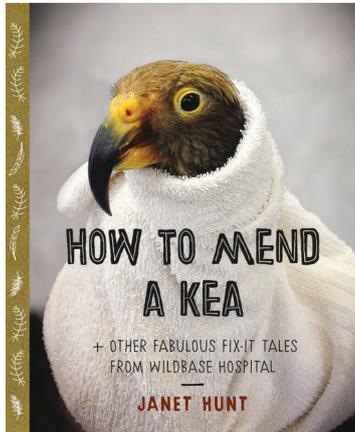


# How to Mend a Kea

+ other fabulous fix-it tales from Wildbase Hospital

JANET HUNT



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## STORYLINES NOTABLE BOOK 2018 / OVER 3000 SOLD

'Near flawless' — *The Sapling, Best Books of 2017*

'I'd recommend this wonderful book for kids and adults to share from age 7 up... it is a fascinating read for all future eco-warriors.' — Sarah Forster, Booksellers NZ

The little kākā that lost its way, the kererū with the broken wing, the tuatara that went floppy, the whio that couldn't fly, the kea with the broken foot . . .

All these stories and more are from Wildbase, the remarkable New Zealand native animal veterinary hospital, and told by expert natural history writer Janet Hunt.

This is the perfect book for everyone who cares about our wild creatures and wants to know more about how they are helped when they are ill or injured. Children, parents and teachers will be entranced and inspired by the stories of how skilled vets can cure our endangered species.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Janet Hunt** is one of New Zealand's best known natural history writers, both for adults and children. Her books include: *How to Mend a Kea* (2017, reprinted 2017), a Storylines Notable Book in 2018; *A Bird in the Hand: Keeping New Zealand Wildlife Safe* (2003), Book of the Year and Best in Non-Fiction at the 2004 New Zealand Post Book Awards and the Elsie Locke Award at the LIANZA Children's Book Awards in 2004; *From Weta to Kauri: A Guide to the New Zealand Forest* (2004), a finalist in the 2005 New Zealand Post Book Awards for Children and Young Adults; and *Wetlands of New Zealand: A Bitter-sweet Story* (2007), which won the Montana Medal for Non-Fiction at the 2008 Montana New Zealand Book Awards.

## SALES POINTS

- A superb book for children that fills a gap in the market for high quality non-fiction for young New Zealand children
- Written by one of New Zealand's best-known natural history writers (*Wetlands*, which won the Deutz Medal at the Montana Book Awards; *Our Big Blue Backyard*, the book of the fabulous TV series, *Bird in the Hand* and *From Weta to Kauri*)
- Tells a series of fascinating stories about some of the native birds and mammals that have come to Wildbase for veterinary treatment and the people (vets, vet nurses, etc.) who work there
- Rich with images and a strong conservation message
- A sparkling narrative that has sufficient depth that young readers will gain great insights into how special our native birds and animals are and how at risk some of them are
- Gives young readers insight into the veterinary world and may inspire some of them to consider it as a career
- Includes a section on what children can do in their own gardens, suburbs, schools and communities to assist wildlife

PRINTABLE A3 POSTER AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST



**1** Tuatara can lift his head—but that's about it.

**2** What is it, Tuatara? What's wrong?

**3** The daily soak in water to help re-hydrate him.

**4** A tiny green gecko looking a bit like Kermit.

46

## HOW TO RESUSCITATE A REPTILE

When he arrives at Wildbase on 21 March 2017 Tuatara is as floppy as an empty sock. His legs are paralysed and he isn't moving his tail. He can slightly move his head. There are no obvious signs of what is wrong. Tuatara is a male aged 11 years, young for this species. He is not tame but has lived all his life in a wildlife park in an enclosure with a number of other reptiles.

Many tests are carried out over Tuatara's first week at Wildbase. His blood is analysed and X-rays and a CT scan are taken. Nothing shows aside from small signs of inflammation. Perhaps he has eaten crickets that were accidentally contaminated with insecticides?

There's not much hope for him but he is treated anyway, with antibiotics, and morphine for pain relief. He is put in water to soak each day because he is so dehydrated and can absorb the moisture through his skin.

For the first week there is no change.

