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Rare whoio found living in Hawke's Bay

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Conservationists buoyed by evidence of a resurgence in the stocks of whoio in northern Hawke's Bay forests hope more signs of the endangered native bird will be found further south.

The hopes come after a thriving population of whoio, the first featured on the \$10 note and otherwise known as blue duck, was discovered by a team of nine river-rafting in the areas of the Waiau and Te Hoe rivers. They border the privately-owned Maungataniwha Native Forest in some of the North Island's remotest country west of southern Lake Waikaremoana.

It has now been declared a "Recovery Site" by the Whoio Discovery Group of the Department of

Conservation. It has often asked hunters, trampers and rafters in Hawke's Bay's ranges to be on the look-out for whoio, previously thought to number 2000 throughout the country. The team, headed by Maungataniwha estate manager Pete Shaw, timed the expedition for the December-January breeding season, and to their surprise discovered 19 breeding pairs, 13 ducks and 29 juveniles along 41km of rivers and streams.

"We're hoping these results indicate at least a partial plateau in the decline of whoio across inland Hawke's Bay," he said. Forest Lifeforce Restoration Trust spokesman Peter Heath said: "It would be good to be able to confirm

this in other parts of the backblocks of Hawke's Bay."

Mr Shaw said the 6000ha forest, owned by muesli bar company owner and Auckland businessman Simon Hall, had been known to be home to the whoio. The numbers indicated higher density higher than other North Island sites, and young duck numbers were also good news because nests were often targeted by stoats.

The group spent three days walking and rafting along streams, examining signs of the ducks, including their faeces.

"Conservation people spend a lot of time looking at poos" Mr Shaw told the *Herald on Sunday*.



SECLUDED: A view over some of the remote terrain in the Maungataniwha Native Forest, where the research was conducted.

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DISCOVERY: Maungataniwha estate manager Pete Shaw led the expedition which found 19 pairs of whio