

Help for Makarora mohua

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In a few years time you'll have quite a good chance of seeing a mohua (yellowhead) if you go down to the Makarora Valley. Beech forests used to teem with little yellow headed mohua - before pakeha arrived with their predators - but now they are very rare. There are a few still living in the Makarora Valley - at least 34 at last count. They have only survived thanks to a trapping programme started 1998 by the Department of Conservation and the Central Otago-Lakes branch of Forest & Bird. The programme has just received a donation of \$11,000 from the Mohua Charitable Trust. This will be spent on 200 new traps

which should make quite a dent in the predator population and result in a corresponding increase in mohua numbers.

The Department of Conservation has been predator trapping in the Landsborough Valley (towards Haast) since 2001 and the mohua population there has increased from 30 to 1000.

Stoats and rats are the worst predators. Stoats kill birds just for fun - not just when they're hungry - and mohua, which nest in holes in trees, are particularly vulnerable. Recent rat plagues following two seasons of heavy beech seeding toppled mohua populations around the South Island. The Landsborough Valley now

has the only significant population on the mainland. DOC is also trying to establish a population on Resolution Island at the bottom of Fiordland to ensure genetic diversity and guard against extinction due to a predator plague on the mainland.

Mohua Charitable Trust founder Nigel Babbage, who lives in Sumner, plans to continue to help protect native birds in the Makarora/Mount Aspiring National Park region. Other native birds which can be found in the area include bellbirds, tomtits, kakariki, riflemen wood pigeons, brown creepers and redpoles. If you can't see a mohua in the flesh you can find a picture of one on the \$100 note.