Survey to help reverse Kereru decline

Title Forest & Bird?s (BirdLife in New Zealand) nationwide kereru count last week has provided valuable information about our only native pigeon and will help conservation projects aimed at reversing its population decline. Kereru Count Project Co-ordinator Jenny Lynch was pleased 1179 kereru sightings were recorded during the inaugural survey that ran from February 19 to 27. Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin emerged as kereru hotspots, which Jenny Lynch says was partly due to ?more eyes and ears? looking out for kereru. But the high numbers also indicated kereru could thrive in urban areas. ?It seems urban reserves and parks are providing food for kereru and then that?s spilling over into backyards. Now we want to encourage residents living near these reserves to plant kereru-friendly food plants to support these populations,? she says. ?It?s good to see the distribution is spread right across the country, but the results show there are some areas where kereru numbers aren?t as high as they should be.? One sighting of about 40 kereru on the West Coast was ?a nice surprise? in the survey. ?We would have seen flocks that size all over the country before Maori and Pakeha settlement. Now it only happens in places where there is really good pest control.? The survey data will be analysed and the results shared with local conservation groups, councils and organisations like the Department of Conservation. Data will identify where there is a need for more pest control and ensure future development of green spaces supports boosting numbers of resident kereru. Keen observers who recorded a kereru sighting during the nine-day survey will be emailed suggestions on how they can support local kereru populations. They will learn what food trees favoured by kereru will grow well in their region, and the relevant conservation projects happening in their area. Forest & Bird is looking to make the survey an annual event and build up data on long-term population trends. Kereru numbers have been in decline since human settlement. As the only bird capable of dispersing large seeds from some of our native trees, they are crucial to maintaining the biodiversity of our native forests. **Subscribe to The BirdLife Pacific Quarterly E-Newsletter** *For more information please contact Forest & Bird Kereru Count Project Co-ordinator Jenny Lynch on (04) 801 2766 or* j.lynch@forestandbird.org.nz