

Roroo distribution northwest Nelson

Sandy and Robin Toy

Roroo or great spotted kiwi are declining at about 2% a year. A primary goal of the Kiwi Recovery Plan is to turn this decline to a 2% per annum increase. However, obtaining reliable distribution data necessary for effective management is challenging for a secretive, nocturnal species that is largely restricted to remote mountainous habitat. We have used acoustic recorders (Figure 1) to:

- determine the current distribution and relative abundance of roroo across 650,000 ha of northwest Nelson
- compare the current distribution with that determined 20-30 years ago
- provide a baseline against which to assess future changes in distribution and population of roroo in northwest Nelson
- increase understanding and support for roroo by involving conservation professionals and volunteers in deploying acoustic recorders.

The Birds New Zealand Research Fund has enabled us to deploy recorders in areas that have previously been inaccessible and fill crucial gaps in our understanding.

Key findings from the study are:

- The NW Nelson population comprises two discrete groups separated by a gap of some 30 km
- The core of the distribution with high kiwi call rates is smaller than previously thought
- Roroo range extends from sub-alpine scrub and tussock down, in many areas to the pasture/forest boundary – roroo are not restricted to more remote areas.

The study was also supported by Kiwis for Kiwi, by several groups who have loaned recorders and by numerous individuals whose assistance and commitment in placing recorders through the back country is gratefully acknowledged.

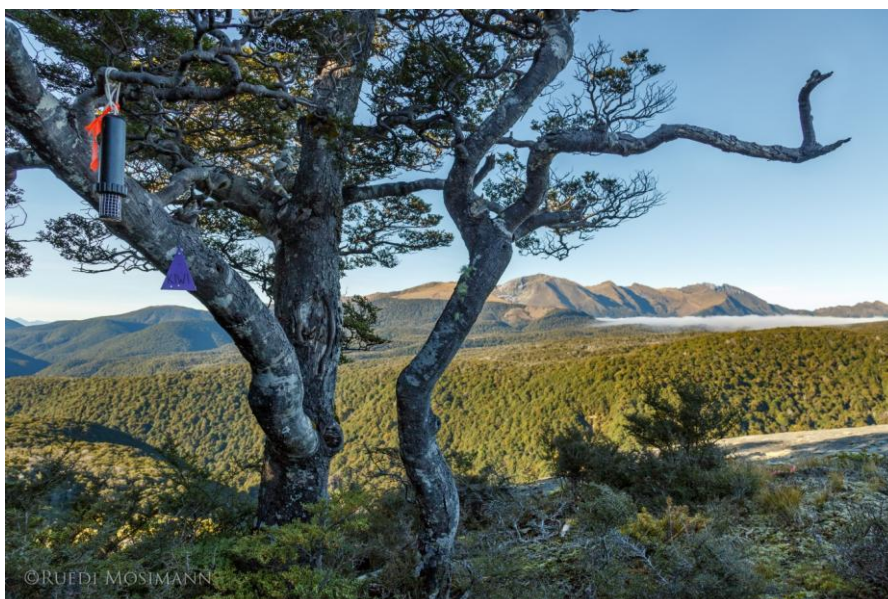


Figure1: Acoustic recorder deployed at Deep Creek, Kahurangi National Park (photo Ruedi Mosimann)



Figure 2: This picture of a female roroa calling outside her nest is taken from a Friends of Flora infrared nestcam video.