

WITNESSING THE EXTINCTION OF SPECIES

The first Department of Conservation radio-tagging trial with kea during an aerial 1080 poisoning operation was in 2008. 7 out of the 17 monitored kea at Franz Joseph died of 1080 poisoning. (40% mortality)

DoC's excuse at the time *"may have been because juvenile kea in the area had a habit of investigating "human-type" junk foods. ..."*(ODT 2/08/08)

In 2008 The Dominion Post obtained a draft internal report by DOC after the 7 deaths. The report says *"aerial 1080 may well be a significant threat to the kea population" with some drops "probably devastating"...*

DoC's Dr Josh Kemp said *"The Franz Josef kea deaths had "shocked and stunned" DOC"* (Stuff 28/01/09)

But kea deaths from 1080 poison have been proven for over 52 years.

In 1964 Protection Forest workers picked up 4 dead kea and 8 dead seagulls after a single 1080 drop. The birds tested positive for 1080 poisoning. (M.H.Douglas: Control of Tahr: Evaluation of a Poisoning Technique July 1966).

To find 12 large poisoned birds on foot would indicate the death rate must have been devastating for all the bird species in the area. DoC like to blame the decline in kea numbers on early bounties *"Kea had numbered in the hundreds of thousands but were devastated when a bounty was paid to kill them because of concerns they attacked stock."* (Press 29/07/08)

In 2011, DoC poisoned 7 out of 11 kea at North Okarito (60% mortality). DoC's excuse this time *"It seemed likely the more open nature of the North Okarito forest was a factor, Mr Costello said"* (ODT 12/09/11)

DoC then went on in 2013 to kill 5 radio-tagged kea at Arthur's Pass, DoC's excuse this time *"the repellent was less than the target concentration"* (Stuff 21/08/13)

If such inane puerile excuses were put forward by CYPS or the Police next time a vulnerable child is brutally killed, the media and politicians alike would take the offending officials to task. DoC appear immune from such scrutiny.

In 1999 DoC's Dr's Elliot and Kemp said *"Kea nests appear to be relatively immune to predation from introduced mammals...Our results agree with a previous study of kea nesting at Arthur's Pass, where no evidence of significant nest predation was found (Jackson 1963)."* (G Elliot & J Kemp 1999)

Now DoC claim *"The kea deaths are unfortunate but without protection most kea chicks are killed by stoats.* (Westport News 26/01/15)

So what has changed, DoC's inept monitoring of nests since 2000 would appear to be resulting in further kea predation and nest abandonment.

Overseas bird experts warn *"Avoid leaving tracks or human scent that can direct predators to nests."*(Cornell University Ornithology Dept 2011) *"visiting nests to check the contents necessarily results in disturbance of the individuals being studied. Moreover, investigator disturbance may increase the probability of nest predation... Human disturbance may also reduce nest attendance (Elser and Grand 1993).*

The logic is simple, birds fly to their nests and leave no scent trail, Dr's Elliot and Kemp and their sweaty cohorts leave a scent trail to the nests that a geriatric stoat on crutches could follow. *"Eggs and chicks disappeared from 35% of the nests we monitored and at two of these nests definite sign of stoat predation was found" "Once it was found, we checked each nest every 2-3 weeks until it either failed or the chicks had fledged..." (G Elliot& J Kemp 2004)*

In 2014, DoC first monitored the endangered rock wren through an aerial 1080 drop in Kahurangi National Park, 29 of 44 birds "disappeared" (65% mortality). DoC blamed "heavy snowfall" at the time and said *"We have found no dead rock wren. There's no evidence to suggest that ... we've knocked them out with 1080."*(Herald 19/01/15)

But DoC's Dr Elliot now admits *"The 1080 drop in 2014 killed four Keas and led to the death of Rock Wrens"* (Fairfax Nov 16th 2015)

So why do so many otherwise sane people accept everything that DoC tell them. The so called independent EPA report is often cited, and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Environment, Dr Wright is an absolute "1080-ophile"

But the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) review was called for by Department of Conservation (DoC) and Animal Health Board, and there was no cross examination of witnesses from either side of the debate. *(In October 2006, the AHB and DoC jointly submitted the formal application for reassessment of 1080. The applicants argued that 1080 is essential to controlling possums, which pose significant risks to farming (through the spread of bovine Tb) and to the environment (through predation of native plants and birds (EPA 2007)).*

The EPA report therefore, is similar in stature to a Local Council decision, made by Councillors or Commissioners. Such Council decisions are often completely rejected or significantly modified by the Environment Court, with the benefit of cross examination of witnesses.

Even after 63 years use of 1080 poison, DoC's Graeme Elliot says *"How are you supposed to find out how to do it perfectly? There is a lot of learning to do before we will get these operations perfect."* (Fairfax March 29th 2016)

There is not a shadow of doubt in my mind, or that of the many retired Forest Service personnel and bushmen that I know, that the single biggest cause of the rapid decline of species such as kea and rock wren, is DoC and it's inept and continuing use of 1080, and these species may well be extinct in our lifetimes, probably before Dr. Elliot finishes "learning".

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