



On a lovely Hawkes Bay day Branch members meet at the Water Bar on West Quay Ahuriri. The view over the water and boats toward the slightly snow topped hills was stunning. As Members arrived, they were entertained with a continuous slideshow of old historical photos of the area, showing old ships, wharves, trade, and the area joined to the north by a bridge across the lagoon as the area was underwater prior to the 1931 earthquake. Faye also created very informative Ahuriri history table mats for our lunch.

This area is of significance to Hawkes Bay Founders as several years ago our branch funded an information post to commemorate the arrival of the first settlers to Hawkes Bay which was erected to celebrate our branch 40th anniversary.

After a delicious lunch, our guest speaker, Bev Wilkinson, Husbandry Manager at Napier's Kiwi Crèche, located not far from our meeting venue, gave us a fascinating talk supported by her PowerPoint presentation. Bev has been working with Kiwis for over 20 years in various roles and locations.



The main function of the crèche is to rear kiwi chicks that have been hatched at the National Kiwi Hatchery in Rotorua. In the wild, kiwi chicks have only a 5% chance of surviving to breeding age, so this is a vital conservation programme.

Interestingly, in the wild it is the male kiwi who solely incubates the eggs, a process that takes about 78 days. In hatcheries, the males are left with the eggs for around 65 days, after which the eggs are transferred to incubators for the final 10 days before hatching.

Although there are five species of kiwi, the Eastern Brown Kiwi is the one nurtured at the Napier facility due to its local presence.

The chicks stay in the crèche until they weight 1 kilo which means they can survive attacks from stoat, weasels and cat but not dogs. Each kiwi has its own run but sometimes due to the numbers they have to share. They are not always happily with their run mates. The crèche sometimes has 60 chicks at a time. The sizes of the males is approx. 1.8 to 2kgs and the females 3 to 4kgs. The females lay eggs of about 500gm up to 6 times a year.

In 1995 the first eggs taken from the Tongariro Forest and hatch in a baby incubator. The technic they used was the same as for ostriches, so much more has been learnt since those early days. Up until this programme the kiwi population was halving every 10 years. There are about 70000 kiwi now. To keep this programme going it cost \$8000 to \$10000 a year to raise each chick. They have special diet made up of beef, ox heart, cat biscuits, vegies, fruit and vitamins to supplement what they can forage.



The season in Napier starts in September/October. Since the Napier crèche opened 246 have been raised and released. The kiwis from this crèche are usually released into the Maungataniwha Native Forest after they have had a chip inserted. While they are not monitored, the chip identifies them if they meet with tragic circumstances, cars, dogs etc. DOC run Kiwi Avoidance Training for dog owners in conjunction with Save the Kiwi. This is especially important to hunters and other recreational people with dogs in our forests.

In case you need help for your next quiz: A group of kiwis are called a Tribe. Kiwi have loose feathers. They have whiskers. and nostrils at the end of their beaks. Kiwi have marrow in their bones making them more like mammals and very strong. Kiwi are the only bird with two functioning ovaries.

For more information and how to help <https://savethekiwi.nz>

Brian Field thanked Bev for her great presentation which was so informative about this special bird.

Chris K