On 27 March, however, a number of people think that maybe, just maybe, they see Tuatara's left leg move when he is being treated. *Is it a trick of the light? Are they imagining things?*

Nothing moves rapidly in the tuatara world.

Day by day, in tiny, tiny amounts, Tuatara improves. He's fed about a teaspoon of fish and reptile food called 'Repashy' and on 2 April, *hry, look!* he's found with a cricket in his mouth.

OK, he can't chew or swallow it, but it's a positive sign.

By 17 April, nearly a month after admission, he's moving all limbs. He is being soaked every other day and is eating all his food. The team is very pleased when he produces a giant poo.

A week later he is enjoying a short daily bask in the sun and getting stropky about being handled. He's ready to go home.

Tuatara are not the only reptiles treated at Wildbase, of course. New Zealand's native lizards, geckos and skinks, also come to Wildbase from captive breeding programmes. Like most creatures, they can suffer from a range of conditions including nutritional disorders, parasites and fungal and bacterial infections, especially to their delicate skin.

**TUATARA**  
*Sphenodon punctatus*  
Conservation status: relic.  
Admitted: 21/03/17  
Symptom: Paralysed.

Tuatara are called 'living fossils' because this species was around at least 200 million years ago. They are the only surviving members of the Sphenodon family.

Tuatara are not fully grown until they are around 35 years old and they live from 60 to 100 years. New Zealand's wild tuatara are either on islands or in wildlife sanctuaries.

47

## HOW TO DETOX WHIO

Whio was first spotted in early April 2017 by trampers, Anthony Behrens and Fiona Burleigh. He was alone on a shingle bar beside the bustling Makaroro River, not far from where it flows out of the Ruahine Ranges into the farmland of Central Hawke's Bay. They could see at once he had been in the wars. His feathers were bedraggled and one wing drooped. He limped under a log and sadly whistled his breathy call: whi-oo.

A message was sent to Ben Douglas, who walked in and carried Whio out. He handed him over to Janet Wilson from the Ruahine Whio Protection Trust. She was going to Palmerston North and dropped Whio in to Wildbase.

When Whio was assessed he was very thin, he could not stand, and his tail flick was slow. Rebecca, the vet, could tell he was an old bird. He was given fluids, liquid food and pain relief and put in an incubator in intensive care. His X-ray the next day showed nothing was broken but there were traces of lead in his blood.

Lead is a soft, heavy metal that does not rust. Humans have used it for thousands of years for a long list of things—in building, plumbing, batteries, bullets and weights. For a long time no-one knew that it is terribly toxic. It damages the nervous system and causes brain damage and blood disorders.

But how did Whio get poisoned?

No-one knows, but there's lead in the environment from all sorts of sources including from lead shot and lead bullets used in hunting.

And why was he by himself? Whio are usually in pairs but are very territorial. Perhaps he had been in a scrap.

Luckily, he was soon sorted. A process called chelation removed the lead and in just over two weeks Whio was splashing like a duckling in the clamshell pool in the display room at the hospital. He was discharged on 12 April and released back in the hills where he was found.

Wildbase treats around 105 native birds for lead poisoning every year. The parrots, kākā and kea, are most likely to suffer because lead is soft and tastes sweet to them. They nibble old lead-lead nails, pick at lead flashing on buildings, scavenge in dumps and help themselves to car wheel weights.

The best people can do is not encourage them so they don't become tame and so they eat where they should—in the wild.

**WHIO/BLUE OR MOUNTAIN DUCK**  
*Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos*  
Conservation status: nationally vulnerable.  
Admitted: 26/03/17  
Symptom: Ataxic—unable to move.

Whio are only found on clear, fast-flowing, stony, rocky rivers. They eat insect larvae they find on and under the rocks with their wide rubbery bills, and are strong, active swimmers, ducking, diving and padding against the current.

48

1 Whio is still battered, but brighter after one week at Wildbase.

2 Whio in his cage in the ward. He has a little box to hide in plus bowls of food. He makes a right mess at night, splashing in the bowls.

3 Whio has a catheter in the leg to deliver medication.

4 5 Out cold for work-up X-ray time.

6 A youngster, different whio in 2014. It was thin and had an old wing injury that was helped with surgery.

49