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Mōhua moved to Coal Island

Eighty mōhua/yellowhead were successfully moved to Coal Island, to establish a new population and spread the range of the bird's recovery on offshore pest-free islands.

Date: 15 September 2015

Eighty mōhua/yellowhead were successfully moved from Chalky Island to Coal Island in Preservation Inlet, Fiordland National Park this weekend. The translocation will establish a new mōhua population, spreading the range of the bird's recovery on offshore pest free islands.

Led by the Coal Island Charitable Trust, in partnership with the Department of Conservation and the Mōhua Charitable Trust (MCT), the translocation supports MCT's aim to re-establish mōhua, and other native bird populations, to numbers once found in New Zealand.

MCT Trustee, Nigel Babbage said, "The Mōhua Charitable Trust is proud to support this excellent community-lead translocation. Through partnership with the Department of Conservation, the Coal Island Charitable Trust is achieving impressive and tangible conservation outcomes."

Ali King, Chair of the Coal Island Charitable Trust said, "It's great to see that all the hard work done by the Trust in keeping Coal Island pest free is now coming to fruition. We are very grateful to the Mōhua Charitable Trust for allowing us to release mōhua on the island."

At 1189 ha, Coal Island is large enough to provide habitat for self-sustaining populations of a wide range of threatened species. The island has never had pest species such as possums, goats or feral cats, and while rats may once have been present, they have not been recorded in the last century. Intensive pest control efforts have successfully eradicated mice, red deer and stoats - although ongoing efforts will be required to prevent re-establishment of deer and stoats.

The 80 mōhua were caught on Chalky Island in one day by a team of nine people, including DOC staff and volunteers. The birds were flown by High Country Helicopters to Coal Island the same day, where they were blessed by Te Runanga o Oraka Aparima and released.

Mōhua were reportedly widespread in the Preservation Inlet area until at least 1969.

Aside from this mōhua translocation, 69 South Island robins (kakaruai) and 27 Haast kiwi (tokoeka) have also been successfully released onto Coal Island.

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