

Dear Members and supporters,

In this issue: Fairy tern news; Education/Advocacy: Local, Grey Lynn Library; Predators; Thanks; Nelson Café; Local Government Plans



Fairy Tern News

Population surveys by DOC Rangers and volunteers recorded 50 individual birds seen.

This includes 28 adults, 9 sub-adults and 13 of the fledglings from this season.

Darren Markin reports that of the captive reared fledglings, Blue, Green and Orange have all been seen out at the Kaipara within the last month, along with Green from the 2023- 20234 season.

Satellite tracking shows White spending lot of her time around Rawene and the Rangaunu Harbour, north of Kaitaia. Yellow is shown to be

moving north and back to the Kaipara area. Let's hope both are doing well.

Both Waipu fledglings, feared lost after the January storm have been seen!

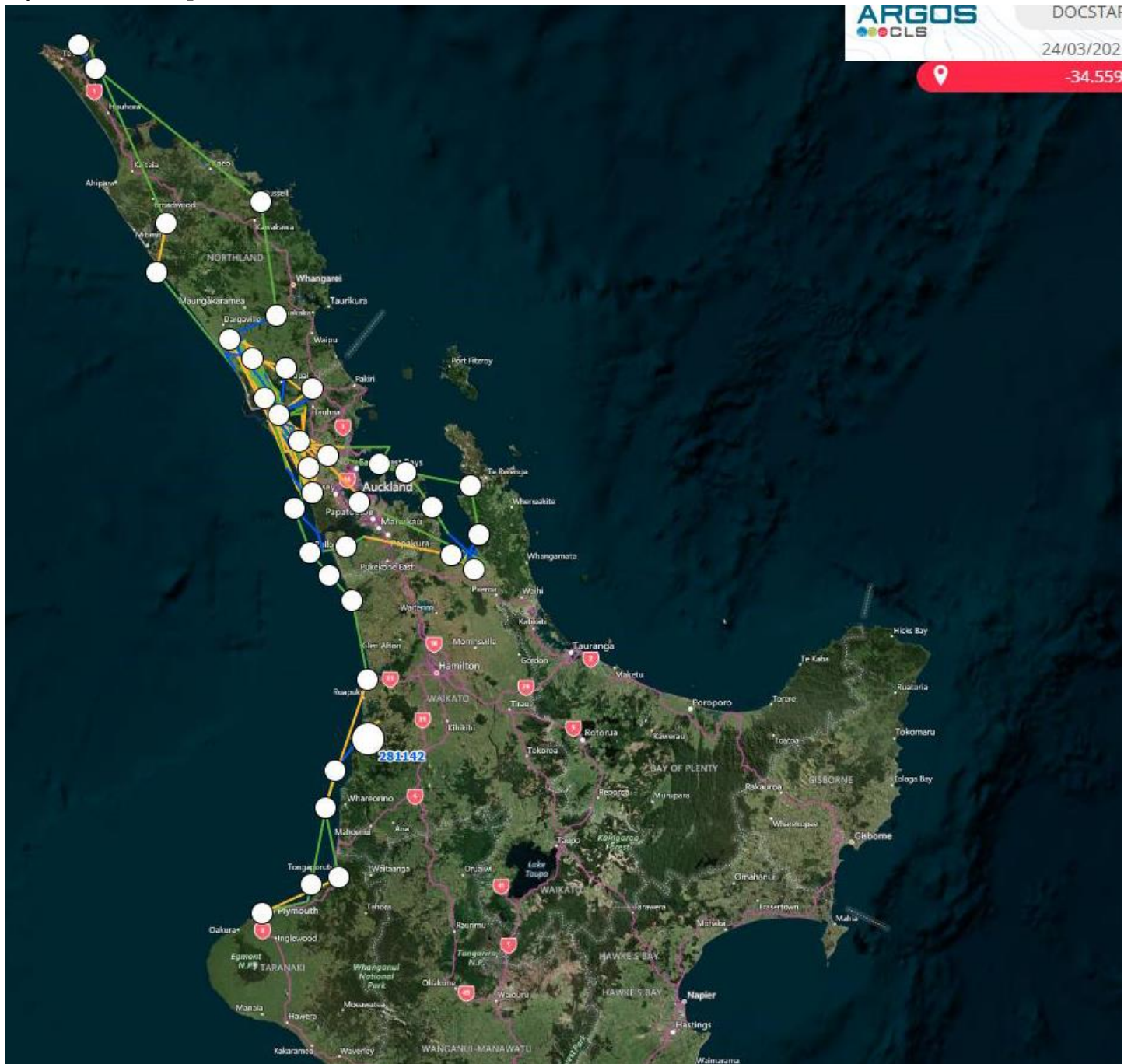
Photos by Darren Markin

Above: Orange (RM-YR)

Below: BM-KW, the last of the Mangawhai wild fledglings



Some of the captive reared fledglings have been doing tiki tours all over the North Island – one as far as New Plymouth! *See map below.*



Credit: DOC

DOC news:

The annual hui for all Fairy tern/tara iti stakeholders will be held on 16th June at Wellsford.

DOC is undertaking research on predator control, targeting cats. *See also our story below headed Predators.*

Videos about our bird and the captive rearing programme:

Link to Zoo video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SF1oOUhF3o>

If you missed it when it was first aired, **TVNZ and Forest and Bird's Endangered Species Series** is now available on **TVNZ+**. Season 2 Episode 1 features the NZ fairy tern/tara iti.

“The Yellows” – an interesting pairing at Waipu

Susan Steedman and Waipu Ranger, Caroline Tahon report.....

After diligently feeding the young KM-BK last season, R-YM returned to the territory he held in the southern end of the Waipū estuary for the 2024 – 2025 season. He was observed carrying fish to another tara iti and observers held high hopes for a 2nd pair at Waipu.

Initially RpG-YM would not take the fish. (A young WM-KW and a young PGM-W were initially reluctant to be fed by a male). But the ever-persistent R-YM eventually won the day. RpG-YM began taking fish from him. This perplexed observers because all records they had indicated that RpG-YM was also a male. At first when the fish were being accepted RpG-YM was not having to call for food. R-YM was a good provider. As their courtship progressed RpG-YM began calling for fish (like any tara iti female). This pairing was nicknamed “the yellows” as they both have yellow-metal bands on their right leg.

