

estimating 19,000 frogs inhabit the island. This healthy population is spreading as the forest regenerates, while the Motuara Island transfer secures the species further.

One rare inhabitant of Maud managed to elude observers for many years, until its discovery in 1989. The striped gecko *Hoplodactylus stephensi*, a beautifully marked forest gecko was previously thought to exist only on Stephens Island — and in pitifully small numbers — so the finding of a second population on Maud has eased concerns about the survival of this species.

Maud Island is also an integral part of the 'takahe recovery programme'. It is part of the 'managed island' population which is proving valuable insurance for the species, as DoC staff struggle to arrest the decline of the last remaining natural population in the Murchison Mountains of Fiordland. Maud has maintained a moderately productive population of several pairs since 1984, with 'surplus' birds being made available for stocking Tiritiri Matangi Island in the Hauraki Gulf, and other islands. Birds are regularly transferred from island to island, ensuring that in-breeding is minimised.

One of the most under-rated success stories has been the creation of a new breeding colony of a common seabird, the fluttering shearwater, on Maud Island by Brian Bell and Ornithological Society volunteers. Well-grown chicks from a neighbouring island were transferred to special handmade burrows on Maud, and hand-fed until fledging. Shearwaters will nearly always return to breed on the island where they were raised. On reaching maturity (four or five years after leaving Maud), some have already returned. The simple technique of 'switching' islands at a critical time in the chicks' development has meant the mature birds have started returning to breed on Maud Island, creating what is hoped will become a self-sustaining population. This is the first time an entirely new breeding colony of shearwaters has been established through transfers. While not important for the survival of fluttering shearwaters, the project has pioneered vital techniques which it is hoped will facilitate establishment of new breeding populations of threatened seabirds such as the taiko, where current nesting locations are threatened by predators.

Maud Island also holds a recovering population of the large native snail *Powelliphanta hochstetteri obscura*, along with other rare invertebrates such as the Cook Strait click beetle. The rare shrub *Hebe speciosa* has been transferred here



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Forest interior on Maud Island shows typical frog habitat.

At right: the Maud Island frog or pakaka, until recently found nowhere else in the world. Mid right: the Cook Strait click beetle is an endangered flightless insect found on Maud Island. Bottom right: the Cook Strait giant weta is descended from a population transferred from Mana Island off the Wellington coast.

from its one natural South Island location at Titirangi Bay, and is surviving well — as is the Cook Strait Spaniard reintroduced in the 1970s as a kakapo food.

Maud has been a conservation leader in several ways, with early and successful transfers of birds and insects, and vitally important remnant populations of rare wildlife. The island is also one of the first to have an official pest and weed prevention and control strategy put in place. This has been widely used as a model for developing systems on other 'conservation islands' throughout the country.

In its early years as a reserve, Maud was in effect sheep pasture — an open paddock of European pasture grasses, with a tiny forest remnant of 18 hectares. In 25 years it has been transformed into an important reserve for native plants and animals. The revegetation continues to expand in the complete absence of pest species such as possum, rat, goat and deer. As a result, the quality of the lush kohekohe-dominated bush is unsurpassed in the region. The regeneration is benefiting the island's



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