

Reintroduction Specialist Group

Oceania Newsletter

November 2004



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Threatened Plant Translocation Workshop

The NZ Plant Conservation Network held a threatened plant translocation workshop at its annual conference in August 2004 in Auckland. For that the network developed a plant translocation form which can be found on the network's website at the following link:

<http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/Documents/Translocation-form.pdf>

The New Zealand Plant Conservation Network November newsletter can be accessed at

<http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/Documents/NZPCN-E-news-12-200411.pdf>

Contact John Sawyer (jsawyer@doc.govt.nz) for further information.

Recent New Zealand Translocations

Campbell Island Teal return to Campbell Island!

In September 2004, 50 Campbell Island teal (*Anas nestiosis*) were reintroduced to subantarctic Campbell Island. Campbell Island teal are flightless, and presumed to have been killed off by rats soon after their discovery on the island in 1810. They survived on 26 ha Dent Island (approx 3 km off the coast of Campbell), and birds from Dent were brought to New Zealand for captive breeding programme in 1984 and 1990. The first breeding occurred in 1995, and 12 birds were released on to Whenua Hou (Codfish Island) in 1999 and 2000 to prepare them for survival on Campbell. Campbell Island is 11,300 ha, and was subject to the biggest rodent eradication in the world when Norway rats were removed in 2001. Subsequent monitoring has found no evidence of rats. 28 of the reintroduced teal were captive raised at Mt Bruce and Peacock Springs (mostly juveniles) and 22 were taken from Whenua Hou (a mix of captive-raised and wild-bred). All birds survived the 72 h trip with some birds putting on weight during transit due to 12-hourly crop feedings. They were then held in pens on the island for 8-12 days to monitor their weight before being released in groups. A specialist aviculturist and vet oversaw the transfer and the birds were all alive and doing well two weeks after being released. Some birds have stayed close to the release sites (3 sites in the same catchment) while others travelled widely, one bird moving over 5 km around the coast and another moving 1 km up a hill to an altitude of 187 m. A trip in February will monitor survival and breeding. A single male bird found on the island in April (probably having travelled over 20 km around the coast from the sole natural refuge, Dent Island, as the overland trip is very unlikely) was found at the same location at 6 ft lake and appears to be doing fine. It is planned to carry out 2 further releases of 50 birds each. Contact Pete McClelland (pmcclelland@doc.govt.nz).

North Island Saddlebacks return to the North Island!

Saddlebacks were reintroduced to Boundary Stream Mainland Island in the Hawkes Bay in September 2004. Saddlebacks have previously been reintroduced to a lake island (Mokoia) within the North Island and to a fenced mainland sanctuary (Karori). However, this is the first attempt to reintroduce them to an unfenced area, and one of the first attempts to reintroduce any "island marooned" species back to the mainland. Boundary Stream consists of 800 ha of intensively managed forest that now has extremely low

levels of rats, possums and stoats. The birds were captured on Cuvier Island and held at Auckland Zoo for 30 days due to disease regulations. Two birds subsequently died in transit and one was too sick to be released, leaving 37 birds (23 female, 14 male) for release. 10 had tail-mounted transmitters attached, and 4 of these were found dead after a period of extremely cold southerlies two weeks after release (predation did not appear to have caused any of these mortalities). There are currently four known pairs, and these have begun to nest. Contact Wendy Sullivan wsullivan@doc.govt.nz.

