

Kōkako Report, Tiritiri Matangi Island, 2021-2022 Season



Contractor: Morag Fordham

Season summary

In a 'normal' season monitoring starts in late September or early October. This regime makes it possible to record the outcomes of nearly all nesting attempts and the approximate dates at which significant events (laying, hatching, fledging and nest failure) take place.

However, 2021-22 was far from normal. Covid-19 restrictions meant the Island was closed to volunteers and visitors until mid-November 2021, and overnight stays by volunteers did not begin until early December. This created a backlog of work on all SoTM projects, the impacts of which lasted for most of the breeding season. It was impossible to do any monitoring at all during the first six or seven weeks of the season. Thereafter, the pressure of other work, plus the understandable reluctance of some volunteers to visit the Island under Covid-19 restrictions, meant that it was hard to check pairs as frequently as usual.

Although we don't have an exact day for the start of the season, we do suspect that there were some early breeding attempts, none of which were successful. On a day trip we were able to confirm two nests on 14 November. The season finished with the last chick fledging around 16 February 2022.

There were 19 pairs for most of this season which included one same sex (female) pair who nested once. Eight of these pairs were successful and they produced nine fledged chicks, one of whom had disappeared two days after fledging and the other one within a week of fledging. We now have four female, two male and one unbanded fledgling, sex unknown. By comparison, in 2020-21 there were 18 fledglings, though one disappeared a few days after fledging.

Seven of our established pairs were unsuccessful this season with predation suspected in at least four cases. Three of these involved chicks and the other one was at the egg stage.

Two pairs had swapped mates in the winter of 2021, with the females moving into the males' territories.

At the end of the season one well established pair split up after being together since 2010.

The season finished early with no new nesting attempts after 2 January 2022. This is possibly due to the dry weather later in the summer. In 2020-21, despite being quite dry, there was an abundance of fruit, especially coprosma and māhoe berries, which encouraged the birds to continue breeding late into the season

Details of breeding season

Hemi (RM-WR) and Te Rangi Pai (RM-GR): Te Rangi Pai, who is Hemi's sister was found incubating on 3 December. By 22 December the nest had failed and when checked contained one egg. Although she was found lining another nest on 26 December she never used it.

Te Hari (M-W) and **Phantom** (BW-M): Te Hari turned 24 years old on 4 November and is our oldest kōkako. Phantom was found incubating on 3 December and their chick, **Wraith** (female, GyM-GyJ), fledged on 22 January. Phantom was last seen feeding Wraith on 23 February. By 26 February this well established pair, who had been together since 2010, had broken up and Phantom had started associating with their one-year-old grandson, **Wakei** (WM-YY). Te Hari has since been seen in the area but is keeping a low profile.

Chatters (G-M) and **Te Rae** (OM-JO): They have been together since the 2007-08 season. Te Rae was found incubating on 20 November and by 4 December they had two approximately six-day-old chicks. However, by 9 December this nest had failed. On 18 December Te Rae was found incubating again and by 29 December they had a brood of three chicks which, as far as we know, is a unique occurrence on the Island. The two smaller ones must have died early on as by 13 January only the biggest one was left. By 8 February, **Awenga** (male, GyM-GyY) had fledged.

Parininihi (M/-) and **Wairua** (RM-RG): This was their third season together. Wairua's nest was found on 20 November and initially it was thought that she was incubating. However, she didn't start incubating until the middle of December. Extra cover was added to help protect the nest from predators. By 3 January they had two chicks but one was much smaller and only **Dianella** (female, GyM-GyR) survived and she fledged on 31 January.

Noel (OM-R) and **Rehu** (M-J): Rehu was found incubating on 20 November and by 3 December they were feeding one chick. **Miro** (female, GyM-GR) had fledged by 26 December.

Crown (G M/-) and **Pureora** (GM-R): For the third year running Pureora and Crown had no successful nests. On 26 November Pureora was found incubating but the nest had failed by the 16 December. It contained one small dead chick. On 19 December she was found building a new nest but she never completed it. After this Crown was seen by himself until Pureora finally reappeared on 8 January having not been seen since 26 December. It is highly likely that she had been on a nest which failed.

Sarang (W-M) and **Discovery** (GM-RY): Unlike 2020-21, when Discovery and Sarang's two nests resulted in a total of four fledglings, this season their three known nests all failed. Discovery was found incubating on 26 November but by 4 December this nest had failed. She was found building again on 7 December and was incubating by 12 December. On 29 December half an empty egg shell was found outside the nest and predation is suspected. A new nest was found on 2 January and by 8 January Discovery was incubating. On 27 January they had two small chicks and one unhatched egg but both chicks were found dead on 8 February. It is possible that it had become too hot and dry so the parents abandoned the nest.

