

News Release



Eglinton Valley to Become Home For Island Mohua

October 18th, 2010

A team of Department of Conservation (DOC) staff will be heading to Chalky Island in Preservation Inlet on Thursday 21st October to set up the necessary equipment to capture up to eighty mohua (yellowhead). Made possible through funding by mohua enthusiast Nigel Babbage of the Canterbury based Mohua Charitable Trust, the birds will be caught and flown on Friday 22nd October to their new home on Fiordland's mainland in the Eglinton Valley.

This transfer, from an island sanctuary to the mainland, is one of the first on this scale and a major milestone for the Mohua Recovery Group.

The Eglinton Valley once had a significant mohua population, but it was severely depleted by predation during two consecutive rat plagues between 1999 and 2001. Since then, DOC has undertaken continuous stoat trapping along with pulsed possum and rat control to protect the remaining threatened species which include both species of New Zealand's only native land mammals; the pekapeka (bat).

DOC Biodiversity programme manager for Te Anau Area Lindsay Wilson said he was confident the mohua transferred into the Eglinton Valley would be protected.

"The impact of rats on vulnerable species such as mohua can be devastating," Mr Wilson said. "At the last count, we recorded just 26 individual birds in the valley".

The increased knowledge of successful rat control methods over the past ten years means DOC can now confidently supplement the existing remnant mohua population in the valley by transferring birds from off-shore islands back to the mainland.

Left unassisted, the population of mohua would take a long time to reach the level they were at prior to the rat plagues. "Chalky Island was getting close to it's optimal holding capacity," Mr Wilson said. "This transfer will ensure mohua recovery rates are maximised, and the bonus is this can happen in an area accessible to many people".

"Mohua are extremely cute little birds and I admit to falling in love with them," said Nigel Babbage, founder of the Mohua Charitable Trust. "There are much better ornithologists than me, who have dedicated their lives to protecting them, but what I could contribute was financial resources."

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