Black Robins to Pitt Island, Chatham Island Group

In February 2004, black robins *Petroica traversi* were reintroduced to a predator-fenced area on Pitt Island, Chatham Islands group. 20 birds (about 14 m, 6 f) were released, and these came from Rangatira Nature Reserve on South East Island. The fenced area is 40 ha, and is within the 53-ha Ellen Elizabeth Preece Conservation Covenant (EEPCC), which covers 53 ha of mixed broadleaf coastal forest, including kopi, matipo, karamu, hoho and ribbonwood, with areas of grassland. It has been stock fenced for nine years and has regenerated to the type of forest habitat where black robins would have been found historically. Black robin previously occurred only on two small islands, so returning the species to one of the larger islands in the Chatham group is essential in order to provide suitable habitat for the population to expand. Any new site for black robin must be free of cats, and both cats and weasels were eradicated from within the fenced area. The 40 ha that is predator-fenced is thought to be sufficient to sustain a new robin population (8 ha of bush on Mangere Island supports a population of over 50 black robins, although the density will probably be lower than on Mangere due to the presence of mice and absence of seabirds). Robins were caught using clap traps, held in a temporary aviary (c. 4m x 4m) on Rangatira until there were up to 10 birds and a period of calm weather for transportation, then transported by boat to Pitt. The birds were transported in cardboard cat boxes (two per box, separated by cardboard divider), then held in pre-release aviaries (6m x 4m and c. 2m high, with 10 birds in each) for 2-4 weeks. Contact Adam Bester (abester@doc.govt.nz).

Relocation of Hochsetter's Frogs from Highway Development

Hochstetter's frogs (*Leiopelma hochstetteri*) are being relocated from a stream in the Brynderwyn Hills (40 km south of Whangarei) that is being infilled due to repair of State Highway 1. We searched the 100 m of stream to be affected from 26 October to 7 November 2004, and found 28 frogs. We were surprised to find so many from a severely degraded stream (we expected 10 max). However, on this search we lifted every rock and ripped apart every log and used nailbars to lever open every crack rather than the usual procedure of only lifting rocks where it doesn't cause damage. We have moved the frogs to other streams nearby (<500m), and all on the top side of the SH, as all downstream stretches regularly get inundated with floods off the road, oil washing off and debris washing in. The release sites have all been marked and we will see if any remain where they were let go. Preliminary results show that every frog released has frogged-off. Monitoring will also be carried out downstream to see if the frogs there survive the works above them. On top of the fill a rock lined concrete drainage ditch will be created which we hope will appeal to the frogs and we will be monitoring to see if frogs migrate into the area at all, and hopefully we can tell if they are frogs returning home or whether they are frogs migrating up from down below. We are very interested to see the results as they become revealed as we know Transit NZ are planning other works on the hill and every single stream there has frogs in it. If it works, then we can do the same, if not, then we will have to look seriously at other options such as putting them into captivity or using

them to try and establish a new population. Contact Richard Parrish (rparrish@doc.govt.nz).

Tomtits to Tiritiri Matangi Island

North Island tomtits (miromiro, *Petroica macrocephala toitoi*) were reintroduced to Tiritiri Matangi Island (Hauraki Gulf 28 km N of Auckland) in April 2004. The translocation was part of the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi and Department of Conservation's restoration plan for the island. Re-establishment of the tomtit would have special significance to the mauri of the island, as it is one of Maui's birds and considered to be the lovebird ("he manu aroha te miromiro"). Releases of tomtits were part of Maori rituals to celebrate a birth, a tohunga, or new pa (see <http://www.nzbirds.com/Miromiro.html>). Tomtits are assumed to have lived on the island before its earlier forest clearance, and the amount of forest has now greatly increased through natural regeneration and planting. The 32 birds released (13 females, 19 males) came from pine forests due to be felled in the Hunua Ranges, 60 km SE of Auckland. The birds were caught by a team of 21 people working 12 mistnets over a 2-day period. However, this rapid capture was due to the birds being trained to take mealworms over a 6-month period by myself and Sonja Gerritsen (intern from the van Hall Institute, Netherlands). A key question for this reintroduction is whether the tomtits would be affected by competition from robins, which were reintroduced in 1992 and now have intense competition for territories. Consequently, robins were removed from several patches for translocation to Great Barrier Island (see below) prior to tomtits being released, and tomtits were released in both "robin-full" and "robin-free" areas to test the effect of competition. Robins colonised the empty areas fairly rapidly and tomtits have been difficult to find in any area. Nevertheless, secretive tomtits continue to be sighted occasionally, and it is too early to assess the success of the reintroduction. One male is definitely no longer on the island, as he has returned to his territory in the Hunuas!! From Barbara Hughes (b.hughes@xtra.co.nz).

