

Kokako banding in Rotoehu forest. From left, Kerry Brown, John Innes and Paul Jansen. Radio transmitters are attached to adult birds so that their nesting activities can be followed. The transmitters are short-lived and designed to fall off within a few months.

Other lone birds or pairs may be taken into captivity at Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre. They will form the basis of a captive breeding population, another insurance against extinction and a source of study.

**I**SLANDS FREE of introduced mammals are havens for endangered native birds, and these island populations are an insurance against extinction. Compared with the relative ease of island security, mainland management of

kokako is difficult, time-consuming and expensive, and there is no guarantee it will save the birds from extinction in the longer term.

So is it worthwhile? Why not take the easy option, save money, and rest on the laurels of Little Barrier and Kapiti Islands? Some scientists favour that option (see page 30) but Paul Jansen vigorously champions the recovery plan and its mainland programme.

Until the research is done, the doomsayers' opinions are premature and unwarranted, he says. He points out that at Kaharoa, where introduced mammals are controlled, kokako have increased to ten pairs with six young produced last summer, a significant increase over the previous summer's numbers.

Gerry McSweeney, former director of Forest and Bird, also argues strongly for mainland programmes. "Offshore islands usually have their own, often unique, assemblage of animals and plants which may be threatened by the introduction of 'foreign' species like kokako", he says. "They also provide little opportunity for ordinary people to participate in the conservation programmes or to benefit from viewing threatened or endangered species in accessible locations."

As the results of the various studies come in, it may become apparent that management need not be comprehensive or regular. Perhaps control of key predators, in those fruitful years when kokako food is most abundant, may be enough to allow breeding and population stability. New technology may make pest control easier and cheaper.

Island sanctuaries too are vulnerable. Catastrophes may occur. Fire, storm or rat invasion could overturn the island harmony overnight. Even if disaster does

not strike, this territorial species will need management to ensure its long-term survival on an island of only 3,000 hectares. There had been no kokako on Little Barrier Island for thousands of years, suggesting the island may be too small for them to survive naturally over a long period. Kapiti Island, at 2,000 hectares, is even smaller.

The position of the kokako recovery group is clear – don't put all your eggs in the basket of island sanctuaries. Their philosophy is optimistic. They believe that, with good management, the North Island kokako will recover from its century-long decline.

A depressingly large number of New Zealand's threatened birds are now restricted to offshore islands, inaccessible and invisible to most people. Against the odds the kokako survives on the North Island. For the sake of the birds themselves, their part in the forest ecosystem, and the people of New Zealand, let us try and keep them here.

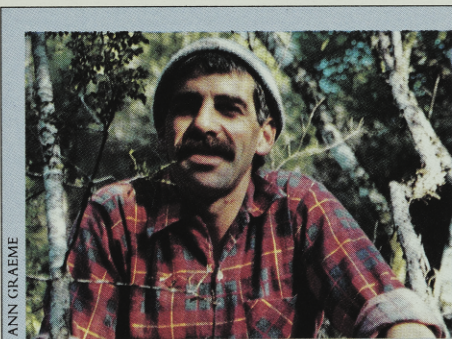
#### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Ann Graeme for additional information. ♦



Gretchen Rasch has been involved with kokako since 1985. She works in the Threatened Species Unit of DoC and is the author of the kokako recovery plan.

She is currently based in Te Anau.



On his farm north of Rotorua, Forest and Bird member Winston Fleming has placed a covenant on 30 hectares of native bush adjoining the Kaharoa forest. Kaharoa is the site of a kokako research programme sponsored by Tasman Forestry.

Since the bush was fenced to keep out grazing stock, the understorey has flourished and a pair of kokako have taken up residence. Winston calls his venture the Kiwi Outback Experience and guides visitors through the forest or provides billy tea and venison at his bush hut where guests can enjoy the bird song at dusk. Prospective visitors can contact Winston on (07) 332-3629.

## S.E. AUSTRALIA WILDLIFE & BIRDING TOUR

**\$3270.00** per person

**27 Sept - 11 Oct 1992**

#### HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS FULLY GUIDED TOUR

Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, opals, Snowy Mountains, Aboriginal culture, Bushrangers, Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Red-necked Wallaby, Sugar Glider, Bush-tailed Possum, Common Dolphin, Koala, Platypus, Swamp Wallaby, Wombat, Lyrebird, New-holland Honeyeater, White Cockatoo, Crimson Rosella, Rainbow Lorikeet, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, Australian Raven plus over 200 other species of birds.

Ralph Levinson at Travelworks has been setting up special interest tours since 1977. In line with our philosophy that travel should be an enjoyable learning experience, this tour will be limited to just 16 people.

*Travelworks*

Travelworks NZ Ltd  
PO 28440, Remuera, Auckland 5.  
Ph: 09 522 0330, Fax: 09 522 0331

**TAANZ BONDED MEMBER**

Write, phone or fax for further details.