

CONSERVATION CORNER

Press release from the Kakapo Recovery Team:

<http://www.kakaporecovery.org.nz/news/media.html>

Kakapo Going Strong

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The kakapo chick survival rate on Codfish Island stands at 100 percent, Department of Conservation Kakapo Recovery Team leader Paul Jansen says.

"Twenty-three eggs have hatched, and we now have 23 chicks doing very well. Two of the chicks are being hand reared as they suffered infections and were underweight, but they are on the improve and we expect them to survive," Mr Jansen said.

"There are three more fertile eggs which could potentially take the total number of chicks to 26. We expect the three remaining eggs to hatch within the next fortnight. The booming of the male kakapo, signalling their mating intent, has now stopped and we are not expecting any more eggs to be laid."

"Twenty of the 21 female kakapo of breeding age laid eggs this year. Prior to this breeding season, the world population of kakapo was 62, all in New Zealand. Staff and volunteers on Codfish Island are ecstatic with the success of this season."

"We are particularly delighted with Hoki breeding for the first time. Hoki, now 10 years, is the first hand-raised female chick to reach breeding age. Her one fertile egg died early, but she was given a replacement egg and is proving to be an excellent mother. Hoki's performance has shown us that our hand-rearing techniques do not affect the bird's ability to mate, lay and nurture a chick."

"A factor in the season's success is the bumper rimu fruit on the island, ensuring a good food supply for mothers and chicks. Fruit in this quantity probably only occurs about once in 20 years on this island. There is no guarantee that the rimu crop will stay on the trees through to a successful ripening."

"However, we have sufficient quantities of supplementary food for the birds if the rimu fruit supply is lacking. Significant research has gone into the composition of this food and how to make it most acceptable to the birds, as part of the multi-faceted Comalco-sponsored Kakapo Recovery Programme."

"Another initiative under the Comalco-sponsored Kakapo Recovery Programme used successfully for the first time was giving fertile eggs to mothers with infertile clutches. This allowed fertile females to lay a second clutch. Another reason for transferring eggs to a different nest was to avoid large age and size differences within broods to minimise a runt developing within a nest," Mr Jansen said.