North Island Robins to Great Barrier Island

In April 2004, 30 robins from Tiritiri Matangi were reintroduced to Windy Hill catchment on Aotea / Great Barrier Island. Robins have been absent from Aotea for about 140 years, and have been released to an area where predators have been controlled to low numbers by the local community. The birds came from the closely-monitored population on Tiritiri Matangi, and pre-feeding of the target birds meant that the birds were captured in less than 24 hours. There are at least three established pairs now at Windy Hill, and a few solitary birds have been spotted up to 4 km from the release site. Contact Judy Gilbert (lovebirds@xtra.co.nz).

Whiteheads to Hunua Ranges

Whiteheads were reintroduced to the Hunua Ranges, a large forest block south of Auckland managed by the Auckland Regional Council, in 2003. The birds were taken from Tiritiri Matangi Island, where whiteheads were reintroduced in 1989-90 and are now extremely abundant. Contact Tim Lovegrove (Tim.Lovegrove@arc.govt.nz).

Whiteheads to Waitakere Ranges

Whiteheads were reintroduced to the Waitakere Ranges west of Auckland in 2004. This is part of the recently developed "Ark in the Park" restoration project. These birds were also taken from Tiritiri Matangi Island. Contact Sandra Jack (slj@slingshot.co.nz).

Kokako to Pukaha/Mt Bruce

In 2003, 6 kokako (4 female, 2 male) from Managutu were reintroduced to Pukaha/Mt Bruce (ca.1000 ha mainland forest block). All stayed within the forested area, and one pair produced 2 fledglings within four months of release. An additional four captive birds (2 male, 2 female) from the Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre were released in winter 2003, and two additional wild birds (1 male, 1 female) from Managutu were released in September 2004. It is hoped future releases will even the sex ratio and consist of birds of the same dialect, until 5 pairs are established at Pukaha/ Mt Bruce. Yearly monitoring of breeding activity occurs, and post-release monitoring of bird survival occurs. Contact Lynn Adams (ladams@doc.govt.nz).

North Island Brown Kiwi to Pukaha/Mt Bruce

Captive North Island brown kiwi of mixed lineage have been reintroduced to Pukaha/Mt Bruce. Contact Lynn Adams (ladams@doc.govt.nz).

New Zealand Scaup to Mt Bruce Wetlands

In August 2004, two captive scaup were released in the Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre wetlands (not captivity). More will be released as they become available and if techniques ensure birds stay at the site. Bird wings were clipped to encourage them to stay on the wetland, recognising that they would be free to fly away once wing feathers moult. Birds are feed supplementary food daily. Contact Raelene Berry (rberry@doc.govt.nz).

North Island Robins to Tuhua Island, Bay of Plenty

In May 2003, 42 robins from Mokoia Island were released on Tuhua/Maylor Island (1277 ha) in the Bay of Plenty. Robins were previously recorded there but had become extinct in the last 30 years. Their extinction was presumably due to predation by Norway rats, which were eradicated in winter 2000 along with kiore, feral pigs and feral cats. Tuhua composes mainly pohutukawa/hardwood forest with shrublands and wetlands and has considerable potential for ecological restoration. Contact John Heaphy (jheaphy@doc.govt.nz) and Keith Owen (kowen@doc.govt.nz).

Red-crowned Kakariki to Matiu/Somes Island

In February and April 2003, 30 red-crowned kakariki from Kapiti Island were reintroduced to Matiu/Somes Island (25 ha, Wellington Harbour). Breeding was detected in 2003 and 2004, and 15 birds were seen regularly seen in July 2004. Contact Lynn Adams (ladams@doc.govt.nz).

Yellow-crowned Kakariki to Mana Island

In April 2004, 26 yellow-crowned kakariki from Chetwode Island (Te Kakaho) were reintroduced to Mana Island (217 ha, off SW North Island). Te Kakaho was selected because the young regenerating scrub and kanuka forest is similar to that on Mana. 12 birds are regularly seen in Sept 2004. Contact Lynn Adams (ladams@doc.govt.nz).