Rimu (GM/-) and **Honey** (RM-YY): By the early observed behaviour we can assume Honey had a nest which failed. After this she was found incubating on 20 December and both parents were feeding one chick on 31 December. However by 6 January there was no activity at the nest. When checked the nest was empty indicating the chick was likely predated.

Waipapa (GM-Y) and **Shelly** (RM-R): After three disappointing seasons Waipapa and Shelly were finally successful and fledged one chick. Shelly was found lining her nest on 14 November and was incubating by 25 November. By the 10 December they had two chicks but one was much smaller. Although two chicks were seen in the nest on 29 December only the larger chick, **Whistles** (male, GyM-GyG) fledged about 6 January.

Slingshot (M-WR) and **Jenny** (J-RM): On 28 November Jenny was observed gobbling down food and then disappearing probably off to a nest that was never located. It presumably failed as she was found lining or laying in a new nest on 16 December. She had started incubating by 20 December and they were feeding a chick on 12 January. Extra cover was added to help protect the nest from predators. Slingshot was seen feeding the fledged chick on 16 February but three days later the fledgling had disappeared. This is very disappointing as over the past three seasons they only have one surviving offspring.

Hotu (M-J) and **Haeata** (RM-W): Haeata was found incubating on 14 November and by 4 December they had a chick. Disappointingly, by 27 December the chick had disappeared and predation is suspected. Although they had two fledglings in 2020-21 they did lose two chicks to predation the season before that.

Rakataura (GM-W) and **Aquarius** (RM-GJ): This was their fourth season together and once again they were unsuccessful. In 2020-21 their only chick disappeared shortly after fledging and predation was suspected. By the time we started monitoring this season Aquarius could not be found and we assume she was on a nest which subsequently failed. On 10 December she was found building a nest and had started incubating by 15 December. By 24 December the nest had failed and predation is suspected.

Aquarius started building another nest about 27 December but did not complete it and was found building another nest on 6 January. This was never used. Rakataura has lost his jade band (previously he was GM-WJ).

Ocarina (RM-Y) and **Dawn** (RM-GG): In 2020-21 Ocarina and Skye finally fledged a chick so it was disappointing that they split up during the winter of 2021 and Ocarina paired up with his younger sister, Dawn. On 20 November Dawn was found building a nest and she was incubating by 25 November. As it was her first season it was no surprise that she continued to incubate for about a week after any chicks would have hatched. The failed nest contained one egg.

Sapphire (JM-WW) and **Pūtōrino** (GM-JW): This was their third season together and this time round they fledged two chicks. On 9 December Pūtōrino was found incubating in a very high nest and chicks were confirmed by 27 December. By 28 January the parents were feeding two fledglings. However, by 4 February one fledgling had disappeared. As the nest could not be accessed we have one unbanded juvenile, sex unknown. It is hoped that we will eventually be able to catch, band and sex this bird.

Apato (GM-JR) and **Koto** (RM-JG): In the middle of November Koto completed a nest that she had started building in spring 2020 and by 26 November they were feeding two chicks. Although two chicks were banded only one, **Koekoe** (female, GyM-GG), fledged on 3 January.

Tama (RM-WG) and **Te Hia** (WM-YW): After Pounamu disappeared in early February 2021 Tama remained on his own. This season we found him paired up with one-year-old Te Hia who is Apato and Koto's daughter. Although she was found building a nest on 22 December this was never used.

Lyric (WM-RY) and **Waitangi** (GM-Y): This was their second season together. Waitangi was found incubating on 21 November but by 5 December the nest had failed. It contained eggs which were presumably non-viable. She built another nest but this too failed. On 21 December both birds were found building a third nest and by 28 December Waitangi was incubating. By the middle of January they appeared to be feeding a chick or chicks but by 22 January the nest had failed. It was a high nest and poorly covered so either predation or the hot weather might have caused this. Waitangi has lost her jade band (previously she was GM-JY).

Bátor (WM-JR) and **Skye** (GM-WW): In 2020-21 Skye was with Ocarina and they had one fledgling. Bátor is Te Hari and Phantom's two-year-old son and five-year-old Skye is Crown and Pureora's daughter. She was found incubating on 9 December and by 26 December they were feeding chicks. However, on 5 January the nest was found abandoned. When checked it contained the remains of two dead chicks. Perhaps it got too hot for Skye and the chicks.

