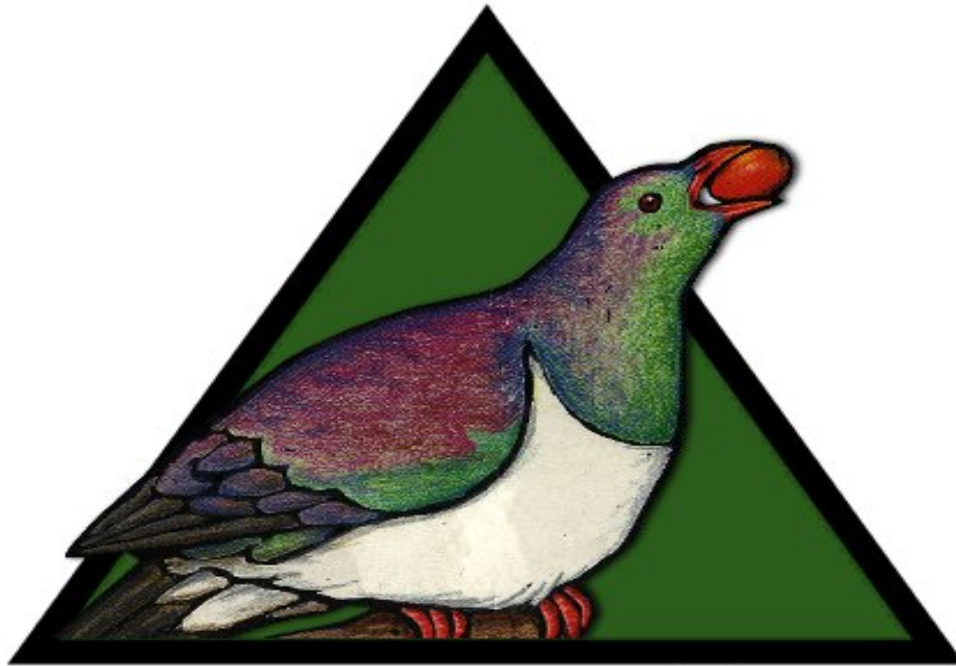


"Look after the birds and the forest flourishes. If the forest flourishes, the birds flourish."



Kereru Awhina Project Strategy



Kereru Awhina Project



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Introduction

In late 2003 an Auckland based, not-for-profit group Kaipatiki Project formerly called Kaipatiki Ecological Restoration Project (KERP) recognised the plight of local kereru on Auckland's, North Shore. The small community group were determined to reverse this plight and developed the Kereru Awhina (Care) Project hoping to enrich the pigeon's food supply and habitat by encouraging planting fruiting native trees such as puriri, nikau, pigeonwood and kowhai. In addition to this they also began developing education programmes on kereru for local schools and community groups.

In early 2004 a representative from Kaipatiki Project met with a representative from Warehouse Stationery, positioned just a stone throw away overlooking the Kaipatiki Creek in Beach Haven. Kaipatiki's passion to save kereru on Auckland's North Shore inspired a partnership between business and not-for-profit to communicate the same messages on a national scale. The problems faced by kereru and other bird species are not just isolated to the North Shore but are spread far and wide over the New Zealand mainland. Subsequently the national campaign under the same banner, Kereru Awhina Project was launched in August 2004 to coincide with National Conservation Week.



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The Advisory Panel

The advisory panel was established to bring together a number of well known Kereru experts who could give the Project credibility and strategic direction. The panel were formally invited to take part on a voluntary basis. Listed below are the current members of the panel:

Professor Mick Clout – Mick is currently Professor at the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Auckland. Mick holds a Doctorate in Zoology and has been a practising researcher for 25 years. His current research and speciality is in vertebrate ecology and behaviour. Mick has released numerous publications on kereru, other birds and conservation topics.

Kevin Prime (MBE) – Kevin Prime is married with 13 children. Kevin was the main driver behind the Ngatihine/DOC/Landcare Research, Native Pigeon Recovery Programme at Motatau in Northland. He is beef farmer, forester and beekeeper and works 75% as Commissioner with the Environment Court.

Stephanie May – Stephanie is presently completing her Doctorate in Environmental Science at the University of Auckland. Prior to this Stephanie had completed an MSc with honours in Environmental and Marine Sciences. She is currently completing her Doctorate thesis in "Management strategies employed to enhance New Zealand pigeon *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae* survival: how could we better achieve desired outcomes?"

