



The
KĀREAREA
PROJECT 

2024 - 2025
BREEDING SEASON SUMMARY



Kia ora koutou,

We wanted to provide a brief summary of how the past spring and summers kārearea conservation research work has gone to all of you, our project partners.

Safe to say that we have had our best season yet. We covered more ground, found more kārearea breeding pairs, followed more nests and marked more females than in previous seasons. This all amounts to a lot of learning that can be used for the conservation management of kārearea in the Upper Clutha Basin, and South Island High Country.

Our achievements this season is in no small part to the very welcome addition of Tom Reeves to the team. Tom was previously with the Southern Lakes Sanctuary. Now with Real NZ, Tom contributes part-time to the Kārearea Project, and is a force of smiling enthusiasm.

Ewan, Kalinka and Graham continue to work on the project, in addition to some keenly observant landowners and residents.

Despite working around the various lambing requirements, we mostly found nests soon after laying. The quality of the data we got is therefore much stronger than when we find nests late in the nesting cycle. This is because we want to know how many nests are failing at the incubating egg stage.

- We have continued the expansion of our working area; Cardrona Valley to West Wānaka to Hāwea and over to Luggate.
- In addition we're recording kārearea activity in the Wākitipu Basin. Kārearea are throughout the area, but pin-pointing where they choose to frequent takes a day or two of effort, and sometimes more.



Tom Reeves in action; all smiles

- This season we followed 14 kārearea nests (from 14 pairs), and followed a further five pairs that either didn't nest, or their nests failed early before we could determine the location. Twelve of the 14 nests fledged chicks successfully. A very encouraging result.
- With one of the two nests that failed, the female was not seen again. During a nest check, we observed the female attempt to capture a stoat very close to their nest on the ground. Despite capturing the stoat twice, the female lost it both times. The next time we visited the nest no activity was recorded, so we eventually approached the nest and only found eggshells. The second nest failed due to hedgehog attack. We are finding hedgehogs to be a very aggressive kārearea nest predator.
- The earliest eggs were laid this season was in the first two weeks of September. A week or two later than previous seasons.



An adult female leg-banded this past season. She's now known as green-yellow / metal.

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- The first nest fledged chicks in November, and the latest nest fledged chicks in late January.
 - 23 kārearea chicks fledged from the 14 nesting attempts.
 - Anectodtally, and not surprisingly, kārearea nests have a better chance of success if they're on steep ground, or a cliff. Presumably because fewer introduced mammalian nest predators get to them. Despite having our abseiling tickets to access birds nests, we choose to not put cameras on those nests as we think we'll disturb the birds for too long, and risk dislodging rocks etc onto the nest scrape.
 - We continued to focus on capturing and marking (leg-banding) kārearea, with a focus on females. This is because we are concerned that female survival is lower than male survival rates. The larger of the two sexes, female kārearea are well documented to suffer electrocution in electrical infrastructure, particularly uninsulated transformers
- Incidents of window and vehicle strike, as well as the shooting of one adult falcon, was detected this season. We presume we only detect a small proportion of these events. How to reduce these, and prevent Wānaka from being a population sink for the species, is a challenge.
 - Kārearea are found from the residential area of Wānaka through to the far back country.
 - We gave several talks to school and community groups throughout this breeding season and had several articles published in local and regional news outlets.
 - The number of sightings submitted through the project online portal and the numbers of calls/texts/emails that we receive from members of the public continues to grow and is a very encouraging sign of the level of community engagement that the project has developed.

Plans for next two seasons

- More of the same, but a larger number of pairs will almost certainly be located early, and followed through the season.
- We also have an application in with DOC to allow us to do some GPS tracking of the birds, to understand how they interact with features in the environment, and the risk associated with some of their spatial behaviours.

Thank you

The project couldn't be possible without the generous support of many individuals, businesses and the wider community. An especial thanks to the Cardrona Distillery who's ongoing support enabled our team to dedicate so much time to the project, and for us to increase our scope in general.



Four approximately 5 - 7 day old kārearea chicks in their nest-scape. This is a common nesting location; on the ground and underneath a large schist rock.



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