

CONSERVATION CORNER

DOC Prepares for Bumper Kakapo Breeding Season 24 April 2001

The Department of Conservation is preparing for a bumper kakapo breeding season on the island sanctuary of Codfish Island/Whenua Hou this summer.

This weekend, it completed the transfer of 11 extra kakapo onto the island, in the hope they will catch the love bug in December.

DOC's Kakapo Recovery Programme manager, Paul Jansen said hopes for a good breeding season on Codfish had been raised by the expected abundance of rimu fruit there this spring.

"Rimu fruit has consistently been shown to be a trigger to kakapo breeding, and all early signs are that we will have a heavy fruiting on Codfish Island this season," he said. "This shift ensures as many birds as possible will be in a position to breed and, if successful, will be a further step towards guaranteeing a future for the species."

"Saving a bird as threatened as the kakapo comes down to maximising our opportunities, and this opportunity is too good to miss." Mr. Jansen said the rimu forest on Codfish Island has only fruited three times in the last 10 years.

The transfer is part of the Kakapo Recovery Programme, sponsored by Colmaco through the Threatened Species Trust, administered by the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society and DOC.

Comalco New Zealand Executive Director Kerry McDonald said the company was delighted at the prospect of a good breeding season.

"This will build on the good initiatives underway to help ensure a healthy future for the kakapo species."

At present, there are just 62 surviving kakapo, making it the most endangered parrot species in the world. Since 1999, the birds have been kept on Codfish Island, in Foveaux Strait, and on Maud Island, in the

Marlborough Sounds. Both are predator-free island sanctuaries where the kakapo are safe from predation by cats, dogs, rats and stoats.

The transfer has seen 11 of Maud Island's 21 kakapo temporarily moved to Codfish Island.

Mr Jansen said it was expected most of the Maud Island birds would return north in early 2002, after the breeding season. Any females that do breed will be moved back later, after their chicks have fledged.

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