

19 December 2024

TO: Kat Lane

Cc: s9(2)(a)  
Nick Kelly  
Kiwi Recovery Group

FROM: Emily King for the Kiwi Recovery Group

---

**SUBJECT: Source site options to translocate brown kiwi to Waiheke**

---

Dear Kat,

The Kiwi Recovery Group has reviewed and discussed the proposed brown kiwi taxa options for translocation to Waiheke, as presented by Save the Kiwi. The options included two hybrid populations (Ponui and Te Hauturu-o-Toi), Coromandel brown kiwi, Eastern brown kiwi, and Northland brown kiwi (Tāwharanui or other islands). Save the Kiwi have expressed a desire to translocate kiwi to Waiheke in 2025; feasibility of achieving this is outside the scope of this advice. The Kiwi Recovery Group advice is summarised below.

### Summary

The Kiwi Recovery Group continues to see potential for Waiheke to hold a population of kiwi, starting with Te Matuku Peninsula provided mana whenua are in support. There appears to currently be insufficient support from the Ponui Island community to progress a translocation from this hybrid population. We recommend the following for the proposed options:

- Moving kiwi outside of their historic range should only be done if there is a clear conservation value to justify it.
- Coromandel brown kiwi is considered the priority taxa to allow for future opportunities for birds to be able to go to the mainland, should they reach carrying capacity, as per the advice provided in August 2021 (DOC-6737709).
- Although there is a conservation need to increase the Eastern brown kiwi population, we would still prefer Coromandel because they are the rarest of the brown kiwi taxa, and the nearest taxa to the island. Moving Eastern brown kiwi that far out of their historic range does not feel justified.
- The Northland brown kiwi was not supported due to the growth rate and recovery of this taxa, which means justification for establishing a population outside of their natural range was low.
- The hybrid populations of Ponui and Te Hauturu-o-Toi may be considered as a source if there are no other available options. In this situation the population on Waiheke would remain closed and would not contribute to recovery programmes elsewhere, as per our advice provided in December 2022 (DOC-7236410). We no longer support this as Coromandel brown kiwi appears to be viable option.

### **Role of the Kiwi Recovery Group**

The Kiwi Recovery Group is an advisory group that supports the role of the decision-maker by providing advice regarding the conservation requirements for kiwi. We hope that this information is of use to help inform the decision and help inform a suitable source site for the proposed translocation to Waiheke.

This technical advice does not incorporate iwi or te ao Māori perspectives, as these will be part of the translocation application and considered by the decision maker.

### **Additional considerations for translocation success**

The risks to kiwi on Waiheke and the associated recommendations from the Kiwi Recovery Group remain, particularly regarding dogs, traffic, and subdivision development, as outlined in previous advice (August 2021 DOC-6737709). Since 2021, significant progress towards eradicating stoats from the island has occurred which, if successful, will benefit the establishment of a kiwi population. We would like to acknowledge the consultation process with the community at Te Matuku Peninsula, particularly the focus of dogs being the greatest risk to the population. We encourage preparing the wider community for the arrival of kiwi, as kiwi will disperse beyond the planned release area.

The impacts of drought should be acknowledged and considered as part of the application. Climate change modelling by NIWA predicts that the northern North Island is likely to experience droughts at a greater frequency and severity in the future. A recent Manaaki Whenua report, commissioned by the Department, highlights that drought will negatively impact kiwi on northern islands. This report includes data from the Ponui kiwi research led by Isabel Castro.

### **Kiwi taxa and clarity of purpose**

As per previous advice provided in December 2022 (DOC-7236410) sourcing kiwi from Ponui, or other hybrid populations such as Te Hauturu o-Toi, has limitations. If a translocation of hybrid kiwi on Waiheke was successful, the population would remain closed, meaning these birds would not be able to contribute to recovery programmes on the mainland, or potentially to other island populations. The rationale for sourcing birds from Ponui is acknowledged as this population has been impacted by droughts, with several deaths observed, and it would relieve some carrying capacity issues. However, this approach may recreate a similar situation with no recourse to move the birds.

Therefore, as Ponui appears to no longer be a feasible source population, we recommend that Coromandel brown kiwi be re-considered to allow for future opportunities and long-term growth of this taxa. This is the Recovery Group's preferred option and would meet the protective benefit threshold by increasing the smallest brown kiwi taxa.

Given the substantive progress to establish a kohanga kiwi on Motutapu, we recommend this island as the source for Coromandel brown kiwi, rather than via ONE. This genetically diverse population is already close to reaching carrying capacity with the first releases to the Coromandel mainland planned for next year. The Recovery Group advise that there should be enough kiwi available to enhance kiwi populations on the Coromandel Peninsula, while establishing a population on Waiheke. Additionally, this approach would be logistically easier and more cost effective than the proposed use of ONE. As the community and iwi are already in support of establishing and protecting a kiwi population on Waiheke this may prove to be a timely opportunity.

We agree that the costs associated with ONE to establish a second Eastern brown kohanga kiwi would be high, as outlined by Save the Kiwi. There is a conservation need to support the brown kiwi taxa which is still declining. An additional kohanga kiwi to enhance areas that are beyond the genetic reach

of the kohanga kiwi at Cape Sanctuary may be beneficial. However, similar gains may be achieved via in-situ management and without the need to move kiwi outside of their historic range. We therefore recommend that Waiheke is an unsuitable location to establish an Eastern brown kiwi population.

Translocating Northland brown kiwi to Waiheke is not supported by the Recovery Group. The Northland brown kiwi taxa are doing well and due to this it will be challenging to meet the protective benefit threshold under the Wildlife Act.

I hope the information provided above is of some value, please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. I'm more than happy to talk through these points.

Ngā mihi nui,

Emily King  
Kiwi Recovery Group Leader

RELEASED UNDER THE OIA