As a pair, they developed habits around feeding locations and defence of the northern boundary of R-YM’s territory. They also began favouring trial sites at the southern end, trial site 3 and north crater particularly. R-YM made scrapes and they seemed to go through scrape acceptance behaviours with R-YM departing for fish while RpG-YM remained in the scrape. However, R-YM ate most of the fish he brought to the site in the early stages of their courtship.



The Yellows

Photo: Susan Steedman

Their relationship developed to the point where they were changing over – each taking a turn in the favourite scrape.

Observers watched with interest to see what would happen next – keen to see any copulation attempts. However, when these were initiated, total confusion resulted with birds behaving like males (with the calling and head swinging and wings up to mount). Each time this became a non-event.

A dummy egg was placed in the scrape on TS3, and this worked wonders for the actual nesting pair of WM-KW and PGM-YB as it diminished the amount of intraspecific aggression. When as a pair they lost interest in the dummy, they started the whole process over again as if the nest had been lost. (The dummy egg was still in the scrape when they began using Blowout 5.)

From here they were seen foraging in the upper part of the river (well inside the territory of the other male that was busy with chicks). They would fly overland to forage beyond the boat club. This often led to chase off between the 2 males in this pairing. However, it wasn’t a divorce!

R-YM behaved as a “social visitor” showing strong interest in the chicks. He would visit the nest site regularly bringing in fish to tease the chicks. Initially he would be chased off by the parents but as the chicks grew older and started to spend more time on their own, they learned to ignore him and eventually to chase him off. Another interesting behaviour has been observed regularly during the second half of the season: the two males chasing each other with one holding a fish being chased by the other. It was initially thought there was an extra male until it became clear it was R-YM and RpG-YM playing together. Once the chicks were fledged, R-YM and RpG-YM were observed at all of the sites the other pair had used. Their pair bond lasted well into January. After the January storm they were seen at all the sites inside the territory of the nest pair. They seemed to be stamping their mark in most places including the scrapes on trial site 2 (the site of the actual Waipu nest) and at the high tide roost.

