

## Good News

IT'S NOT ALL DOOM AND GLOOM out there, as the latest update from the Department of Conservation's Threatened Species Unit proves. Some recent advances include:

**Mahoenui giant weta:** Weta have been released into nearby DoC reserves from the main gorse-ridden weta area. Some of these weta have been seen 12 months later. Fire-breaks have been created throughout the main weta area. Captive breeding has been successful (see *Forest & Bird* February 1990).

**Black stilt:** The total number of black stilts in the Mackenzie Basin last season was 66 black and 16 near-black hybrids, with just 8 pairs of pure black stilts. 63 eggs were artificially incubated at the new Twizel captive breeding facility to lessen the risk of egg predation. Most eggs were then returned to birds in the wild, although 13 stilts were hand

reared or reared by captive pairs.

**Takahe:** The takahe captive rearing programme goes from strength to strength. Last summer 36 chicks were raised in the wild in the Murchisons and 17 were captive reared at Burwood Bush near Lake Te Anau. Birds raised at Burwood Bush are being released in the Glaisnock area of the Stuart Mountains and two island populations have been established on Maud and Mana Islands. The significant fact is that captive-reared birds released in the Stuart Mountains are attempting to breed. Total numbers are 260, with 180 in the Murchisons. In 1983 the birds were reduced to 120 in the wild.

**Kakapo:** The endangered bird with the highest profile. Two males have recently been shifted to Maud Island, in anticipation of a captive breeding programme. On Little Bar-

rier Island kakapo are showing encouraging signs of eating exotic supplementary foods.

**Chatham Island taiko:** One taiko chick fledged from known burrows this season. The estimated population of this seabird is between 50 and 150.

**Stitchbird:** More intensive efforts will be put into establishing the Kapiti Island population, especially now that possums are no longer on the island.

**Pingao:** The sand-binding plants are being grown from seed and planted out in dunes. Precise distribution of pingao is being mapped on low level aerial photos. Pingao is also being planted *in situ* on marae so that cultivated plants can be used for weaving instead of being taken from the wild. ♣

## KNOW YOUR WEEDS

### Wild Ginger

TWO SPECIES OF GINGER have become wild in New Zealand: kahili ginger (*Hedychium gardnerianum*) and yellow ginger (*Hedychium flavescens*). Widely grown as ornamental plants, they have escaped into the wild and become a major problem.

Wild ginger smothers the forest floor, forming a dense mat of roots which is virtually impenetrable. Gradually it is creeping into our native forests. It is widespread in the Wai-takere Ranges, Northland and Coromandel forests. It has started to spread south and has been spotted in the wild in Wellington, near Christchurch and on the West Coast.

The two species can be distinguished one from the other. Kahili ginger has a spike of lemon yellow flowers with red stamens. After flowering the seed capsules split to display red/orange seeds which are dispersed by birds, often into undisturbed forest. The



Yellow ginger. Photo: Ewen Cameron

leaves are lance shaped and smooth. Yellow ginger has cream coloured flowers and its leaves are narrower. It does not set seed.

#### Eradication

Wherever possible wild ginger should be dug up, taking care to remove all the rhizomes. Do not dump the plant by the roadside or in the compost heap as the smallest rhizome will form a new plant.

For large infestations, spraying is an option. The only herbicide that works is Escort. A wetting agent called Pulse can be added to the spray mixture to help the spray adhere to the leaves. Spraying should take place only from early spring to autumn. If the stems are cut, spray may be painted on each stem and on exposed rhizomes. Spraying is effective but it can take up to 18 months for the plant to die – one application only is required. ♣

Anne Joyce



Kahili ginger. Photo: Gareth Eyres