

MEDIA RELEASE

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Friends of Flora seek support for return of kiwi

The Friends of Flora community conservation group has a new ambitious goal – returning kiwi to Kahurangi National Park's Flora Stream area - and is seeking funding support for the project.

Friends of Flora chairperson Maryann Ewers said the group aimed to move seven great spotted kiwi/rooa pairs into the Flora area next year but needed to raise the necessary funds for this, initially \$24,000 by December this year.

“We now have an exceptional opportunity to bring our iconic native bird, the kiwi, back to one of Kahurangi National Park's most used access points. It is a place where many people, including children, would be able to experience one of the most unforgettable sounds in the New Zealand wilderness – the call of the kiwi.

“The stage is set for returning kiwi to the area with our pest trapping network now covering about 5000 hectares, stoat numbers now at low enough levels to make it safe for kiwi, and with Department and Conservation (DOC), Kiwi Recovery Group and local iwi approval for it. We just need more funding and we are now looking to the community and organisations to help us raise the necessary funds and help return kiwi to the Flora.

“The initial \$24,000 is required for the first year of the project to move kiwi to the Flora area with further funding needed for the following two years to monitor their progress.

“Many local children get their early experiences of the wilderness in the Flora area with their families, schools and youth groups, often staying overnight at Flora Hut. Many trampers also pass through this area heading further into the park. It will be great for the community to have kiwi in this part of Kahurangi National Park.”

Friends of Flora was set up in 2001 with the main aim of protecting and - where possible – returning endemic birds to the Flora Stream. Volunteers carry out rat and stoat trapping and other pest control and monitoring of bird and pest numbers, working closely with DOC. Motueka High School students have got involved, making and monitoring rat tunnels. The Friends of Flora won the Tasman District Council Environmental Award in 2003 and has been highly commended several times.

“Kahurangi is New Zealand's second-largest national park, exceptional for its unique diversity, and it is at the top of the list to become our next World Heritage site,” said Ms Ewers. “But sadly native birds and other wildlife are under threat in the park, as elsewhere, from introduced pests, especially stoats, rats and possums.

“Our volunteers have been able to make real progress in protecting native species from pests. Native bird numbers are increasing steadily and blue duck (whio) are now breeding again on the Flora Stream for the first time in 12 years.

“It is exciting to now be at the point where there can again be kiwi in this part of the park.”

People wishing to donate funds to the Friends of Flora return of the kiwi project can do so on their website www.fof.org.nz or they can contact the group by emailing fof@fof.org.nz or phoning (03) 526 6068.

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