



Bryn, ready to pounce. Photo: Vanessa Mander

## Tūi update: Feb 2016

Over the last year the tūi population on Banks Peninsula has enjoyed both successes and losses, but the birds appear to be holding their own in both Akaroa and Okuti Valley. Monitoring work has been bolstered by 2014/15 summer scholar student Bryn Williams, followed by MSc student Vanessa



Watchful mum, hungry babies.  
Photo: Bryn Williams

Mander (whose actual research project focuses on Great Spotted Kiwi). Between them they've followed the dramas of tūi life through two breeding seasons.

The 2014/15 breedings season ultimately proved quite successful for the pairs that were monitored. In Akaroa, Fred, Ginny, Nikau and Kit were all known to be paired with unbanded birds, while Tooe and Fleur formed the only known double-banded pair aside from Dot & Dash in Okuti Valley. By February 2015, Bryn had monitored 7 nests which produced

a total of 16 fledglings. A further 7 fledglings were found (although their nests were never located), bringing the total number of tūi fledged in Akaroa and Okuti Valley to at least 23. Dot & Dash were particularly successful, fledging 2 nest-fuls of 3 chicks each before the season ended.

Twenty tūi were banded in June 2015: 13 in Akaroa/Takamatua and 7 in Okuti Valley. True to the pattern seen in previous years, the newly-banded birds tended to be seen regularly after banding, and



Rodger prefers not to share.  
Photo: Vanessa Mander

some were soon known to have made return trips between Akaroa and Okuti Valley. On one day in June, Alison Evans in Okuti Valley sighted a number of visitors at her feeder, including Hiringa, Tobes, possibly Helps, and our favourite wanderer The Bishop! Ali Baba has also been back and forth at least once.



I really think you're big enough to feed yourself.... Photo: Gill and Trevor Bedford

Several of these new recruits have been monitored over the subsequent breeding season. Pairs found in Akaroa over the last five months include Janna & Ali Baba, Bryn & Ginny, and Ada, Fred and Gracie all paired with unbanded partners. Five double-unbanded pairs have also been located, some with fledglings. Louie and Laurie were sighted with smaller (female?) unbanded birds early in the season, but it is unknown whether they nested.



Gracie's been looking after three fledglings and looks rather frazzled. I'm sure plenty of mums can relate. Photo: Laurie Richards

### Cheeky Fantails!



Gill and Trevor Bedford had some unusual houseguests in Takamatua!

*"One evening, two fantails continually tapped on our window. We couldn't work out what the noise was initially, and then they did it again the following night, so Trev opened the window and they flew in. They ended up huddled together on our clothes rack above the stove and remained there for the night. The next morning we opened the window and off they flew!"*

### Since our last update:

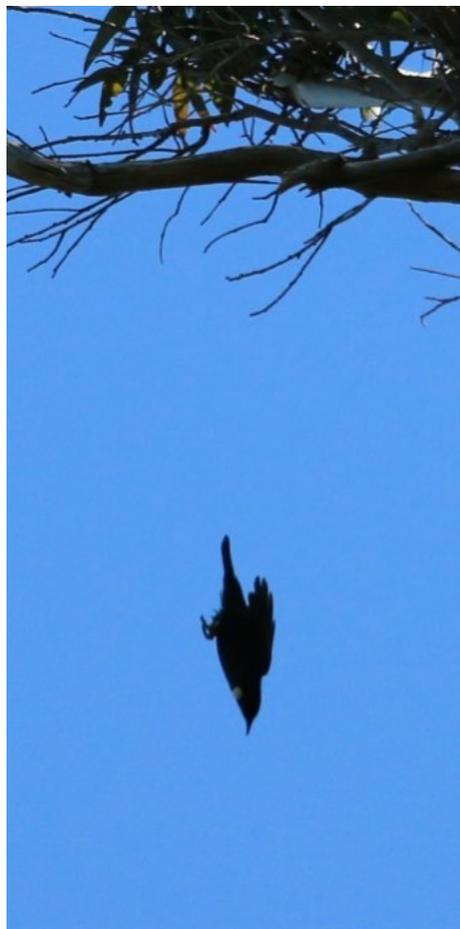
Number of 2010 tūi seen	7
Number of 2009 tūi seen	3
Number of new tūi banded	21

In Okuti Valley, at least four pair were known or suspected to be nesting, including Dot & Dash and Oke One & Cyclops. Murray and Thora were each paired with an unbanded partner.

So far we know of at least 16 fledglings, plus Skippy (whose story is told on page 3 of this update!). Additional fledglings often turn up at feeders in late February/early March, so we suspect the total will rise before Autumn arrives.

### Purple Peak Curry Reserve

Aside from our regular monitoring work that focuses on Akaroa and Okuti Valley, we continue to receive reports from residents in both of these areas and other spots around the Peninsula. In December, Hugh Wilson reported a tūi near the Hinewai visitors' centre and others frequenting the area around the Otanerito Homestead. In addition, he noted that up to 5 tūi are seen "nearly every time we are working" in the new Purple Peak Curry Reserve. Protection



Ali Baba goes for broke. (Yes, the photo is right-side up!) Photo: Vanessa Mander

of this area will certainly be welcomed by the tūi – they settled in to the then-future reserve quickly after their release in 2009/10. Tūi were reported regularly by Mae Curry during Karen Middlemiss' spell as a summer scholar in 2010/11; Mae also remembered the tūi being around in her younger days on the Curry Farm.

