Translocation of great spotted kiwi - when adults are let loose amongst the teenagers

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Great spotted kiwi (Apteryx haastii) populations are in decline, which is largely attributed to the extensive introduced predator load in their natural habitat associated with successive human colonisations. Predator control and translocations are the most common conservation tools used in the management of these populations. Therefore understanding the mechanisms of both behaviour and biology of great spotted kiwi is necessary to ensure that these tools result in minimal disruption to the birds and maximum benefit to the conservation effort. In a joint venture between the Department of Conservation and the community-run Nina Valley Recovery Group, the Nina Valley GSK sub-adult population was supplemented with genetically diverse birds from the Hawdon Valley in April 2015. Eight individual paired adult GSK were translocated (wild to wild) from the Hawdon Valley (Arthurs Pass National Park) to the Nina Valley (Lake Sumner Forest Park) in the northwest of the South Island of New Zealand. The GSK were released near areas of five known resident, previously translocated captive reared sub-adults. All subject birds were tracked for four months pre translocation and six months post translocation with activity data collected via radio telemetry from GSK 2.0 diagnostic transmitters. The captive reared sub-adults either remained or returned to previously held territories by the study's end, while all but one pair of the wild translocated bird dispersed from their release sites. The activity of the translocated birds increased overall from pre to post translocation with no change from the captive reared birds already resident in the Nina Valley. Activity data is currently only used to determine incubation status. Understanding the differences in activity levels between individuals can help wildlife managers understand whether unquantified differences exist between source and recipient sites or if the translocation process adversely affects the health of any transmittered individuals.