Specked Skinks to Mana Island

Speckled skinks (*Oligosoma infrapunctatum*) from Stephens Island have been reintroduced to Mana Island (217 ha, off SW North Island). 49 animals were caught with pit-fall traps, held in temporary enclosures where they were feed mealworms and jam-

water, transferred individually in plastic containers with damp paper towels, then released under driftwood placed on a forest edge close to both grassland and forest. *Ad hoc* monitoring to determine survival of individuals is occurring but formal monitoring of population growth will begin in five years. Contact Lynn Adams (ladams@doc.govt.nz).

Flax Weevils to Mana Island

In March 2004, 70 flax weevils from Maud Island were reintroduced to Mana Island (217 ha, off SW North Island). Animals were captured from coastal flaxes (*Phormium cookianum*) and harakeke (*P. tenax*) by hand at night, held in plastic containers overnight with damp paper towels, and translocated the following day. Further translocations will occur in subsequent years until about 150 have been released. Formal monitoring will begin in 2009. Contact Lynn Adams (ladams@doc.govt.nz).

Great Spotted Kiwi to Rotoiti Mainland Island

In May 2004, Great Spotted Kiwi *Apteryx haastii* were released in the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project, in Nelson Lakes National Park in the South Island. 9 adult birds (5 m, 4 f) were released, and these came from Goulard Downs in Kahurangi National Park, which is the stronghold of the species (probably about 10 000 birds). The birds were located using kiwi dogs and a taped call. The birds were caught by hand or with a hand net, held overnight in boxes, then transferred in boxes or capture bags and released in pre-dug artificial burrows (time from capture to release was 10-40 h). The reintroduction is part of the ecological restoration of the honeydew beech forest in the Rotoiti mainland island. Great spotted kiwi would have occurred in the Rotoiti area historically (records indicate a large species of kiwi), but was probably eradicated by cats and/or mustelids. Cats and mustelids are controlled, and dogs are excluded by the legal status of national park. Adults are relatively predator robust, so the key to monitoring will be to establish whether the management allows adequate juvenile survival. Contact Paul Gasson (pgasson@doc.govt.nz) or Matt Maitland (mmaitland@doc.govt.nz).

South Island Robins and Saddlebacks to Erin Island, Lake Te Anua

On September 12 2003, 18 South Island saddleback *Philesturnus carunculatus carunculatus* and 18 South Island robins *Petroica australis australis* were released on Erin Island in Lake Te Anau, Fiordland, New Zealand. This was a joint project between the NZ Department of Conservation Te Anau Area Office and the University of Otago. This translocation was significant in a New Zealand context because it was: i) the first release of saddleback back into primarily beech forest habitat, where they have been absent for approximately 100 years, and ii) onto an island that was within swimming distance to stoats, a major (introduced) predator of saddlebacks and of robins. These reintroductions have two objectives: i) to assess the value of predator-controlled inshore islands for translocation of threatened species that normally vulnerable to introduced mammalian predators and ii) to determine the short and long term effects of inbreeding in small island populations. Erin Island had been cleared of stoats since November 2001, although a juvenile stoat was trapped there most recently in July. Stoat control was intensified on the island and the adjacent mainland just before the release took place. Research on effects on inbreeding will assess nesting success and survival in relation to inbreeding, and will involve a sister study on Ulva Island. This is one of the first times that all translocated birds had blood samples for genetic analysis taken before release to determine whether individuals that are more genetically variable have a greater survival and/or subsequent breeding success. Birds also had standard body size measurements taken as well as blood and faecal samples for disease screening to determine whether

other traits could affect successful establishment. The blood sampling and banding of all subsequent offspring will allow pedigrees to be constructed and used to study the effects of inbreeding in island birds. Monitoring will be done by University of Otago PhD student Sabrina Taylor over a three year period. Contact Ian Jamieson (ian.jamieson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz).

