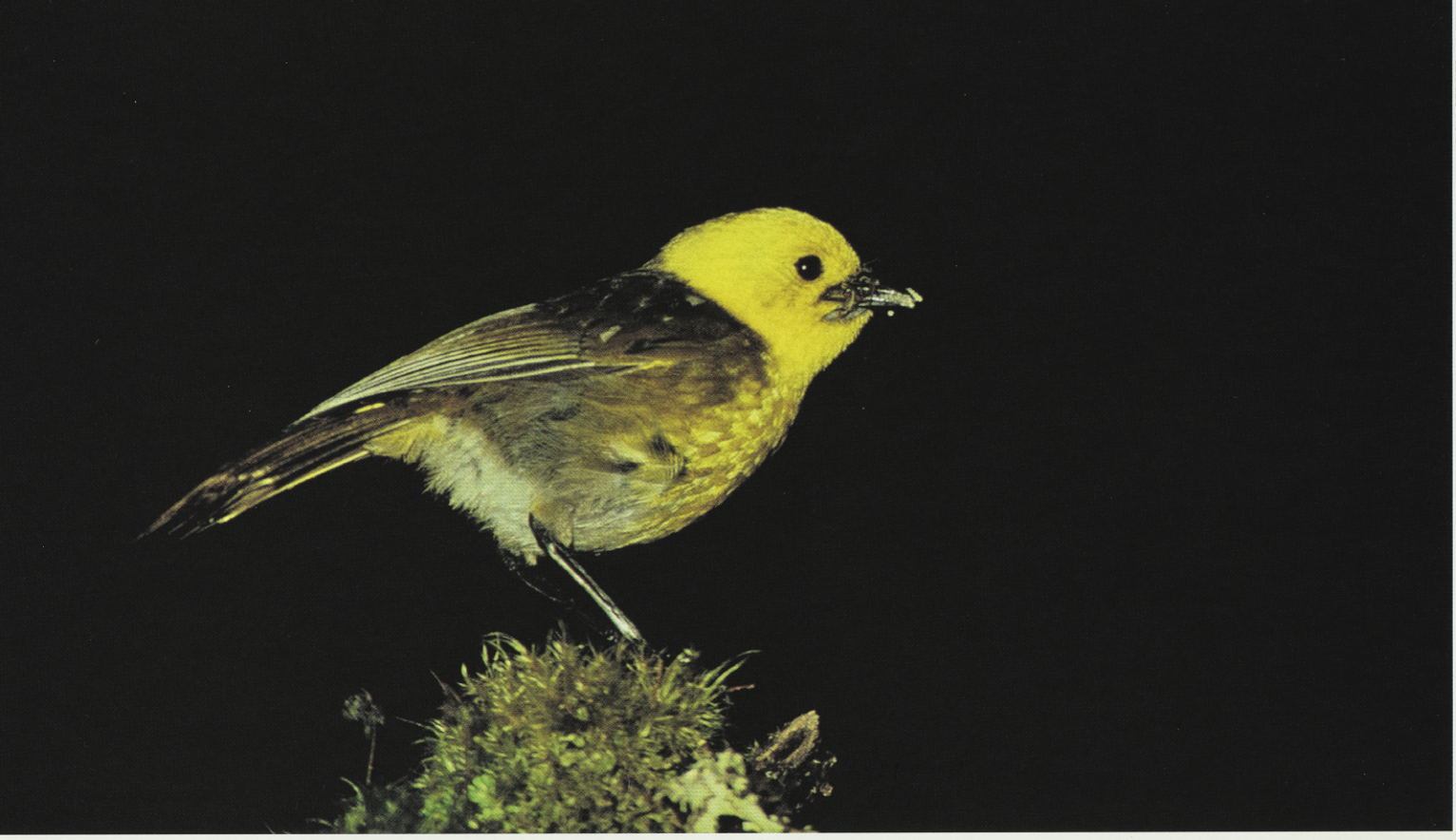

DON GEDDES

Mohua search for food in the forest canopy, where they appear to thoroughly inspect leaves and twigs from all angles, and also in the lichen, moss and crevices on the trunks of beech trees. Spiders, weta, beetles, moths and other insects form the bulk of their diet.

ROD HAY

The work with mohua provides the first quantified evidence of the magnitude of stoat impacts on the long-term viability of a threatened endemic bird. Similar threats also face the New Zealand forest parrots, kiwi, kereru, robin, Hutton's shearwater, black stilt, takahe, and possibly other species such as our bats, kokako, and penguins.

FOUND ONLY IN the South Island, the mohua *(Mohoua ochrocephala)* is a small insectivorous bird which has disappeared from extensive areas of relatively unmodified forests since the arrival of Europeans. Historical records report that mohua were once among the most abundant and conspicuous forest birds in the South Island and Stewart Island and were present in most forest habitats of these islands – some 6.5 million hectares.

Mohua now only occupy about a quarter of their historical range (see map), and are continuing to decline. Their main predators are stoats. During most mohua

Climbing skills required. Peter Dilks gets a bird's eye view as he climbs up to examine mohua nests in the Eglinton Valley and follow the fate of eggs and chicks. The work requires specialised rock climbing and caving equipment to reach the nest holes which can be 30 metres up in the canopy. If stoat control is effective, almost all nests produce young and no females are lost to predation.