Erenora (RM-RY) and **Yindi** (WM-GG): This season these three-year-old females stayed together, as they had in 2020-21. On 4 December they were seen trying to build a nest platform. This was not continued and on 23 December Erenora was found incubating in a new nest with Yindi visiting with food. By 30 December both Erenora and Yindi were incubating together and being visited by **Tātākī** (RM-YG), Chatters and Te Rae's one-year-old son. He appeared to be more interested in Erenora, who is his sister. By 13 January the nest containing two eggs had been abandoned. On 6 March Tātākī was seen with Erenora; Yindi may have been nearby but this was not confirmed.

Other birds

Oran (2018-19 female, GM-GY, Rimu and Honey's daughter) appears to have settled into a small territory near Slingshot and Jenny's territory. Since March she has been seen with her one-year-old brother **Haar** (GM-RJ).

Mānuka (2018-19 female, GM-YJ, Rimu and Honey's daughter) was seen occasionally usually around the top part of Wharf Road. Sadly on the 4 April she was found dead in this location. There was no sign of an injury but she was underweight.

The unbanded bird (2018-19, Crown and Pureora's offspring) of unknown gender has not been seen this season and is presumed dead.

Sixteen of our seventeen fledglings from 2020-21 have been accounted for. In addition to Te Hia, Tātākī, Wakei and Haar they are, **Rēkohu** (GM-YR), **Riki** (RM-WY), **Te Kōkī** (RM-JW), **Honesty** (GM-YG), **Minstrel** (WM-JW), **Joy** (WM-WY), **Hina** (RM-JY), **Marihi** (RM-YW), **Sunny** (YM-YY), **Atarau** (WM-JY), **Aroha** (YG-GM) and **Wai Ata** (GM-RW). Unfortunately Parininihi and Wairua's son **Ariki** (RM-GW) has not been seen.

Summary of transfers to/from the Island

There have been no transfers to or from Tiritiri Matangi this season.

Population summary

As far as we can tell, during the 2021-22 season we had a maximum of 55 adult kōkako on the Island, 25 males and 30 females. With the loss of one female and the addition of this season's fledglings, this gives us, at the beginning of April 2022, a likely total of 61 (27 males, 33 females and one sex unknown).

Future actions

In the longer term, we will continue to manage the population as best we can to optimise its genetic composition. Translocations both on and off the Island could continue to play a role in this, especially if there are other sites that wish to receive birds from us. This will not happen until a current rāhui has been lifted. We are looking at the possibility of egg swaps with the Hunua Ranges.

Birds present at some stage during the 2021-22 season

Territorial pairs in 2021-22				Unpaired birds, March 2022			
Male	Bands	Female	Bands	Male	Bands	Female	Bands
Hemi	RM-WR	Te Rangi Pai	RM-GR	Haar	GM-RJ	Oran	GM-GY
Te Hari	M-W	Phantom	BW-M	Tātākī	RM-YG	Mānuka	GM-YJ
Chatters	G-M	Te Rae	OM-JO	Wakei	WM-YY	Minstrel	WM-JW
Parininihi	M--	Wairua	RM-RG	Rēkohu	GM-YR	Joy	WM-WY
Noel	OM-R	Rehu	M-J	Riki	RM-WY	Hina	RM-JY
Crown	GM--	Pureora	GM-R	Te Kōkī	RM-JW	Marihi	RM-YW
Sarang	W-M	Discovery	GM-RY	Honesty	GM-YG	Sunny	YM-YY
Rimu	GM-	Honey	RM-YY	Awenga	GyM-GyY	Atarau	WM-JY
Waipapa	GM-Y	Shelly	RM-R	Whistles	GyM-GyG	Aroha	YG-GM
Slingshot	M-WR	Jenny	J-RM			Wai Ata	GM-RW
Hotu	M-J	Haeata	RM-W			Miro	GyM-GR
Rakataura	GM-W	Aquarius	RM-GJ			Koekoe	GyM-GG
Sapphire	JM-WW	Pūtōrino	GM-JW			Wraith	GyM-GyJ
Ocarina	RM-Y	Dawn	RM-GG			Dianella	GyM-GyR
Apato	GM-JR	Koto	RM-JG				
Tama	RM-WG	Te Hia	WM-YW				
Lyric	WM-RY	Waitangi	GM-Y				
Bátor	WM-JR	Skye	GM-WW	One unbanded bird of unknown gender			
				Female-female pair in 2021-22			
					Bands		Bands
				Erenora	RM-RY	Yindi	WM-GG

Fledglings from 2021-22 are shown in green.

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