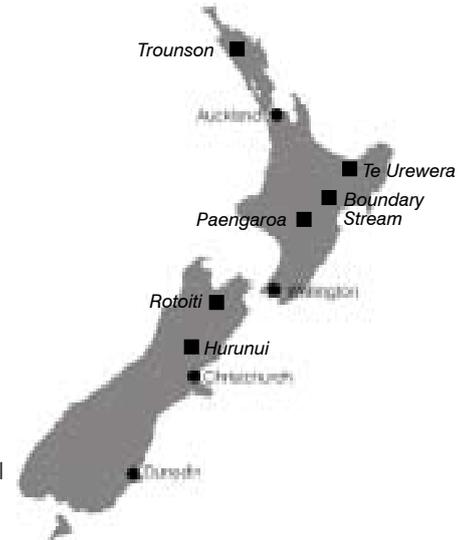


Mainland Islands

Biodiversity

An exciting area of conservation management, 'mainland islands' can be found at special locations throughout New Zealand. Within these areas, native plants and wildlife are still relatively intact and are kept discrete by means of fencing, geographical features or more commonly, by intensive pest management. Unlike real islands, which are surrounded by water, mainland islands are not easy to keep clear of pests which can re-invade from adjoining land. For this reason, ongoing commitment is needed to restore and conserve these special habitats.



Where are they?

The Department of Conservation has six mainland islands: Trounson Kauri Park in Northland; Northern Te Urewera on the East Coast of the North Island; Boundary Stream in Hawkes Bay; Paengaroa Mainland Island near Taihape; Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project, covering honeydew beech forest restoration in Nelson Lakes National Park; and Hurunui Mainland Island, covering beech forest restoration in Canterbury. There are also other mainland islands in NZ set up by other organisations such as the Karori Reservoir Native Wildlife Sanctuary in Wellington.

How do they work?

Mainland islands are managed as natural laboratories and training grounds for conservation science. The main focus of mainland islands is the intensive control, and where possible, eradication of introduced pest species. Each mainland island has its own long-term planning goals. Individual projects are reviewed by scientists and most mainland islands have steering groups appointed to oversee progress and recommend future management priorities. Knowledge and experience gained from mainland island projects are applied to other habitat and species restoration projects.

Why set up mainland islands?

Introduced pests have had a devastating impact on a range of unique habitat types on the New Zealand mainland, in many cases contributing to the extinction of endemic species. That is why the objective of mainland islands is to provide an area where techniques can be researched and developed to restore at-risk ecological communities in natural surroundings. These restoration projects concentrate on inter-related species and habitats rather than individual species alone. The very nature of such restoration projects makes them long-term commitments. Once the techniques required for the restoration of an ecological system are developed, the next logical step is to apply them in other locations.

Great spotted kiwi R. Morris

Left: Kauri, Trounson Kauri Park
T. Lilleby





Attaching transmitter to a North Island kōkako before release into Boundary Stream Mainland Island T. Ward-Smith

What are the benefits?

There are significant benefits for many plant and wildlife species which are facing extinction on mainland New Zealand in the next few decades. There will also be benefits for conservation technicians who will be able to trial management techniques under 'live laboratory' conditions and apply the results to other areas. Probably the most important benefit will be the ability of the public to eventually see native species in their natural surroundings, particularly those species that had become either rare or extinct from mainland New Zealand.

What can you do?

The support of the community for all conservation restoration projects is important and special efforts are made to involve the public in mainland islands. Some mainland islands have special access facilities for visitors while others involve volunteers in either monitoring or pest management activities. For example, a community group, the 'Friends of Rotoiti' was formed in 2001 to assist and extend the mainland island Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project within Nelson Lakes National Park. The 'Friends' check and set around 20 kms of stoat trap lines and over 40 rat traps.

For more information

Visit the Department of Conservation website at www.doc.govt.nz or contact your closest DOC office or visitor centre.

A sample of the birds benefiting from mainland island projects: roa/great spotted kiwi, North Island brown kiwi, tieke/saddleback, NZ wood pigeon (kererū or kūkupa), kākā, NZ falcon/kārearea, North Island robin/toutouwai, weka/woodhen, orange-fronted parakeet/kākāriki and North Island kōkako.



Lake Rotoiti I. McFadden