



Wildlands Wellington News December 2013

An update on our people and the services we provide.

Wildlands: providing outstanding ecological services to sustain and improve our environments.

In the news this quarter: Wildlands expertise with fauna surveys and relocation.

Fauna surveys

Why fauna surveys?

Fauna surveys are needed to assess the biodiversity values of our special places. Fauna surveys are carried out to monitor the abundance and distribution of species. They help to identify which sites have high biodiversity and should be looked after. For example, to assess potential impacts of a proposed development, and help to design appropriate mitigation. Long-term monitoring can identify trends to inform management decisions and opportunities for further investigation.

Many Wildlands staff have special expertise with New Zealand fauna. This means that we can help you with information and advice about lizards, birds, bats, invertebrates, freshwater fish, and pest animals.

Why employ a specialist?

Fauna surveys are best undertaken by people with appropriate skills. Some species of fauna are hard to find, or look similar to other species. Surveys need to follow accepted guidelines and protocols, including data analysis. If

protocols are not followed then findings may be challenged.



Permits are required to handle many of our indigenous fauna. Wildlands staff either hold these permits or can apply for them for your project.

Wildlands has a wide range of modern electronic equipment for use when carrying out fauna surveys.

We also undertake the capture and translocation of fauna.

Lizards

There are two types of lizard in New Zealand, skinks and geckos. Skinks have smooth shiny skin and are often seen in our gardens. They can be found using pitfall traps (adjacent photo) which need to be checked daily, or artificial cover objects (ACOs), which can be left out for long periods.

Geckos are seen less often because they tend to live in trees. They have matt skin that feels soft and silky. You can sometimes find them by wrapping trees with closed cell foam and waiting for up to a year (photo top centre).

There are many ways to search for and monitor lizards. It helps a lot if, like our specialists, you know the places they are likely to be and can distinguish between a native skink and an Australian rainbow skink (photo top right).

Wildlands has undertaken lizard surveys for subdivisions, wind farms, and roading projects, including translocations of lizards to new safe locations.

Invertebrates

A diverse range of species perform many vital roles, from pollination to waste processing. Invertebrates (e.g. mayfly; below left) provide food for other animals such as fish and rare birds. Some invertebrates, such as giant weta, are famous in their own right. Many invertebrates have unique relationships with plants or other animals. Sometimes a particular species of insect points to the presence of a special plant or animal, and invertebrate surveys can provide additional management information. In Canterbury, Wildlands is helping to identify remaining semi-natural communities where insect-plant relationships are intact, in contrast to places where only the plants remain.



Birds

Wildlands routinely carries out general bird surveys, and we also undertake specialist bird surveys. Wetland birds can be well camouflaged, are often rare and hard to find. Royal spoonbills (front page) are occasional visitors to the Onepoto Arm of the Porirua Harbour. Wildlands has undertaken species specific surveys (e.g. kiwi, blue duck, black-billed gull, Westland petrel, kokako) and bird flight surveys for wind farms. A banded rail carcass (above photo) was found on intertidal flats at Whangamata, where they occur in saltmarsh and mangroves.

Bats

New Zealand bats are challenging to detect and monitor. They are about the size of a mouse and only come out at night. They need large trees with flaky bark or hollows to roost, and sometimes use caves. With the development of automatic bat recording devices, bats are now being found in many more places. Wildlands undertakes bat surveys and assessments, and are also called in when potential roost trees may be affected or when someone wants to know if bats are present, e.g. wind farm or road development. Our specialists also write site-specific management plans for bats.

Fish and macroinvertebrates

Many people don't know that New Zealand has a diversity of unusual indigenous fish species, and most only come out at night. Surveys are finding fish in stormwater pipes in major cities or beneath buildings, and in small stream remnants at the top of piped catchments. Some species are remarkable climbers and will swim a long way for a bit of stream. They eat insects that either fall in the stream, or live in the stream. Wildlands staff undertake fish surveys, fish translocations, macroinvertebrate sampling and Stream Ecological Valuation (SEV) surveys. So please get in touch if your activities may be affecting a stream or would like to know more about our native fish species.

Pest animals and predators

Many of our Wildlands staff have expertise in dealing with pest animals, including goats, deer, possums, rats, cats, hedgehogs, stoats, ferrets and weasels, pest fish, and feral livestock. We produce pest management plans for small and region-wide projects, and for developments and restoration areas. We are currently working on a document which describes how to identify pest animals from sign (footprints, droppings, or bark damage - photo right). Wildlands is also providing advice on how stoat trapping might be improved to better protect takahe in the wild.

Recent Wildlands fauna projects:

Wildlands routinely provides fauna surveys, monitoring and management plans to a wide range of clients including transport agencies and utility companies, rural landowners, territorial authorities, conservation trusts, government departments, iwi groups, and private individuals. Recent projects have included: relocation of forest geckos from a quarry, surveys for skinks, fish surveys, fish rescue and relocation operations; surveys for banded rail, fernbird and spotless crane, general wetland and forest bird surveys, and bat surveys. A currently project is using occupancy modelling to investigate the factors that have the most impact on detection of a bird species.



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