

Ewen lab hihi research update

February 2011



ACCEPTED PAPERS AND MEDIA *publications in scientific journals, popular science and media coverage*

- Leila was featured in the New Zealand herald related to the collaboration between science and art to be showcased in the “in celebration of hihi” week being held on Tiritiri Matangi. (note that a photo credit for the male hihi should be to Eric Wilson).
- Rose (and John) were interviewed for Live Science magazine about Rose’s latest paper in Proceedings of the Royal Society.
- John has been working with Reuben Trusler to update and re-structure the hihiconservation.com website – check it out and see the media coverage in more detail via the active links!!

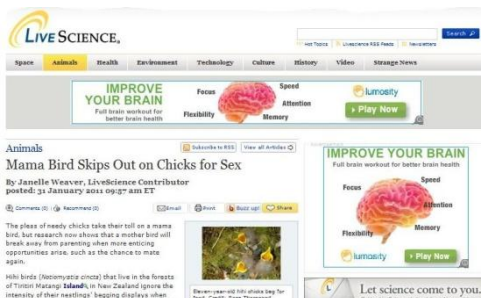
Hihi's plight no laughing matter

By Jim Eagles

9:30 AM Tuesday, Feb 22, 2011

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Hihi – otherwise known as stitchbirds – may well be New Zealand’s most interesting birds. They have chicks that look like Jimi Hendrix, the males wear gaudy yellow and black coats, unlike most of our native birds, which are monogamous, these guys lead promiscuous sex lives, and they’re apparently the only birds known to have intercourse face to face.



PRESENTATIONS, VISITS & NEWS *conference presentations, visits to and from group members etc*

- Ali has sent the Kapiti island hihi demographic study manuscript to co-authors for comment.
- Patricia has submitted an application to the Swiss National Science Foundation for a fellowship based on continuing hihi research.
- Kate is on Tiritiri Matangi starting her research project now that research permits are in place.
- Leila, Annette and Kate successfully completed the February population survey on Tiritiri Matangi.
- Annette Fayet finished up her research assistant position on Tiritiri Matangi after five months of dedicated and fantastic work – thank you!!
- Mary-Ann (SoTM), Patricia, John, Leila & Kate continue preparing for the “In celebration of hihi week” to be held on Tiritiri in early March.

FEATURE STORY: **Update from the field: Tiritiri Matangi Island by Leila Walker**

This season has seen record numbers of hihi produced on Tiritiri. 241 chicks have fledged from 84 nests. This bumper crop of young has ensured large sample sizes for the nestling supplementation experiment I have been conducting this season, with the assistance of Annette Fayet (hihi RA). The experiment is designed to consider the longer term effects of nestling environment on plumage colouration by manipulating nestling competitive environment and access to carotenoids.

This year all first clutch nests were assigned either to a wombaroo treatment or to a sugar water treatment (wombaroo is a dietary supplement intended for honeyeaters). Within each nest some nestlings received carotenoid-enhanced treatment food (i.e. wombaroo plus carotenoids or sugar water plus carotenoids) and some received treatment food alone, treatment being allocated within nests by alternating down weight rank. All first-clutch nestlings were fed their assigned treatment every other day between four days old and 20 days old and chicks were also weighed at the time of feeding to track growth rates. This design has resulted in all first-clutch hihi fledglings belonging to one of four treatment groups: wombaroo plus carotenoids, wombaroo without carotenoids, sugar water plus carotenoids or sugar water without carotenoids. These fledglings are now moulting and will be recaptured upon completion of moult to measure the colour of their carotenoid-based plumage patches. Not only this but we have a nice experimental design to quantify any benefit of wombaroo supplementation to growing hihi nestlings.



A young hihi chick about to receive a feed (top) and a juvenile male “colouring up” after fledging (below)

FUNDING *our major funders and new funding news*

CURRENT AND PAST FUNDING – thank you!

- + British Research Council + Royal Society + Leverhulme Trust + Department of Conservation + AXA-fund + NERC + SoTM + ASAB + Massey University + Wesfarmers Industrial and Safety NZ Ltd.

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