

Getting close and personal with Kiwi

A couple of years ago, Nga Hapu o Rawhiti (Ipipiri, Eastern Bay of Islands) met with the Behavioural Ecology and Conservation Group (BECG; Massey University) to exchange knowledge. This encounter led to a successful application to BNZRF, with funding used to train members of the Hapu to handle and monitor brown kiwi and members of BECG to learn about Maori culture. Funding was divided to complete two multi-day field training trips for several kai mahi. In the first one, members of both teams got together to work with brown kiwi in the BECG's study site. Six kai mahi from Te Rawhiti (Alvin Rewha, Rana Rewha, Teina Hook, Robert McPherson and Wiremu Henare led by Richard Witehira) are kiwi practitioners as a result of training and will be able to work with brown kiwi and train others in their own rohe, Cape Brett (Figure 1). Two children joined us, Te Taonga Hook and Ashleigh Witehira. Te Taonga (7) was very excited about working with kiwi showing great potential: a Kai mahi in the making. He was able under supervision to help with every part of the project from handling kiwi to writing notes. It shows the importance of whanau work and starting early in life.



Figure 1: a) Team photo; b) BECP, Massey University, students Maria Ortiz and Imke Askevold with Alvin Rewha, and Teina and Te Taonga Hook with Natasha Peters transmitterising kiwi. c) Rob McPherson, Teina Hook and Alvin Rewha measuring a kiwi. Wiremu Henare, Rob McPherson, and Rana Rewha transmitterising a kiwi. e) Richard Witehira attaching a transmitter under supervision of kiwi practitioner Jess Hiscox. f) Father/son team Teina and Te Taonga Hook releasing a pair of kiwi (Photos by Leah Rivendell, Natasha Peters and I Castro).

For the second training session Te Hapu o Te Rawhiti went to Te Teko, Whakatane to work with Tuhoë and Ngati Awa who run the Omataroa Kiwi Trust. The kai mahi caught several kiwi, helped with pest control and with their annual kiwi call survey. Eight Kaimahi participated in this trip: including the team above plus B.J. Black and Russell Hook (Figure 2).



Figure 2. a) Alvin Rewha Catching kiwi with the Tuhoë whanau. b) BJ Black with kiwi at Te Teko. c) Russell Hook, Alvin Rewha and Teina Hook at Te Teko on a cold evening before embarking on a kiwi call survey. Photos Bird Relocation Ipipiri.

Richard Witehira and his hapu are developing a programme with DoC, the Regional Council and community groups to protect and enhance the biodiversity in Ipipiri (Bay of Islands). The training provided here is central to the management of wildlife, especially kiwi, in their rohe.