

Save Cans – Save the Kakapo



There is added incentive now to recycle your cans as increases in can recycling will mean greater kakapo funding.

There is strong linkage between aluminium can recycling and kakapo sponsorship, besides the obvious symbolism, or "synergy" as Kerry McDonald puts it.

Comalco have agreed that, if can recovery can be increased significantly, they will increase their funding of the kakapo programme.

This offer should be added incentive to conservationists to return their cans to recycling bins. At present New Zealand has a can return rate of about

30 percent – a good base from which to start. It should not take much to improve that and in turn provide extra money for kakapo. Encourage children to collect cans instead of hitting their parents for pocket money. Ensure any cans discarded at your workplace or functions you attend, are recycled. The processing of a recycled can uses only five percent of the energy required to produce a can from raw materials.

The Trust Fund is a partnership between Forest and Bird and the Department of Conservation. Society director, Kevin Smith, DoC's director-general, Bill Mansfield and the chairperson of the New Zealand Conservation Authority oversee the operation of the fund. They have the power to co-opt a further trustee from the commercial sector. Administration of the Fund is the responsibility of Forest and Bird. For each sponsorship a project committee is established comprising representatives from Forest and Bird, DoC and the sponsoring company.

Sponsorships will not be limited to the glamorous bird species. Skinks, giant wetas, carnivorous land snails and a host of threatened native plants all need help too.

Credit for developing and successfully steering the Trust Fund through the administrative and legal requirements lies mainly with DoC's former assistant-director, Gordon Shroff, Society solicitor David Hurley and Society staff.

Comalco have committed themselves to a \$1,000,000 sponsorship for kakapo over six years. Additional funds will be contributed if aluminium can return rates increase significantly: a good incentive for Forest and Bird and DoC to promote aluminium can recycling which is a worthwhile endeavour in its own right. Comalco's sponsorship will enable DoC to fully implement the kakapo recovery plan.

Some of the projects include: close monitoring of the Codfish Island and Little Barrier

populations, supplementary feeding to increase the chance of breeding success, development of captive breeding techniques in case the wild population continues to decline, rat control, further research into kakapo feeding and habitat requirements.

Tasman Forestry have committed \$150,000 over three years to a management project designed to discover the key to maintaining viable kokako populations in mainland forests. Nest predation by rats and stoats and food competition from possums are serious problems for the kokako. Few chicks are successfully fledged.

The 3-year project will aim at controlling predators such as rats, stoats, and wild cats which attack nesting kokako and their eggs or nestlings. Browsing animals which have a detrimental effect on the kokako's habitat will also be controlled.

The project will be centred on forests in the Kaharoa area north of Rotorua. Heading the project will be Hazel Speed, who has recently spent three years studying kokako in Pureora and other King Country forests. Working with DoC staff, she will monitor the effects of the control programme on both predators and kokako to establish the most effective and efficient management techniques.

It is expected that the project results will have wide application for the management of other kokako reserves.

Bryce Heard, Tasman's chief executive, is right behind the project.

Working Side By Side

"Tasman Forestry's commitment to the project is an illustration of industry and the conservation movement working side by side with Government in a sensible, positive manner. We particularly support the active management principles in this project, which should help the kokako's survival," he says.

These projects will be implemented by DoC's newly formed Threatened Species Unit headed by Alan Saunders. Only projects approved by the Threatened Species Unit and forming part of a recovery plan (where one exists) will be considered for sponsorship. Forest and Bird has welcomed the formation of the Threatened Species Unit and we have been very pleased by their willingness to consult with Forest and Bird and seek our input into the recovery plans. Society field director Mark Bellingham is on the kakapo recovery committee and Kevin Smith is on the kokako committee.

Cynics might suggest that Tasman and Comalco are buying off two of their potentially sternest critics to any future controversial developments they might be planning. To the credit of both firms, neither has even hinted that it expects a softening of Forest and Bird's or DoC's conservation advocacy on other issues.

Observes Gordon Ell: "It was made clear from the outset that the sponsorship will be completely separate from any other relationship we may have with the company. Any spillover to date has been to the benefit of conservation. The overwhelmingly positive response Tasman Forestry have had to their kokako sponsorship and their commitment to native forest protection in the Tasman Accord has convinced parent company Fletcher Challenge of the merit of the green approach. Fletcher Challenge's Tasmanian subsidiary, Australian Newsprint Mills, played a constructive role in a recent accord in Tasmania between conservationists and the timber industry."

The co-operative partnership forged between DoC, Forest and Bird and industry augurs well for the future of some of New Zealand's most special inhabitants. Only 43 kakapo managed to hang on till New Zealand's sesquicentennial celebration after surviving here on these isolated islands for millions of years. The kakapo will not be around for the bi-centennial celebrations without a great deal of help, nor might the kokako. Comalco and Tasman Forestry's investment in the future of New Zealand's native wildlife will hopefully be just the first of a number of threatened species sponsorships.