Education/Advocacy



Schools in the Vicinity of the breeding grounds

Susan Steedman reports on her school visits....

Every year Jane Vaughan of the New Zealand Fairy Tern Trust has made the link for our educators with Mangawhai Museum so that we are able to take the predators held by the museum to school groups. Tamariki in our rohe get to see just how nasty these introduced mammals are. It is only by seeing their sharp teeth, keen noses and talking about them that students get to understand why they must be removed from the habitats used by our endemic and native taonga species.

Photo: Courtesy Susan Steedman

The students at Waipu Primary recognised the stoat immediately because during their kiwi study they had been read Heather Hunt’s story ‘It’s my egg (and you can’t have it.)’ In this picture book the deadly stoat is eventually caught in the trap that has been set near the burrow. Because of all the work the teachers have done students understand why these creatures need to be caught. In the photograph you can see that students are using their hands to show how big the kiwi is while they look at the size of the stoat in front of them.

The predators have been used with eight different groups of students on this current outing. Most schools in our rohe have traplines students work on during the school year.

Kaiwaka Keas

Jane Vaughan reports...

Recently, I was asked to talk with the Kaiwaka Keas at the Hakaru Hall on a weekday evening. Keas are a youth group aligned to Scouts NZ, organised and run by a dedicated group of local volunteer leaders whose aim is to teach youngsters about the world. My job was to discuss predators of the local wildlife as part of their Nature Badge.

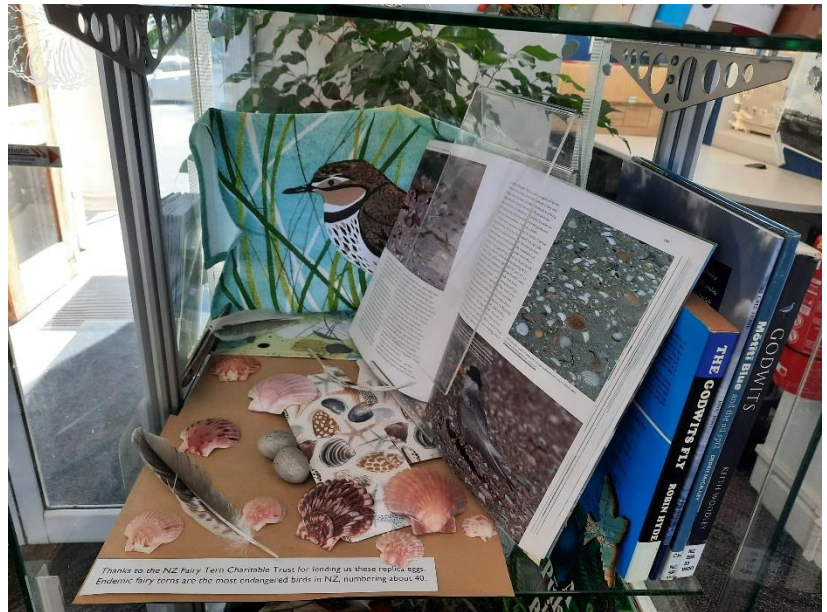
There were about 20 youngsters both male and female ranging in age from 5 to 14. I took along the NZ Fairy Tern Charitable Trust's taxidermied animals which always create a lot of interest! They were all caught on the Mangawhai sand spit by the Trust trapper Reg Whale. There is an enormous feral cat with a snarly face, a large rat, a stoat, weasel, and a hedgehog which does surprise some people. Hedgehogs can travel up to 3 kms per night and delight in eating ground nesting birds' eggs and chicks from under sitting parents.

There were a lot of curly questions and tales of what their families caught in their back yards told with great delight.

The person in charge that evening invited me back as he said he had never seen this group of children sit so still for so long!

Further afield: Grey Lynn Library borrowed the Trust's replica eggs for their Easter display.

