates they are carefully protecting their young out of view.



I say to date as the first couple of months are crucial to the survival of the wee beasts. But given the relatively warm and dry spring/early summer so far all signs are positive. So if you are out and about on the island this time of year, don't be too disheartened that you may not see a Takahe, it means they are likely to be still keeping their young in close and under cover most of the day. As the chicks grow and become older and bolder they will venture out in the open with mum and dad a lot more in the coming months.

We only have a couple of pairs of nesting Shore Plover this season. One pair currently have a 1 month old chick and the other are still sitting on 3 eggs soon to hatch. Two of last years four pairs never returned to breed from 'over wintering' on the mainland. Hopefully we will have another translocation of captive reared birds this summer to boost the dwindling island numbers. Prior to

the rat incursion and predation in 2011 the island was holding a healthy and growing population of these very rare birds.



Colin Miskelly, from Te Papa Museum and something of a sea bird expert was out recently. He was excited to discover there are now five species of burrowing sea birds now breeding on the island.

His most recent discovery was of a White Faced Storm Petrel sitting on a single egg amongst the myriad of burrows above the southern cliffs. Many of you may have seen these birds more commonly referred to as JC or Jesus birds for the characteristic way they appear to walk across the water.



We wish you all the Merry Christmas and a happy new year.

We'll be on the island throughout the festive season and would love to see some of you out here, don't be shy, drop on by.

Ka kite

The Islanders