

Rachel sends 100th kiwi on his way

Model Rachel Hunter has marked a milestone for a conservation project by releasing its 100th kiwi into the wild.

Takamoana, a 1kg male North Island brown kiwi, was set free in the Maungataniwha Native Forest in northern Hawkes Bay yesterday by the Forest LifeForce Restoration Trust.

The trust was established in 2006 with the backing of Auckland entrepreneur Simon Hall, who is the executive chairman of Tasti Foods.

Ms Hunter and Mr Hall released the kiwi into the trust-owned forest which borders the Department of Conservation-managed Te Urewera National Park and the Whirinaki Conservation Forest. The 6120ha private forest includes a 600ha "core area" where predator numbers have been reduced by baiting.

Ms Hunter, an advocate for conservation projects around the world, was made the FLR Trust's patron.

Takamoana was hatched as part of the BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust's Operation Nest Egg, which incubates eggs taken from the wild.

Once the kiwi are large enough to defend themselves against stoats, they are set free.

BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust executive

director Michelle Impey said rearing and releasing 100 kiwi would usually take twice as long.

"The FLR Trust team have got it down to a fine art and it's wonderful that some of the chicks released three or four years ago are now breeding."

Half the 100 kiwi hatched have been released at Maungataniwha, where the eggs came from, and the other 50 relocated to the Cape Kidnappers and Ocean Beach Preserve.

Conservation Minister Kate Wilkinson paid tribute to Mr Hall, who she said was a driving force behind the project.

"I am very impressed by what Simon and his team have achieved. It is important these initiatives are encouraged."

"Not only is the trust restoring kiwi, they are working to control pests and bring back other threatened plants and animals at sites as far [away] as Fiordland."

"Their work demonstrates the co-operation that is developing all over the country between private land owners, the business sector, like-minded restoration groups and the Department of Conservation."

DoC regional conservator Alan

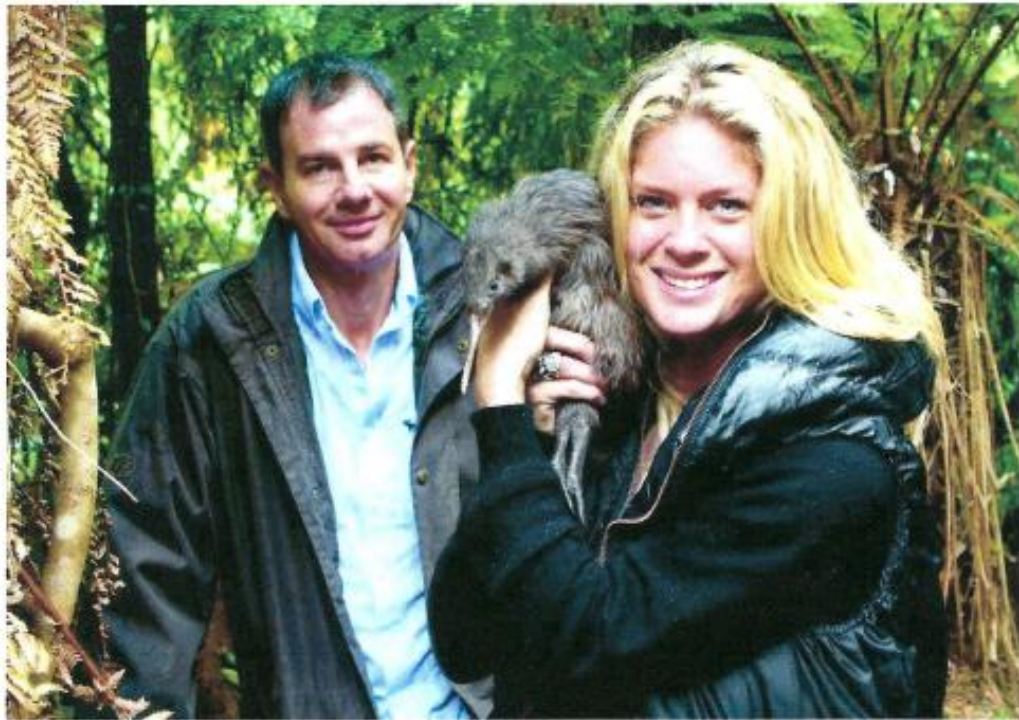
McKenzie said privately funded conservation and regeneration projects were without doubt the way of the future. The department could maintain the status quo, but a step-change in the re-establishment of native species would require significant investment that the private sector could deliver.

"We see our role as facilitating this, and working with organisations such as the FLR Trust to establish the framework for a national model."

The kiwi Takamoana was named after Karaitiana Takamoana, an important local chief in the 1800s who was also Mr Hall's great-great-grandfather. — APNZ

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Michelle Impey, BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust



Rachel Hunter releases Takamoana into the Maungataniwha Native Forest under the watchful eye of Simon Hall, the driving force behind the FLR Trust.

Photo: APNZ

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