Buff Weka on Te Peka Karara, Lake Wanaka

In November 2002, 30 buff weka were released on Te Peka Karara/Stevenson's Island (65 ha) in Lake Wanaka. Buff weka were historically found in the eastern South Island, but until this reintroduction, they were found only in the Chatham Islands where they were introduced in 1905. The aim of this project is to re-establish buff weka within their historical range. The island has kanuka mixed shrubland forest with some grassy clearings. Possums, rodents and mustelids (stoats, ferrets and weasels) are absent on the island. The weka have bred successfully over the last two years, but the population appears to fluctuate and does not seem to have grown beyond 30 birds. Contact Bruce McKinlay (bmckinlay@doc.govt.nz) or Frances Schmechel (schmechf@paradise.net.nz).

Riflemen to Ulva Island

In February 2003, 30 riflemen from Whenua hou / Codfish Island were reintroduced to Ulva Island (269 ha, Paterson Inlet, eastern side of Stewart Island). Ulva Island consists of podocarp forest with coastal muttonbird scrub. Norway rats were eradicated from Ulva in 1995, and robins, mohua and saddlebacks have also been reintroduced. Birds were captured with mist nets (low sets), held in large transfer boxes and avaries, and fed meal worms for up to 2 nights prior to flying to Ulva for hard release. There was a large mortality (50%) during holding. At least 21 birds survived the first winter and produced 27 young during the 2003/2004 breeding season. Contact Brent Beaven (bzbeaven@doc.govt.nz).

Stewart Island Fernbird to Ulva Island

In October 2004, 30 Stewart Island fernbirds from Mason Bay Area of Stewart Island were reintroduced to Ulva. Birds were captured with mist nets (low sets), held in transfer boxes, and fed wax moth larvae prior to flying to Ulva for hard release within five hours of capture. Two birds died during capture. Contact Brent Beaven (bzbeaven@doc.govt.nz).

Recent Kapapo Translocations

With no breeding since the bumper 2002 season, kakapo numbers remained stable at 86 birds until July 2004 when three deaths occurred. In early July, 18 of the 24 juveniles raised in 2002, plus one adult male, were translocated from Whenua Hou (Codfish Island) to Te Kakahu (Chalky Island) so that they could become familiar with beech forest and recognise beech (and rimu) masts as stimuli for breeding. Three of the juveniles (all females) died within a few days from an acute infection of the bacteria *Erysipelas rhusiopathiae*. The bacteria probably reached Whenua Hou by way of petrels and shearwaters (it has since been identified from bone marrow from seabird carcasses on the island), and infections are usually associated with stress. All surviving kakapo on Te Kakahu were subsequently held temporarily in captivity while receiving a course of antibiotics, and all kakapo on on Te Kakahu and Whenua Hou have since been vaccinated. Other recent translocations include:

- Four males not currently needed for breeding were moved from Whenua Hou to Pearl Island in May 2004 to create space on Whenua Hou for genetically under-represented males from Te Kakahu
- 12 birds including 7 adult females and Richard Henry (the only known survivor from Fiordland) were moved from Te Kakahu to Whenua Hou to re-position Richard Henry and other genetically under-represented males to make a greater genetic contribution to the next generation.

The table below summarises the total population of the species.

	Female		Male		Total
	Sub-ad	Adult	Sub-ad	Adult	
Fiordland	Believed extinct since ~1987				
Stewart Island	Population relocated 1980-97				
Whenua Hou	7	20	5	17	49
Te Kakahu	10	1	8	4	23
Pearl Island	-	-	-	11	11
TOTALS	17	21	13	32	83

From Don Merton (DMerton@doc.govt.nz). See the Kakapo recovery website at : www.kakaporecovery.org.nz.

Updates on Previous New Zealand Translocations

Stewart Island Robins on Ulva Island

Stewart Island Robins were reintroduced to Ulva Island in 2000-2001. The University of Otago has monitored the robins since release. At the end of the 2003/2004 breeding season, the population comprised 42 adults (including 11 of the founder birds) and 34 juveniles. A look at bird pedigrees on Ulva Island has revealed that 46 of 49 robin offspring are descended from one breeding pair. This is mainly due to the initial breeding success of this pair after translocation. Contact Brent Beaven (bzbeaven@doc.govt.nz) or Ian Jamieson (ian.jamieson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz).

