

Help us to save a very special part of New Zealand's heritage

Na te Save our snails society

On a small hill near Cape Reinga of this country there lives a very special and rare animal. Maori know it as pupuharakeke or flax snail. It is probably one of the rarest snails in the world and is in danger of dying out completely.

It is a bright beautiful animal with a rich chocolate brown shell which is bright pink inside and the snail itself is quite large and has smoke grey skin.

These snails are only found in small pockets of bush around the northern tip of New Zealand. These pockets of bush are all that remain of a once extensive area of bush that has been cleared for farmland.

The largest colony of pupuharakeke alive are found in the small patch of bush on Maungapiko Hill. Old people can remember when the entire hill was covered in bush and the pupuharakeke were everywhere. Today only the most persistent person would be lucky enough to find one in the small piece of bush that is their home.

But this last outpost is still threatened.

For the past six years we have been negotiating with the Maori land owners for permission to fence off the small patch of bush on Maungapiko Hill.

During this time we have seen the bush eaten back by wild stock. As the bush canopy has been opened up by grazing, thrushes and blackbirds have been allowed into the bush to prey on the snails.

Pupuharakeke hide in thick moist leaf litter during the day and come out at night to eat the leaves that have fallen off native trees. They are extremely fussy and would rather starve to death than eat the leaves off trees they do not like.

Unfortunately sheep and cattle like to eat the same plants and the pupuharakeke. Without the leaves of their favourite trees the snails starve to death. This is what has been happening at Maungapiko.

The grazing of stock on the bush has therefore caused the snail population to drop rapidly. The only solution that will save these rare snails is to fence off the small patch of bush from the wild stock and to replant some of the native trees.

In recent weeks the land owners have agreed to allow us to fence off the small patch of bush on the side of Maungapiko Hill. We are keen to go ahead with this last opportunity of saving

these snails.

To do this we need your help.

Who are the Save Our Snails Society?

The Save Our Snails Society was formed six years ago by a group of people who were concerned that many of our native animals like snails, giant wetas, stag beetles and giant weevils were dying out and no one seemed to care. The aim of the society is to promote and protect these types of animals.

We are an independent group and all our activities are funded by donations and by fundraising activities. We have been involved in trying to prevent pupuharakeke colonies in other areas from dying out by planting trees and by laying rat poison to stop the rats and mice from eating the baby snails.

We have produced posters of native beetles and snails which we have given away to schools. We are also constantly giving talks about our endangered snails and beetles. Many people do not seem to realize that our native snails like the pupuharakeke are just as much a part of New Zealand as the kiwi or the tuatara.



The Far-Northern flax snail or pupuharakeke.



The outline of the proposed fence around the bush patch containing the snails at Maungapiko Hill.