

CASE STUDY WHANGAREI HEADS LANDCARE FORUM SAVING KIWI



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Written by Yuki Fuduki on behalf of NZ Landcare Trust, 2012.
www.landcare.org.nz

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Community Group:

Whangarei Heads Landcare Forum (WHLF)

Location: Northland

Area: 6000 ha

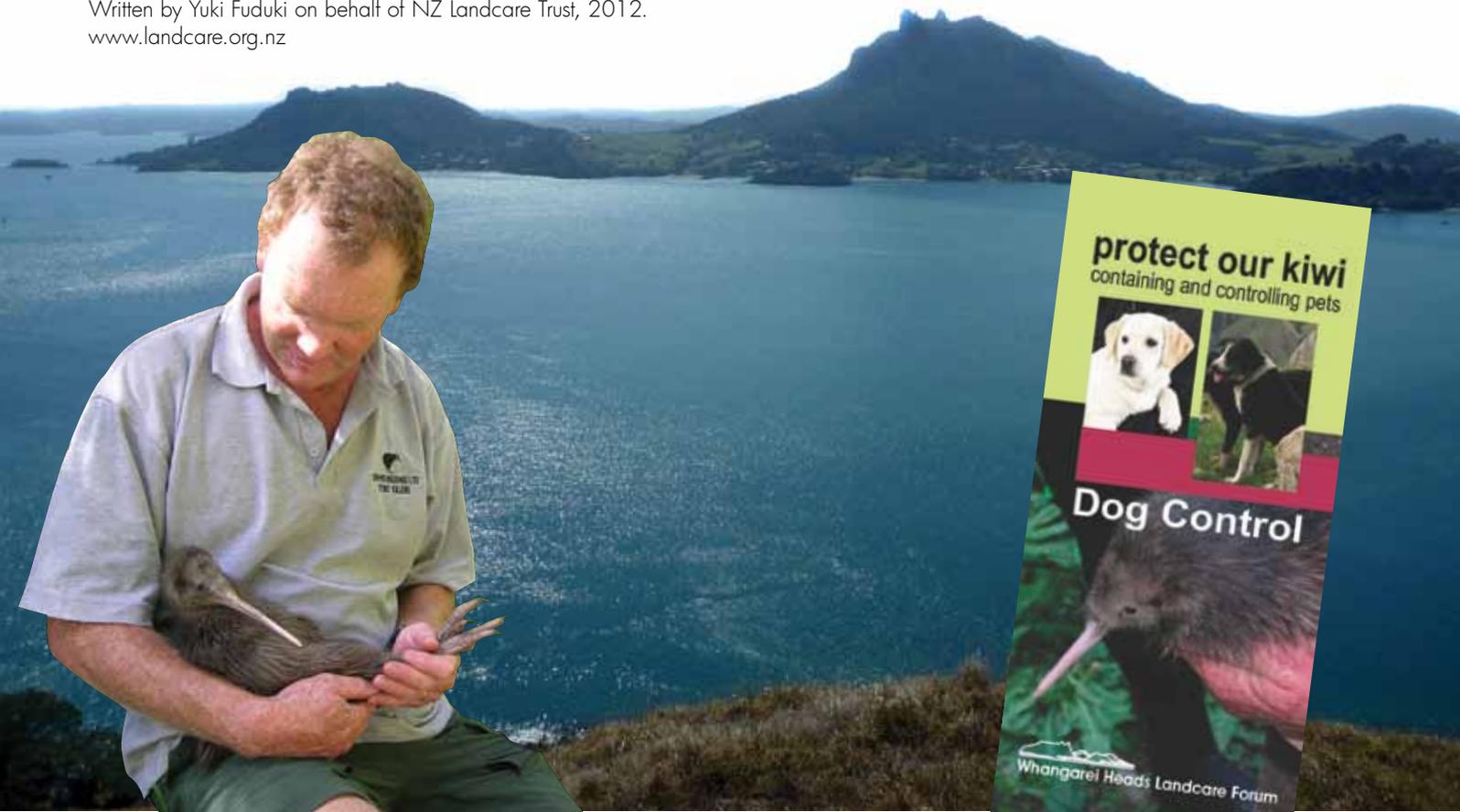
Biodiversity enhanced and restored by:

- ✓ Controlling animal pests (stoats, feral cats, weasels, ferrets, possums and rats)
- ✓ Advocating for dog control
- ✓ Weed control
- ✓ Native tree nursery and revegetation
- ✓ Estuary enhancement and riparian planting
- ✓ Providing opportunities for the landowners to interact with kiwi

Gains:

- ✓ Northland North Island Brown Kiwi numbers increased
- ✓ Increased native wildlife and plant populations, including rare and threatened species
- ✓ Native forests restored to a healthy state
- ✓ Engaged and informed landowners

Images (left to right): Todd Hamilton holding a kiwi ready for release at Whangarei Heads. Whangarei Heads where community groups are protecting kiwi. Photo: WHLF. Brochures encourage people to control their dogs so the kiwi population is maintained.



So far, we have looked at five case studies of individual landowners taking action to enhance biodiversity conservation and economic performance of their farms. This final case study shows how a collective of landowners can make an even bigger difference.

Whangarei Heads is a special place, featuring a mosaic of coastal forests, shrublands, farms and life-style blocks set amongst a dramatic landscape of rocky spires and windswept headlands. There are more than 50 threatened animal and plant species, including kiwi, living in the Whangarei Heads area.

Eighty kiwi remained in the area in 2001, but their numbers were declining due to predators. As various landowners became aware that kiwi still lived in their backyards, they decided they wanted to do the right thing – keep the kiwi there for much, much longer. A Landcare Group was formed with the aim of protecting kiwi from predators and ensuring the bird's survival.

Over time, up to a dozen Landcare Groups formed to care for their 'patch' of Whangarei Heads. Some targeted plant and animal pest control, others native tree planting. With the help of NZ Landcare Trust, they combined to form a legal entity (incorporated society) to provide a platform which helped coordinate the Landcare Groups in the area. This ensured that each group could still maintain their individual focus, while kiwi recovery was more effectively coordinated and funded across the entire area.

Backyard Kiwi bumper stickers, billboards and postcards now appear around the Whangarei Heads area to remind residents and visitors to be on the lookout.
Illustration: Heather Hunt

Kiwi recovery started with predator control for kiwi chick survival. However, monitoring of kiwi mortality elsewhere in Northland revealed that uncontrolled dogs were responsible for 70% of kiwi deaths. Controlling dogs of any size or breed and reducing their numbers was a key to kiwi survival. Talking with other landowners and raising awareness got them interested in taking actions in their backyard as well – and that's how the project has got bigger and better.

WHLF has attracted funding from organisations including Northland Regional Council, BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust and Biodiversity Funds. Signs were put up to promote caring for 'Kiwi in Your Backyard'. Schools were visited. Predators were controlled day and night.

The kiwi responded as a result of this care. Their population has grown to 400 in 2011. These collective efforts have also benefited many other native species, such as kaka, bellbird and blue penguin.

For more information, check out the website www.backyardkiwi.org.nz

One person's effort can go far. But if you combine the efforts of everyone who cares, they can take you much further and achieve a much bigger goal. Find out what's living in your backyard – whether it's tui or tree fuchsia, you might be surprised to find a New Zealand treasure that does not exist anywhere else in the world.

Community members gather at a recent kiwi release in the area.
Photo: Suzy Barlow

