

Birds and beetles return to Mana Island

by Stacy Moore

Working stealthily both night and day, members of Friends of Mana Island (FOMI), Ngati Kuia, Ngati Toa and DOC staff captured 25 yellow crowned parakeets and 80 flax weevils from islands in the Marlborough Sounds to transfer to Mana Island.

For three days in May they used almost invisible mist nets to trap both male and female parakeets on Chetwode Island. The birds were held in a temporary aviary then placed in wooden carrying cases and flown to Mana Island. "It was amazing to hear the kakariki calls in the Manuka trees upon their release in their new home," said Jason Christenson, ranger on Mana Island.

Two hundred nesting boxes were carefully constructed by students at Plimmerton School and the Ucol Conservation Corps in Levin for the homecoming. FOMI volunteers placed the boxes in vegetation along Bush Valley to await their new occupants. More than 380,000 trees have been planted by volunteers on the island since the mid-1980s, providing plenty of food for the birds.



Brian Paget, President of Friends of Mana, releasing a yellow crowned parakeet
Photo: Stacy Moore



Kakariki nest box
Photo: Stacy Moore

Parakeets were part of the original Mana Island ecosystem and their reintroduction will support DOC's goal of restoring threatened species and ecological processes to the island.

Today it is free of all introduced mammals.

Humans became nocturnal on Maud Island as they searched the island for large flightless flax weevils. Adult weevils retreat deep into the base of flax bushes during the day making them nearly impossible to find. When seen at night under torch light the weevils become motionless. If the flax leaves are disturbed then the weevils drop to the ground making them difficult to find.

Flax weevils were once widespread throughout New Zealand but are now found predominantly on rodent-free islands. It is hoped to establish a self-sustaining population of flax weevils on Mana within a few years.



Stacy Moore holding a flax weevil
Photo: Stacy Moore



Ian Cooksley - Area Manager Kapiti, releasing a yellow crowned parakeet
Photo: Stacy Moore

The project was made possible by funding and efforts of FOMI which has supported many animal and plant restoration projects on Mana. They will be using teams of volunteers to monitor the parakeets and weevils during the coming months.

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