

## Helping Kiwi survive



Did you know nine out of ten kiwi chicks in the wild die naturally or get chomped by stoats, cats or dogs? Appalling but true.

Matakohē-Limestone Island, which has no predators, offers a safe place for kiwi chicks to grow to a size where they can defend themselves from stoats and cats (but never dogs of course).

As part of the Department of Conservation "Operation Nestegg" programme, the island receives kiwi chicks, usually captured in the wild and brought across by Todd Hamilton, predator trapper and kiwi expert of the Whangarei Heads Landcare Group. Hatched on the mainland by their Dads but already independent at a week old, chicks like Nancy in the photograph here, are first micro-chipped for lifelong identification before release into the Island's safe haven.



At around 300 grams, the chicks are too small to wear radio-tracking transmitters. Left to themselves, they grow quickly and within a year have reached the target weight of 1200 grams where they can be safely relocated back onto the mainland with a good chance of fending off stoat and cat attacks.



◀ Without tracking transmitters fitted, the services of James Fraser and his specially-trained kiwi finding dog are much needed. The best time for the dogs to sniff-out kiwi is at night when they move about to feed and scent trails are fresh.

Hugh Robertson, renowned New Zealand kiwi expert, holds up a massive juvenile kiwi called PW, weighing in at a whopping 1800 grams. Hugh is the Department of Conservation scientist who manages kiwi in New Zealand. ▶



◀ Island Ranger, Cathy Mitchell in the photo above, weighs and fits a radio transmitter to a juvenile kiwi so it may be easily found at a later date when it is convenient to transport it from the island to a new home on the mainland.



◀ Kiwi leaving the island receive a blessing, given here by Te Parawhau kaumatua, Te Ihi Tito. This photo was taken on the foreshore at Onerahi where members of the public have the rare opportunity to see a kiwi at close quarters.

Graduating from the Matakohē-Limestone Island creche, the now juvenile kiwi are released at Whangarei Heads into predator controlled areas managed by the Whangarei Heads Landcare Group. In this photograph, David Walker of Golden Bay Cement releases a juvenile female named 'Wilson' by GBC staff in honour of the long association of the cement company with the island. ▶



Matakohē-Limestone Island has over seven years (2002 - Aug. 2008) successfully returned 61 kiwi back into the mainland environment, helping kiwi survive in the wild.

More information about kiwi can be found on the website through the menu: The Island → Restoring the Island → Animal Introduction.