South Island Saddleback on Ulva Island

South Island saddlebacks were reintroduced to Ulva Island in 2000. The University of Otago has monitored the saddleback for the last two breeding seasons. At the end of the 2003/2004 breeding season, the population comprised 84 adults (including 17 of the founder birds) and 32 juveniles. Contact Brent Beaven (bzbeaven@doc.govt.nz) or Ian Jamieson (ian.jamieson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz).

Mohua on Ulva Island

Mohua (yellowhead) were reintroduced to Ulva Island in 2001. Since release the mohua have produced at least 20 offspring, and the estimated population is now 44. Five birds had colonised an islet of less than 1 ha, where they successfully raised three offspring in a low forest comprised of tree fern and muttonbird scrub. These birds were relocated to Ulva Island prior to last breeding season. Contact Brent Beaven (bzbeaven@doc.govt.nz).

Recent Australian Translocations

Western Swamp Tortoise to Mogumber Nature Reserve, Western Australia

This critically endangered freshwater tortoise (*Pseudemydura umbrina*) had a very small geographic range mostly within the Perth metropolitan area. Conservation efforts have been underway since rediscovery in 1953. During the 1980s a severe decline due mainly to fox predation and drought led to the development of a recovery plan, and the appointment of a recovery team by the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land management (CALM). Since rediscovery there has been considerable research and management work, including

- The creation of Ellen Brook and Twin Swamps Nature Reserves, in the Upper Swan area within the north-eastern part of the Perth Metropolitan Region. Both have been enlarged by purchase of adjoining land. Both are very small in terms of the tortoise's home range and the habitat in both is considered to be marginal. Both are surrounded by fox-proof fences. The reserves require intensive management. One purchased area requires ongoing habitat restoration.
- Considerable research, much of it conducted within The University of Western Australia. This has provided an excellent basis for recovery planning and on-ground management.
- Population and environmental monitoring. Population data have been maintained since 1963; one of the longest ongoing data sets for any Australian animal population.
- Captive breeding at Perth Zoo, with initial research being conducted by CALM and later research and support being provided by UWA.
- Translocations of captive-bred tortoises. These have been to Twin Swamps Nature Reserve, and more recently to part of Mogumber Nature Reserve purchased partly to provide a translocation site for the tortoise.
- Searches for additional translocation sites. The vast majority of the tortoise's original habitat has been cleared, drained or mined for clay. Remaining suitable sites are scarce, mostly outside the species' known natural range and will require expensive modification.

Captive breeding is now routine, with about 40 tortoises being translocated each year. From 1994 to 2000 translocations were to Twin Swamps Nature Reserve to restock the population there, which had been reduced to less than 10 tortoises because of fox predation and drought. Since 2000, attempts are being made to establish a new population

in Mogumber Nature Reserve, outside the species' known range, as no translocation sites within the known range are available.

Contact Andrew Burbidge (Andrew.Burbidge@calm.wa.gov.au) or Gerald Kuchling (kuchling@cyllene.uwa.edu.au).

Updates on Previous Australian Translocations

Mala on Trimouille Island, Western Australia

Mala were translocated to Trimouille Island (part of the Montebello Islands Conservation Park, off the Pilbara coast of WA) in 1998. Monitoring up to September 2004 showed that the Mala are breeding and have extended their range to include the whole island. A recommendation to move the subspecies from 'Extinct in the Wild' to 'Endangered' is under consideration. Contact Andrew Burbidge (Andrew.Burbidge@calm.wa.gov.au)

Djoongari on North West Island, Western Australia

Djoongari (Shark Bay Mouse, *Pseudomys fieldi*), which were previously restricted to a single island, were introduced to North West Island (135 ha, Montabello Islands, Western Australia) in 1999 and 2000. Surveys up to September 2004 have shown that they have bred and have occupied the whole island since 2001. Contact Andrew Burbidge (Andrew.Burbidge@calm.wa.gov.au)