

Orana Wildlife Park Walk-through Kea Aviary

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LOCATION

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KEY WORDS

awareness, conservation,
 interaction

AWARDS

2010 ZAA Exhibit Award

DESCRIPTION

The aim of designing the Walk-through Kea Aviary was to raise awareness on the plight of kea by giving visitors an interactive experience. The birds are shown in a positive manner to counterbalance their notorious reputation for damaging vehicles. The exhibit is part of the park's native fauna section. It simulates a regenerating beech forest and contains fallen trees, high roosting posts, a water pool and fruit-bearing native trees. By reflecting a natural habitat, the enclosure makes it easy for visitors walking through the aviary to have close encounters and to observe natural kea behaviours. Visitors exit via an alpine themed musterer's hut. The interpretation communicates the intelligence and uniqueness of kea and highlights the fact that the birds are endangered. Visitors are presented with take-home messages about appropriate behaviour in kea habitats and how they can help conserve these mountain birds.

SIZE

The walk-through aviary is 20m x 17.6m = 340m² and reaches 6.8m at the peak. The visitor path through the aviary is 2m wide and



Kea ©Florian Schäfer, 2015



Visitors in the kea aviary: The aviary allows the visitors to observe the keas at close proximity without any physical barrier. ©Orana Wildlife Park, 2010

ANIMALS

| Family | Species | Common Name | Capacity |
|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------|
| Strigopidae | <i>Nestor notabilis</i> | Kea | 6 |



Overview ©Orana Wildlife Park, 2015

about 35m long. It ends in security areas of 9m² on both ends. The musterer's hut is 35m² and ends in a 9m long ramp. The keeper space is 6m². The adjacent isolation cage is 24m².

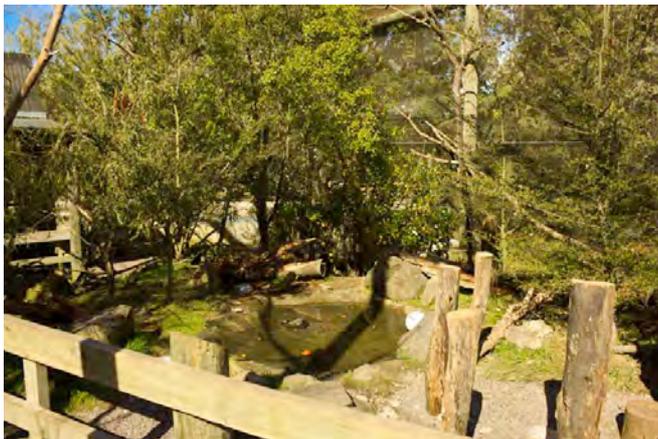
Space allocation in square meters:

| use | indoors | | outdoors | | total exhibit |
|----------|------------|-------|------------|-------|---------------|
| | accessible | total | accessible | total | |
| animals | | | 364 | 364 | 364 |
| visitors | 53 | 53 | | | 53 |
| others | 6 | 6 | | | 6 |
| total | 59 | 59 | 364 | 364 | 423 |

COSTS

NZD 200,000

The aviary was planned and built by the Park's Development team. This significantly reduced the cost of the project.



View from visitor walkway: View from the centre of the aviary. Here, the keas can be observed foraging or taking a bath in the pond. ©Florian Schäfer, 2015

OPENING DATE

12 December 2009

DESIGN

Beginning:

- Design: Orana Wildlife Park Development Team

CONSTRUCTION

Beginning: 2008

- Construction: Orana Wildlife Park Development Team

PLANTS

The habitat is designed to simulate a regenerating beech habitat. Some beeches got ring-barked by the kea.



Landscape in kea aviary: The kea aviary represents a regenerating beech forest containing fallen trees, a small pond and native trees. ©Orana Wildlife Park, 2010

FEATURES DEDICATED TO ANIMALS

The environment of the aviary allows the keas to show natural behaviours. Visual barriers like trees create retreat areas so that dominant birds don't target more submissive individuals. The aviary allows flying, playing in a pool and following the sun around the exhibit, since the trees are arranged so that there are always sunny spots for the birds. The keas are very active and repetitive behaviours that three birds displayed in the former exhibit are reduced.



Kea on the walkway: Keas enjoy to get in close contact with visitors and meet them on the visitor pathway. ©Florian Schäfer, 2015



Kea observation: Visitors can observe the intelligent birds up close. ©Florian Schäfer, 2015

FEATURES DEDICATED TO KEEPERS

The large isolation cage allows keepers an easy separation. New birds can be introduced through large mesh walls. Keepers have been able to integrate two groups of birds through the use of these mesh walls. Keepers do not need to provide the keas with many play objects because of the built-in enrichment features of the aviary: vegetation, rotten logs, natural food sources, people walking though. Previously, a very labour intensive enrichment programme was in place to keep the intelligent birds stimulated. The size of the aviary and service areas help reduce the potential for keeper injury. In the past, keepers had to squeeze through tiny service areas and avoid hitting their head on the low hanging perches.

FEATURES DEDICATED TO VISITORS

The aviary is an immersive experience with views of the birds and the opportunity to see keepers interacting with them.

INTERPRETATION

Colourful interpretation is included along the walkway that provides 'did you know' facts as well as a take-

home message about habitats. Interactive signs encourage visitors to touch casts of kea feet and a beak; hug a post that represents a 60 year old beech tree because trees in the aviary are much smaller; and play a quiz inside the alpine musterer's hut that tests the visitor's knowledge on keas.

When people viewed our previous kea aviaries from outside, typical comments about the birds were 'these birds are boring' and visitors often spent less



Interpretation: The signage presents the intelligence of the keas and the threats to this species. ©Orana Wildlife Park, 2010



Kea aviary exit: Visitors exit via the musterer's hut. ©Orana Wildlife Park, 2010



Musterer's hut: The hut is used for interpretation and includes a quiz board testing people's knowledge on keas. ©Orana Wildlife Park, 2010

than one minute in front of the aviary. In the walk-through aviary, frequent comments are 'these birds are amazing' and the holding time in the aviary is 10 to more than 15 minutes. This facilitates our advocacy messaging on how to interact with the animals in the wild (e.g. 'don't feed the birds'). As kea are endemic to the South Island, local Christchurch people (who make up 55% of visitors to Orana Park) have a very real chance of encountering kea in the wild within one hour drive of Christchurch.



Wood hut: The keas use the wood hut for weather protection and forage between the logs. ©Orana Wildlife Park, 2010



Kea on wood. ©Orana Wildlife Park, 2010



View from the veranda into aviary: The veranda in front of the musterer's hut provides a sheltered viewing opportunity. ©Florian Schäfer, 2015

MANAGEMENT

New birds are introduced through the mesh between the isolation cage and the main aviary. Before entering the aviary, signs alert visitors that the birds might land on them. In the aviary signs tell visitors

not to feed the birds. Wheelchairs and buggies are allowed in the aviary. Keepers work hard to provide significant enrichment for these intelligent birds which is an interesting challenge for the team. Both visitors and the kea have enjoyed the interaction within the aviary. Kea are extremely inquisitive and from time to time test the boundaries with visitors. Keepers regularly monitor the birds' behaviour, for their welfare and that of the visitors too.

RESEARCH

The aviary has been used to test the birds' reaction to items that they may find in the wild, such as disabled predator traps and mock poison bait. Furthermore, a scientific project on human-kea interaction was completed in cooperation with Lincoln University.

CONSERVATION

The exhibit provides good example to visitors on how they can live together with keas in New Zealand and addresses actions for their conservation in the wild.



Kea with keeper. ©Orana Wildlife Park, 2009