Claire Gummer sent these photos



Predators

All our display predators were trapped by Reg Whale who has been a volunteer trapper in the Te Arai – Mangawhai area for many years. The animals have usually spent some time in Jane Vaughan's freezer before being taken to the taxidermist in Kaukapakapa who prepares them to look lifelike and menacing. They are kept in climate-controlled conditions thanks to Mangawhai museum. Allowed to get too hot, they can be very smelly!

In 2012 the Mangawhai Ranger asked Reg for his help as she was noticing a lot of birds being killed by cats and she was having trouble catching them. The Trust obtained funding from Foundation North to set up a trapping programme and contracted Reg Whale to carry it out.



Reg and Kenny, the cat dog

Photo: Darren Markin

From 2013 to 2023 Reg trapped predators on the Mangawhai Sandspit Refuge, working nearly every day in the breeding season and continuing maintenance trapping during the winter. He traps all the target species - rats, hedgehogs, stoats, weasels, ferrets but his success rate with catching feral cats is noteworthy and has no doubt been a major contributor to tara iti breeding success at Mangawhai. In the last two years, DOC has taken over management of predator control on the Wildlife Refuge. Reg has continued his trapping in the Tern Point subdivision, providing a valuable buffer zone, catching predators before they reach the Refuge.

Since 2013 Reg has caught a total of 178 feral cats on the Refuge or Tern Point, including 6 in January this year.

Thanks to....

... **Bennetts Chocolate Factory, Tumbleweed Tees, Bird Plus Bird, Tern Coffee House**, businesses who have made significant, generous donations to the Trust recently. We really value your support and appreciate your generosity.

Thank you too to all those generous individuals who keep supporting us! We couldn't manage without you.

Nelson Café Visit

Trust secretary, Glenys Mather and husband David recently toured the South Island and called in on our friends at the Tern Coffee House in Nelson. Glenys met Mel Paul, the owner and gave her a framed fairy tern print.

Glenys with Mel

Photo: David Mather



Local Government Plans

Local councils are in the process of notifying their plans and opening them for public submissions. We have particular concerns about the Kaipara District Plan because of the number of developments proposed for Mangawhai.

Diane Piesse reports....

The Proposed Plan was publicly notified on 28/04/25. Submissions close on **30 June 2025**

"The District Plan sets the framework for the use, development and management of natural and physical resources throughout the district"

The Plan may affect the protection of the Fairy Tern due to its provisions for development and management of new and existing natural and physical resources.

It is important that we all become aware of the provisions of the Plan and the ways in which it may affect our own properties, parks, natural resources and of course coastal areas where the fairy tern flock, fish and roost.

The Plan can be viewed at Kaipara District Council offices at Dargaville and Mangawhai, and the public libraries at Dargaville and Mangawhai. It can also be accessed on the KDC website: kaipara.govt.nz/kaipara-district-plan-review. Submission forms can be found on the KDC website.

Options for making submissions are: online, email, in person (to pick up a copy of the form) or via post.

Development by Cabra at Black Swamp Road and Raymond Bull Road (Proposed Plan Change 85)

The plan change application was submitted to the Council on 12 December 2024. We expect that the plan change will be notified for public submission sometime in the next few months. During the notification period, any member of the public will have the ability to make a submission on the plan change request and can ask to be heard at a future hearing.

Members of the Trust met the developers to talk about our concern that the development will have an adverse effect on New Zealand fairy terns, because of its proximity to fairy tern breeding and feeding areas.

Potential adverse effects from the development fall into three main categories:

Water quality, disturbance and predators.

Our recommendations:

- Strict earthwork and sediment controls during development as all watercourses on the property flow into the estuary.
- Ongoing monitoring of stormwater, run-off and wastewater to ensure no contaminants enter the estuary.
- To limit disturbance to fairy tern foraging, we recommend that **there be no boat launching facilities from the site.**
- We fully support the proposed ban on cat ownership for residents in the development and the suggested "grandfather" clause for existing properties.
- We agree that dogs must be confined to their own properties through fencing or electronic control and must be on leash at all times when walked.
- We would like to see an overall predator control programme over the entire property with owners encouraged to take an active part in monitoring their own properties.

Once the Plan Change is notified, the Trust along with Trustee, Bryan Clarke will make a submission. We encourage others to do the same.