Dr Tim Lovegrove - Tim is Natural Heritage Scientist in the Heritage Department of ARC. He has a PhD in Conservation Biology and has been involved for over 20 years in numerous regional national and international species conservation projects including protection and species transfers programmes, including kakapo, echo parakeet on Mauritius Island, saddlebacks, kokako, North Island robin, whitehead, kereru and dotterel. He looks after the conservation programmes on regional parks including mainland island projects and species conservation projects at Tawharanui, Wenderholm, Hunua

Shona Myers - Shona is Team Leader, Natural Heritage in the Heritage Department of ARC. She has an MSc in ecology and botany. She has worked for 20 years in conservation work with Department of Conservation, and more recently at Regional Council level, particularly on the development of ecological survey methods. She has a strong interest in lowland forest and wetland ecosystems and particularly the value of kereru as a disperser of large fruited native tree species, and also a strong interest in working with landowners to protect and restore lowland ecosystems.



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Dr Astrid van Meeuwen – Dijkgraaf - Astrid was born in the Netherlands and migrated to New Zealand when she was 12 years old. She was immediately in awe of the natural beauty and freedom that New Zealand offered. Astrid completed Bachelor and Master Degrees before finally receiving her Doctorate in plant, animal interactions of large fruited-species, Kereru and possums. Currently with the Department of Conservation in Wanganui, Astrid has spent many years researching Kereru and native fruiting species. Her current role is as Conservancy Advisory Scientist.

Dr Colin Meurk - Colin is a plant ecologist based in Lincoln in the South Island where he is employed by Landcare Research. Colin holds a Doctorate and is presently involved in research of vegetation processes and patterns, landscape ecology, vegetation management, native flora and community based ecological restoration.

Dr Ralph Powlesland - Ralph is a senior scientist at the Department of Conservation and has been a leading bird ecologist now for many years working with many bird species including much time with Kereru. Ralph has written numerous publications on Kereru.

Kereru Awhina Project Strategy

In October of 2004 the "advisory panel" were invited to respond to a communication pack sent out from the Kereru Awhina Project partners. The communication pack focussed on what were the biggest threats to kereru and where investment should be channelled to effectively mitigate these threats or even better eliminate these threats.

The following sections are a summation of the responses. The responses were unanimous and hence Kaipatiki Awhina Project had no difficulty in setting the direction of this project. In 2005 we invite groups to apply for funding in line with the responses that we have had from the advisory panel (see join Kereru Awhina Project on the menu bar). Below are the responses to the key questions about the threats and the effective response to these threats.

Please note that Kereru Awhina Project has decided that a pronged approach is necessary to address the following issues and these will be discussed in this document.



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Kereru Threats

Response from the "advisory panel" has indicated that the ultimate threat to kereru survival is that of predation. Predation by possums, mustelids and rats. Below are the listed threats from greatest threats (intolerable) to lesser threats. Please note that the lesser threats are still a major issue and need to be addressed.

1. Predation of adults/chicks and eggs by introduced predators such as possums, mustelids, rats and feral cats.
 2. Loss of habitat
 3. Competition for food sources
 4. Illegal hunting
 5. Crashing into car or house windows
-

Threat Solutions

The major threat to the continued existence of kereru is undoubtedly the pressures put on it by introduced predators. The pressures extended by possums are two fold as it competes with kereru and other native birds for food. The possum is destroying our native forests at an alarming rate. Mustelids, particularly the stoat is a random killing machine and does not necessarily kill to eat more for fun. The additional pressure that weasels, ferrets, rats and feral cats place on kereru exacerbate the situation for kereru and many other native species.

The "advisory panel" decided that a concentrated New Zealand wide focus at controlling and even better eradicating these pests from New Zealand's shores is the ultimate outcome for our native flora and fauna. Unfortunately this job is an extremely big one and eradication of the millions of predators from our country seems at this stage too difficult a task. There is still hope of controlling the numbers of pests out there by combined efforts of pest control as has been seen in places like Wenderholm and off shore islands.



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The following solutions came from the responses from the "advisory panel" and should not be considered in isolation.

1. Control of predatory mammals such as possum, mustelids, rats and feral cats through trapping exercises. Research also into more effective trapping methods needs to be looked at.
 2. Restoring and replanting of lowland ecosystems. Planting native food species and developing corridors of native catchments.
 3. A centralised information source available to all New Zealanders on kereru, fact sheets, posters and education resources.
 4. Protection of native habitats
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Conclusion

The threats facing kereru are unanimous and so are the solutions. Further investment needs to be made into predator control in all areas. This can be driven from individuals and from groups. Greater visibility of predator destruction of New Zealand ecosystems can be achieved by writing to local city and regional councils. By using a pronged approach to assist kereru numbers the Project feels this will make added impact rather than just focussing on one facet.

The Project supports pest control, restoring and replanting (natives) to rebuild ecosystems and the continued public drive and commitment to environmental issues through individuals, groups and societies. If all New Zealanders come together we can make a difference. And this difference will not just benefit kereru but the thousands of ecosystems that rely so heavily upon the survival of this bird.
