



# New Zealand Conservation Trust

## Spring 2005

Welcome to all our members. We have had some exciting developments take place during the last few months which should further our conservation work. Read on to see what's been happening for us.....

### OPERATION NEST EGG (O.N.E.)



The first Haast egg hatching



Haast chick in the TLC unit

September saw the start of a new era for the NZCT with the beginning of our participation in the BNZ Recovery Program Operation Nest Egg. This program involves eggs being removed from the wild by D.O.C. and either flown or driven to Chch for delivery to our facilities. We incubate the eggs, the chick hatches and once it has reached a certain weight it is taken to a predator free area where it remains until big enough to protect itself. The chick is then returned to the area in which the egg came from.

The purpose of this program is to eliminate the critical stage in the kiwi chick's life when they are very vulnerable to predators and have little ability to defend themselves.

It is a fantastic project for us to be involved in and hopefully we will see a rise in the numbers of South Island Kiwi species through this program.

We have had successful hatchings of the first Okarito (Rowi) egg and both the viable Haast Tokoeka eggs hatched successfully. On top of this we have hatched two North Island Brown kiwi with a further two eggs under the male.



### Okarito kiwi hatching success

The successful hatching of the Okarito (Rowi) egg is a major success for the Trust as this egg had been abandoned in the wild approximately ten days after being laid.

This strong, healthy chick will be returned to its natural habitat and will go some way to boosting the numbers of the Okarito kiwi. It is currently estimated that the population numbers of this species are as low as three hundred birds so any successful hatching is very valuable to the survival of these kiwi.

We hope to keep you updated on the progress of this chick as it passes back into the care of the Department of Conservation for eventual release.

### Education program update



The collective 'Immersion' group work on their food garden project designed to feed the animals at the reserve. This project is open to all volunteers.



The first harvest...spinach for the primates which was greatly enjoyed

The 'Travellin' Tutatara' is visiting lots of Canterbury schools. This visit is a conservation targeted session with our education officer. If you have children at school we encourage you to talk to your school about taking advantage of the range of educational opportunities we offer. There's nothing better when you're studying dinosaurs to have our very own living example come visit. This program has a strong focus on kiwi conservation and has been enjoyed by over 1400 students this year.



Our inquiry project option has seen participation from a number of groups including an entire school which made enrichment systems for a variety of our animals. This project was a student directed research and construction based option and turned up some ingenious finished projects by the children.



# Return of the Buff Weka

The New Zealand Conservation Trust in partnership with Willowbank Wildlife Reserve has welcomed a new addition to their native captive breeding programmes. We see the arrival of 14 Buff Weka (*Gallirallus australis v. hectori*) to Willowbank Wildlife Reserve. (these birds are a different sub-species to the West Coast Weka). The birds were captured on the Chatham Islands by a group of volunteers and staff and will form the basis of a breeding group for the New Zealand Conservation Trust and Willowbank.

The aim with these birds is to undertake a captive breeding program with the goal of eventually releasing the birds and repopulating areas of Canterbury. Our initial release area will be in a 'predator free' area in the Styx Mill Reserve.

The Buff Weka has been extinct in this region since the 1930's so this program is a major step in conservation efforts for the Canterbury region.

The Buff Weka was introduced to the Chatham Islands (which is the only place they now live and are still legally allowed to be eaten!) from Canterbury in 1905 and 100 years later we will see the return of them to their natural area of habitation.

The weka is a large, brown flightless bird with a famously curious personality. Although somewhat shy, contact with, and proximity to human habitation results in a number of opportunistic behaviours from the bird. They will quite happily remove small items and pinch foodstuffs right before your eyes.

Be sure to keep your eyes open for these birds next time you visit the reserve.



Jeremy, construction manager at Willowbank and intrepid weka catcher on the Chatham Islands trip does the honours and releases one of the birds into their new enclosures at Willowbank.

## The Ashley School Projects

The Ashley School extension group worked on creating enrichment systems for a variety of the animals at the reserve. The cappuchin monkeys enjoy the challenge of getting their food from one of the finished projects.



This project involved the students being involved in all aspects of research, design, construction and installation.

For more information, to speak to our Trust Manager or Education Officer or to become involved in working bees please contact us:  
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## Chairman's word.....

Hello to all our members...work continues on our new kiwi viewing facility which, upon completion, will allow the public to view the breeding facilities, to see hatchings and young chicks in the first stages of their lives. A number of sponsors have contributed to this project and we thank them all for their invaluable input. Our new kiwi project for the Great Spotted kiwi is moving through the required stages to get to the point where we can get it off the ground...hopefully more news on this front next update. Thanks to all of our members for their support. Without this the Trust would be unable to undertake the level of valuable conservation work that it does. We hope you all have a happy Christmas and a wonderful New Year.



**Shaun the WWR kiwi keeper with Mohua**

The beginning of August saw the arrival of Mohua, the first Great Spotted Kiwi to be held by the New Zealand Conservation Trust at Willowbank Wildlife Reserve.

Mohua has a damaged beak which has affected her ability to feed herself and has resulted in her being brought back into captivity for rehabilitation at Willowbank after a previous release into the wild.

Unfortunately the damage to Mohua's beak is permanent and will necessitate Mohua remaining in captivity. This however makes her a valuable part of future breeding programmes for Great Spotted Kiwi. A fantastic effort from staff with assisted feeding programmes for Mohua has seen her weight increase back to her initial release weight.

With the addition of tasty worms into her enclosure and a gradual lowering of the quantity of food given during assisted feeding Mohua is well on the road to better self sufficiency in food gathering. It has been an exciting development for the Trust and Willowbank to be actively involved in the rehabilitation of a kiwi such as Mohua.