



## Rowi Release in the Sounds



New Zealand wildlife keeper, Shaun, travelled with D.O.C. staff to Motuara Island in the Marlborough Sounds to release our first Rowi chick from the Bank of New Zealand kiwi recovery program Operation Nest Egg.



The chick will stay on this nursery island until it is big enough to fight off predators. It will then be returned to Okarito where it came from as an egg.

## Otago Skink Breeding Success

It is estimated that there are less than 2000 Otago Skinks left in New Zealand so it is a positive achievement for the breeding programme managed by Rata at Willowbank to have had a successful birthing of 4 live young to our breeding pair. This follows the birth of 1 live baby last year. At the end of 2004 there were only 25 Otago Skinks in captivity so these young provide a real boost to numbers.

It is rare for a female to have four young at once as the eggs hatch inside the female and the babies are then born live. It is estimated that this skink could be extinct within 10 years making it critical that we can breed enough to set up new colonies in Otago. Unfortunately the ones still surviving in the wild are threatened by cats, stoats, ferrets, rats, birds and pigs, not to mention land development by humans

At present we hold one adult pair, two adult males and five babies. Rata has developed a management plan and is hopeful of getting at least 2 more females in June to boost the program.



Our one year old baby Otago Skink

## Chairman's Report April 2006

Shortly the Trust will have two Great Spotted Kiwi in the breeding centre at Willowbank.

This will see the early stages of the planned initiative to commence a full scale breeding programme for this South Island species culminating in release to the wild in the greater Arthurs Pass National Park. The programme will commence with one breeding pair but it is planned to supplement the process with the addition of suitable Kiwi from the wild and a nest egg operation.

The kiwi breeding programme for the Haast Tokoeka and Okarito Rowi is also expanding rapidly and one of the challenges for the Trust is to be able to effectively display these breeding processes to the public.

In support of the Great Spotted Kiwi programme there will be field facilities established in the Craigieburn Forest Park which will ultimately include a captive natural breeding operation.

Expanded facilities are presently being constructed at Willowbank to allow the incubation of Kiwi eggs and the downstream husbandry of Kiwi chicks in far greater numbers than would have ever been thought possible a few years ago.

The Kiwi programme has entered a very exciting stage which marks a milestone in South Island Kiwi conservation.



The first two Haast Tokoeka chicks from Operation Nest Egg are carefully crated before being flown down to Wanaka for transportation to their nursery island in Lake Te Anau. They will be returned to Haast when they are big enough to protect themselves.

## Lemur Encounter - up close and personal



On Saturdays and Sundays the opportunity is now available for a one on one encounter with the ring tailed lemurs. You are accompanied into their enclosure with a keeper where you can feed and interact with these special monkeys. Learn more about the animal from the keeper while experiencing their beautiful nature first hand. Please note there is a charge for this experience.

# Kiwi Hui 2006

On the 10th April three members of the NZCT went to New Plymouth to attend a Kiwi Hui. This is run by DoC and is attended by other organisations who have one common goal, which is to save our ever decreasing number of kiwi. With the exception of the Okirito DoC contingent we were the only other organisation representing the South Island. The Hui was extremely informative, with many of the North Island organisations giving presentations about their Reserves, how they went about managing predators and then re-introducing kiwis into the reserves. Many of these reserves have extremely difficult terrain which has to be monitored by dedicated team members as well as having a great volunteer system in place. The Bank of New Zealand is extremely supportive of the Kiwi programme and having helped many an organisation are hoping to be able to spread this help out to other organisations. In a recent survey that BNZ conducted, it revealed "an overwhelming public awareness of the plight of the kiwi with a strong call by New Zealanders to support ways to save our national icon" Education is also very important to them, which goes hand in hand with what we at the NZCT are striving for, with increasing success. Isabel Castro from Massey University, together with some of her students are doing a fascinating study on Pounui Island with kiwis and have made some very interesting findings both with the habitat, food and their continual battle with predators such as rats who not only are predators but who also forage for the same food so will always be in competition with each other. We were also shown how to insert transponders into chicks, all be it that it was done on a live chicken. A transponder is inserted into a Kiwi chick to allow it to be monitored and although it looks to be painful, we were assured that they don't feel a thing. An alternative to placing a transponder into the Kiwi is to band it with a ring on its leg, this once again has to be done in such a manner that the bird cannot get injured once released. After three very full days, there was one message that came across very clearly and that is that there is an enormous amount of people in New Zealand who care about saving our National icon and who have a huge amount of respect for each other and for what each organisation is striving to accomplish.



Participants at the kiwi hui practice the placement of a transponder into a chicken.

We have a number of sponsorship opportunities available for new conservation initiatives we are undertaking. If you are interested in having more involvement please contact our trust manager, Janet, on 03 359 6226.



Construction is underway on raising the height of the fences in the enclosures for the Great Spotted kiwi pair. These kiwi can jump quite high and modifications to our predator free area has to take place to keep them safely contained. The male, Saxon, who is arriving shortly will initially be kept in an enclosure away from Mohua (our female). Over a period of time the birds will be gradually moved closer to each other until we are finally able to place them into the same enclosure. This gives the birds some 'acclimatization' time to get used to each other and allows for a less stressful introduction.

## Membership Changes

The New Zealand Conservation Trust has recently made a number of changes to how our membership works. Information regarding these changes will be sent to you at the time of your membership renewal or you can contact us on 3596226 or [conservationtrust@willowbank.co.nz](mailto:conservationtrust@willowbank.co.nz) for more information. We hope you will continue to support us in the conservation work we do and thank all of our members for their support so far.

We would like to thank Fisher and Paykel and Kitchen Appliances respectively for their generous donations of a much needed washing machine for the kiwi breeding area and fridges for medicines and kiwi food. It is this kind of support which contributes to the work we are able to do.



"A warm welcome to a baby Llama, born at Willowbank on the 27<sup>th</sup> February which has still to be named. Caramello his father is a very gentle animal who loves children and taking nuts out of their hands. He often goes for walks around the farmyard to the picnic area where our new donkey ride is situated."

Coming soon - the New Zealand Conservation Trust website. For more in depth information on conservation projects visit



[www.nzconservationtrust.org.nz](http://www.nzconservationtrust.org.nz)