

## People power brings kokako back

The return of the endangered kokako to Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari after 30 years shows that people can reverse environmental loss when they put their minds to it, says fundraising expert and environmental author Tony Lindsay.

Kokako have been extinct in the area since the 1980s. The forest-covered mountain, near Cambridge in Waikato, is now a mainland ecological island protected by the world's longest predator-proof fence. Over the past two weeks, six kokako have been released into the forest, with another 34 to come.

The project is being funded by the \$70,000 the Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust Board has raised with the support of Vega.works, the supporter engagement software platform developed by Mr Lindsay's company to help clubs and charities raise money. A social entrepreneur with a long history of raising money for charities, Mr Lindsay had conservation groups like Maungatautari in mind when he led the creation of the Vega.works platform.

'Vega.works is intensely proud to be associated with the successful reintroduction of kokako to

Maungatautari,' he said. 'Conservation, restoration and accepting our responsibilities as kaitiaki of the natural world are issues close to my heart. It's vital that groups like Maungatautari can successfully raise money to do the work they need to do. Without sanctuaries like Maungatautari, many New Zealanders and most tourists would never get to see our unique and wonderful flora and fauna.'

Kokako are wattlebirds, and are closely related to the now-extinct huia and the near-threatened saddleback. In Maori mythology, kokako were the birds that brought water to the demi-god Maui as he battled the sun. The songs of the North Island kokako (the South Island kokako is thought extinct) were once common, but their numbers have dwindled in the face of habitat loss and predation from introduced animals, like rats and stoats.

They disappeared from Maungatautari in the early 1980s, but with the 3,400 ha native conifer/broadleaf/podocarps forest now safe behind a 47 km long predator-proof fence trustees decided it was time to bring them back. The birds being relocated to Maungatautari are from Pureora Forest west of Lake Taupo. Ten will be released this year, with the rest released over the next three years.

'If you are ever in a position to hear the haunting song of the kokako on a misty morning, you are transported back to an ancient Aotearoa/New Zealand and you will never forget the experience,' Mr Lindsay said. 'This beautiful bird will now sing over the Waikato from the security of Maungatautari. What an achievement for everyone who worked hard to make it happen.'

Mr Lindsay says that more money is needed to support the project, and urges anyone who can spare even a dollar or two to go to the Maungatautari or Vega websites to make a donation. 'Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust is an extraordinary credit to its founders and to all the people of the Waikato. It is a globally recognised taonga, and I urge everyone to support it.'

Saddlebacks were reintroduced to Maungatautari in 2012 from Tiritiri Matangi, in the Hauraki Gulf, and are now breeding well.

*This is a reprinted press release issued by Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari on 11 October 2015. For comment please contact Tony Lindsay (027 286 4277) or Adelia Hallett (027 221 7451). For more information on Maungatautari see [www.sanctuarymountain.co.nz](http://www.sanctuarymountain.co.nz).*



One of the kokako released at Maungatautari. Source: Phil Brown, Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari





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The Foundation's capital has come from donations by the NZ Institute of Forestry and NZIF members. With this, the Board has been able to offer three student scholarships and a travel award each year. It has also offered prizes for student poster competitions at NZIF conferences.

To make a real difference to New Zealand forestry, including being able to offer more and bigger scholarships and grants, the Board needs to grow the Foundation's funds. Consequently it is appealing for donations, large and small, from individuals, companies and organisations.

The Board will consider donations tagged for a specific purpose that meets the charitable requirements of the trust deed. A recent example has seen funds raised to create an award in memory of Jon Dey who was known to many in New Zealand forestry. Donations for that award are still being sought.

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