

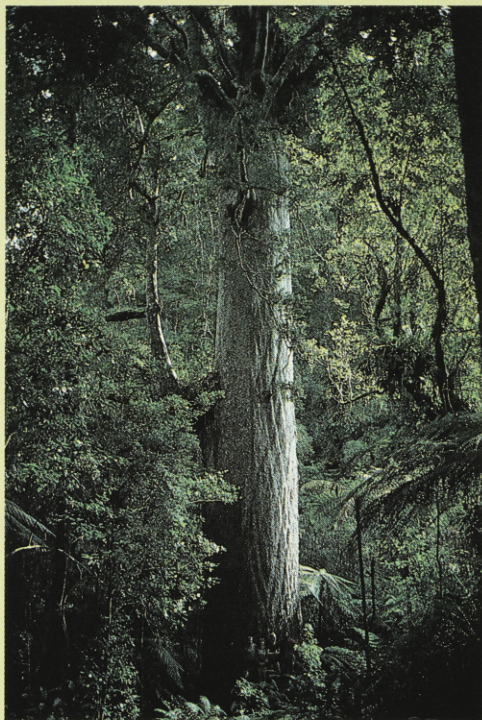
Kokako in Northland

SURVEY WORK CARRIED out this year in Waipoua Forest in preparation for an aerial possum poisoning operation has turned up a bonus in the form of an unexpectedly high kokako population.

At the time of writing (early September) DoC field workers had located 17 birds, including at least six pairs. The kokako found so far are clustered in the eastern reaches of Waipoua, on high, wet plateau country along the old Waoku coach road. While there have been sporadic records of kokako from Waipoua for many years, this is the first time the birds have been systematically monitored in the forest.

But the news from Puketi forest is less bright. Preliminary survey results suggest a major decline in kokako numbers since 1984 when 100 birds were recorded. This decline has coincided with increased levels of possum damage in the forest, and DoC staff from Kaikohe are gearing up for an intensive possum trapping programme around the known kokako area.

The department is now weighing up long term management options for the two populations. Possum and goat control operations are either underway or imminent in both habitats. Preliminary stoat trapping is being carried out in populations, albeit temporarily.



Ward kauri, Waipoua forest, centrepiece of the proposed Kauri National Park. With the news of a sizeable kokako population in the area, DoC's possum control programme has come at a timely moment. Photo: Mark Bellingham

The intensive ground-based possum trapping in Puketi may provide a logistic base on which to build rat and mustelid control programmes.

The discovery of the Waipoua kokako population has thrown a new angle on kokako management in Northland, and DoC faces some difficult choices as to where and how kokako populations can best be protected in these large and rugged blocks of forest. This work in Northland will be co-ordinated with kokako management in other parts of the North Island under the North Island kokako recovery plan, which will be released shortly.

Nick Hancox and Gretchen Rasch ✂

Kakerori starting to recover

IN THE AUGUST 1990 issue of *Forest & Bird* we read of the plight of the kakerori or Rarotonga flycatcher (population circa 30) and the efforts to improve its chances of survival. This year is the second of a major rat poisoning campaign within the bird's habitat and the signs of recovery already look good.

Last year a marvellous volunteer effort by Wellingtonian Eddie Saul led to a breakthrough in juvenile production. The rat control campaign which he carried out allowed 13 kakerori young to successfully leave the nest, a huge increase on previous years.



How many of those young survived to reach breeding age? After a week of survey, Hugh Robertson of the Department of Conservation reported that at least six of the fledglings had survived the year. He was hopeful of more, since not all of the habitat had yet been searched. In addition, almost all of the previous year's adults had survived, including three which Rod Hay banded in 1984!

Eddie Saul made an even bigger commitment this year. His application for leave from his job at DSIR's Library Centre was not received very sympathetically and he had to retire early, a sacrifice he was prepared to make for the sake of the birds. We trust that Eddie's efforts will provide an even bigger boost to the kakerori this season. ✂

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