

# Haast birds to be moved to Resolution Island

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A consortium of conservationists, businesses and iwi are working together in an effort to transfer up to 80 yellowhead (mohua) from Haast to the predator-free Resolution Island, in Fiordland.

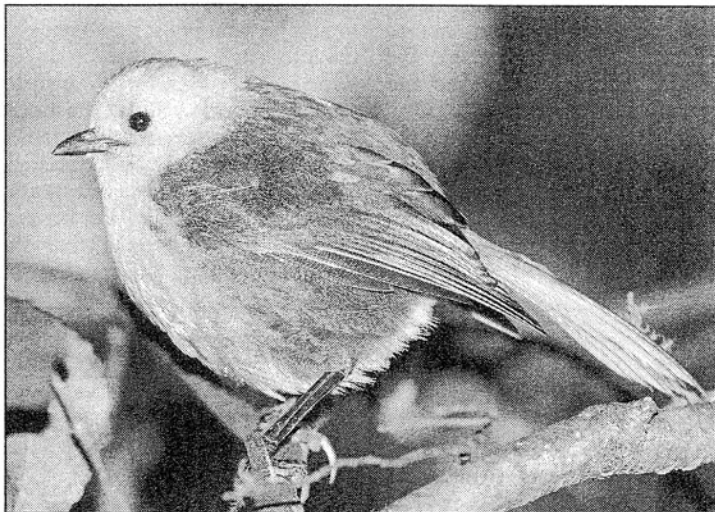
The relocation, planned for October, is intended to create another viable breeding population for the nationally vulnerable species.

It will be the first time native wildlife is returned to New Zealand's original nature reserve since famous conservationist and the island's former caretaker, Richard Henry, abandoned his transfers of kiwi and kakapo there in the early 1900s.

Department of Conservation biodiversity ranger Rebecca Wilson said the yellowhead population was doing well in the Landsborough Valley, inland and north of Haast, thanks to ongoing predator control.

That meant DOC could take some birds to re-populate Resolution Island without affecting the Landsborough population.

"Mohua numbers quickly increased in the Landsborough once predator control was established in 2000. We estimate that the population is now at about four times the size it was in 1998."



Yellowhead (mohua).

PICTURE: Michael Erkstaedt

Richard Henry's translocations a century ago failed because of the presence of predators on Resolution Island. However, recently a large-scale restoration project has removed all stoats.

Yellowheads are expected to flourish in their new home, as the climate and habitat are similar to neighbouring islands in Dusky Sound, where they have previously been transferred and established successfully.

On the West Coast side, Mountain Helicopters has helped DOC with flights to the Landsborough Valley for ongoing work maintaining stoat trap lines. The company is also

donating flying time to the transfer project.

Yellowheads were once widespread throughout the beech forests of the South Island. In the 1980s it was recognised they had disappeared from 75% of their former range.

DOC says introducing the birds on the 20,860ha Resolution Island should create a genetically diverse and self-sustaining population because the Landsborough Valley birds are genetically distinctive. DOC is still working out how many birds it will transfer, but it should be up to 80.