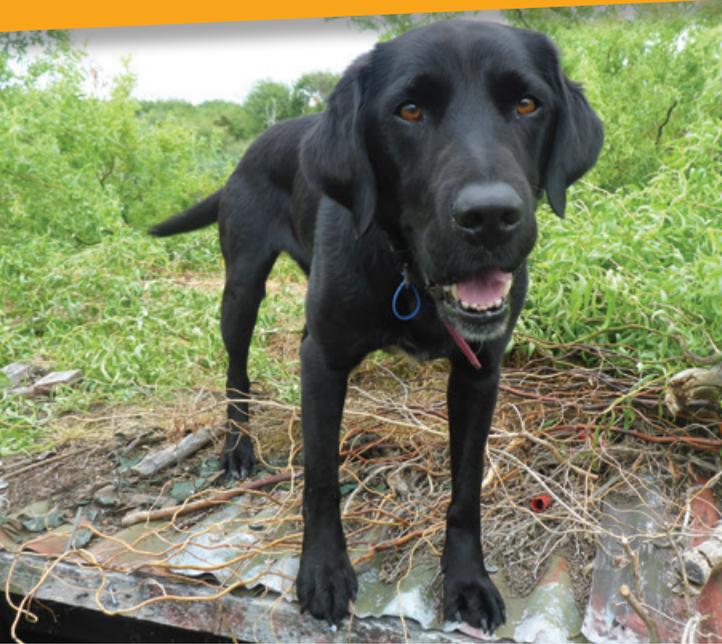


A DAY IN THE LIFE OF KIMI THE BITTERN DOG: A WETLAND ADVENTURE

By Ingrid Stirnemann



Hi, my name is Kimi. I have a special job. I am the world's only bittern dog. I help my human friends find bitterns even when we can't see them.



A bittern is a rare New Zealand bird that lives in wetlands. They are so secretive and shy, and hard to find.

As only a small amount of their original wetland habitat remains, they don't have many places to live. Predators like cats, stoats, and rats eat their eggs and babies.

So they need lots of help.



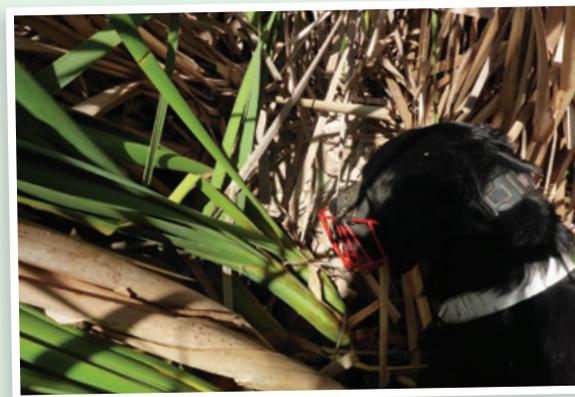
Today, I am going to look for bitterns so we can learn more about them. Before going into the wetland I need to put on my work uniform – a conservation dog vest and muzzle.



Today I am getting to the wetland by kayak. I like kayaking.



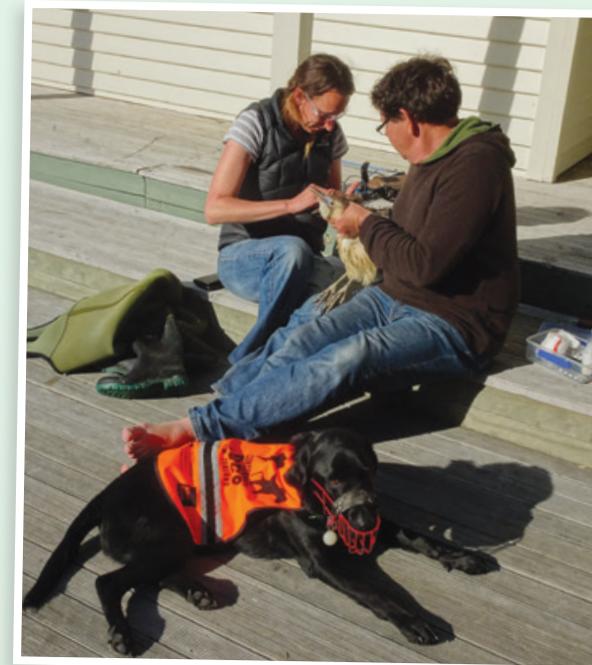
I use my powerful nose to smell if bitterns are nearby. Bitterns smell good.



I found a nest! Great, that means there's an adult bittern somewhere here too.



When we find a bittern, sometimes I can help my human friends catch it by hand, but, if not, then we put out a special bittern capture trap in the wetland.



We then put special radio tags on the birds so we know where they go when we release them back into their habitat, so we can better protect them.



After all my work I like to have dinner, and sleep on my comfortable bed.

Photos by Emma Williams and Colin O'Donnell

Meet another of our NZ conservation dogs – Millie the rat dog – on our website (kcc.org.nz). Search "rat".