### Soldiering on!

Over the last few years we've had a few tūi surprise us with their resilience in the face of injury. Cyclops, for example, was initially sighted with one eye so badly injured that he couldn't have been able to see with it. However, he fully recovered and has gone one to be a regular commuter between Akaroa and Okuti. Thora, another Okuti resident, has survived for nearly two years now despite one non-functional leg. Most



Miro and his wonky wing. Even the sparrow admires his tenacity! Photo: Laurie Richards  
remarkable is Miro, a 2010 releasee who was first sighted with a wonky wing (and noticeably awkward flight) in December of that year. More than 5 years later he's still going strong and looking otherwise healthy!

### Obituaries

Sadly, we also have several tūi deaths to report from the last year. Two birds, Oke One and Tooee, appear to have succumbed to disease. We have consulted with the wildlife veterinary team at



Café culture, Winter 2015. Photo: Laurie Richards

## Sighted since our last report:

### 2010 releasees:

Joseph, Kahutaiki, Gabriella, Miro, Lill (unconfirmed), Takamatua, Georgina

### 2009 releasees:

Kahurangi, Kopata, Louie and a possible sighting of Helps

### Newly banded in 2015:

Rodger, Ada, Hiringa, Tobes, Janna, Buster, Bryn, Rita, Gracie, Ali Baba, Hughie, Poi, Clare, Murray and six additional, as-yet-unnamed birds in Okuti Valley. Also newly banded (in 2016) is Skippy (see separate story!).

### Peninsula-banded birds:

Yakka, Parson, Roryluca, Remi, Thora, Trevor, Cyclops, Kit, Fred, Laurie, Ginny, Charlie, The Bishop, Tooee, Jonesy, Fleur, Dash, Dot, Lester, Yeah Right! and Dave

## ...plus many unbanded birds.

In addition to the funding support provided by donors, tūi sponsors, and the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust, we are grateful for support from Brian Mason Scientific and Technical Trust for funding of operating costs and field assistance for monitoring.

Massey University and they have noted that this could be due to a combination of naturally-occurring environmental factors and the stress of the breeding season. More alarmingly, we have had three additional birds – Parson, Yakka and an unbanded bird – that were known or likely to have died due to window/glass balustrade strike. (We know of at least one other bird striking a window but recovering enough to fly off again under her own power.) In combination with previous deaths, this makes glass the biggest known source of mortality for Peninsula tūi. If tūi frequent the area around your house, please consider taking measures to reduce the risk of glass strike. This may include using UV-reflective tape or decals (but note that they must be closely-spaced to be effective) and/or placing furniture, plants or other objects against glass balcony/deck surrounds.

We have also, unfortunately, had a confirmed cat predation. Ada (who, to our surprise, turned out to be male) was killed by a cat in November. We strongly encourage cat owners with visiting tūi to keep cats indoors if possible. If you have seen a feral cat, please contact the Trust, and they will put you in touch with someone who can assist.

### Skippy de do da...

–by Vanessa Mander

Skippy's nest was one I took great pains to discover. The unbanded



The ground: an unsuitable location for a chick that can't quite fly. Photo: Vanessa Mander

parent tūi were both attentive and secretive, a great start for chick rearing. Unfortunately, on a hot December day, several weeks after hatching, the parent's behaviour had changed. This puzzled me at first until I discovered they were feeding the chick on the ground. Being an urban environment with plenty of predators, it was unlikely that this chick would last long in its current position so the decision was made to try and get him back in his nest. This process saw both Kit and I defending ourselves from the extremely irate parents. Tragically, the chick's nest-mate was found dead (with no evidence of predation), and the live chick continued to spring upwards, out of the nest and back to the ground. At this point it was clear that the chick would not survive under those conditions so he returned to Christchurch for rearing and was christened "Skippy". The sex is unknown due to the chick's age but for the ease of storytelling, I refer to Skippy as a "he."

Susan Shannon, our tui veterinarian, started the feeding cycle (not unlike a demanding newborn) and when Skippy was stable a week later, he went to grow through the 'tween' ages with local bird rescuer Jackie Stevenson. As he matured, he began to feed himself with flowering flaxes and was slowly weaned away from the hand feeding that he had become accustomed to.

Skippy was released back in Akaroa on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 after a

short stint in a beautiful makeshift aviary with yet another "aunty and uncle", Rob and Kit Grigg. The release was greeted with much fanfare and support from the community and maybe just a tear or two from all his carers. It just goes to show that it truly takes a village to raise a child.



Skippy quickly adapted to his elegant "halfway house" in Akaroa. Photo: Laurie Richards



Skippy is off to see the world! Photo: Laurie Richards

Many thanks to all tūi spotters, and to Alison, Simon, Gill, Trev, Rob and Kit for allowing us to band birds on their properties in 2015.

A big thank you also to Jackie Stevenson for fostering Skippy, and to Susan Shannon for generously providing veterinary services.

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