

Outside Orokonui Robin Project: summary report 2019 – 2020

Otago Birds NZ members have been monitoring South Island robins in a privately-owned mixed forest block adjacent to Orokonui Ecosanctuary since 2016, but 2019 was the first year that we operated under authorisation to band robins with unique colour band combinations. The project aims to ascertain whether robins are successfully establishing a self-sustaining population outside the Ecosanctuary's mammalian predator exclusion fence and to provide Birds NZ members with the opportunity to progress nest monitoring and bird capture and handling skills. The project, expected to continue for a further 4 years, has received PAF funding to cover costs.

In 2019, 10 Birds NZ members were involved with helping to locate birds, train them to come to mealworms, find nests and monitor their outcome. As visits to the site were fortnightly, we focussed our efforts on monitoring the nesting attempts of four pairs. Six nests were found, two of which fledged young and four of which failed before fledging. In addition, we were fairly sure that there was another nest at the beginning of the season that we did not find before it failed. We could not establish the cause of failure of most of the failed nests, but a nestling with a damaged skull was found outside one nest, suggesting predation was the likely cause of failure there. Preliminary nest survival analysis indicates that although overall nest survival was higher than in previous years it remained relatively low. Five robins were banded by a Level 2 bander on the team: 4 breeding adults (2M and 2F) and one recently fledged juvenile bird.

The 2020 monitoring season will start in mid-August when we hope to resight the banded birds and continue with banding and nest monitoring, with the help of nest cameras borrowed from The Halo Project. The presence of Level 3 banders on site will also enable upskilling of Birds NZ members who hold L1 and L2 certification.



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