

# SAVING KAPAPO : an illustrated history

## 1894 –1900: Kakapo transfers in Dusky Sound

Richard Henry (1), helped by his dogs (2), caught and transferred almost 400 kakapo (3) to Resolution and other islands in Dusky Sound (4). Stoats reached Resolution Island close to his home on Pigeon Island (5, 6) in 1900 and his quest to save kakapo there was abandoned.



Although Henry's attempt failed, the use of islands as refuges became the mainstay of endangered species conservation in New Zealand.



8.

**1958 – 1969: Confinement to captivity**

A sudden realisation that kakapo were extinct in North Island, and almost so in South Island, prompted over 60 searches in Fiordland (7) and north-west Nelson. Of 10 birds, all males, found in valleys near Milford Sound (8), six were caught (9,10) and placed into captivity at Mt. Bruce (11).



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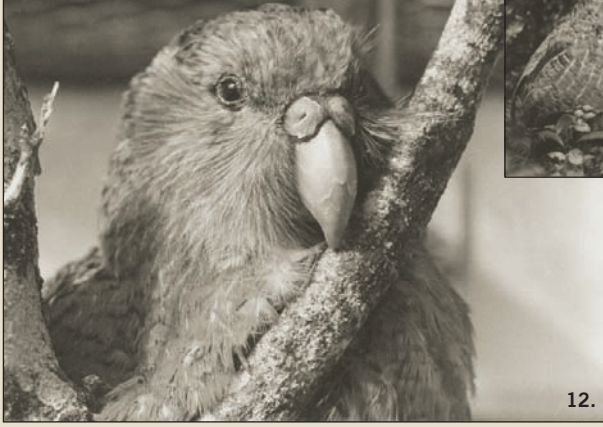
10.



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12.



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14.



Five died within weeks, but one lingered for over 4 years (12, 13) and was intensively studied (14).



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18.

**1974 – 1978: Last chance to find?**

For 4 years the New Zealand Wildlife Service's searched high altitude valleys (15, 16, 17, 18) near Milford Sound to find and remove remaining kakapo to predator-free islands. 18 males were found and their spectacular displays photographed for the first time (19, 20, 21), but no females – was the species already functionally extinct?



21.



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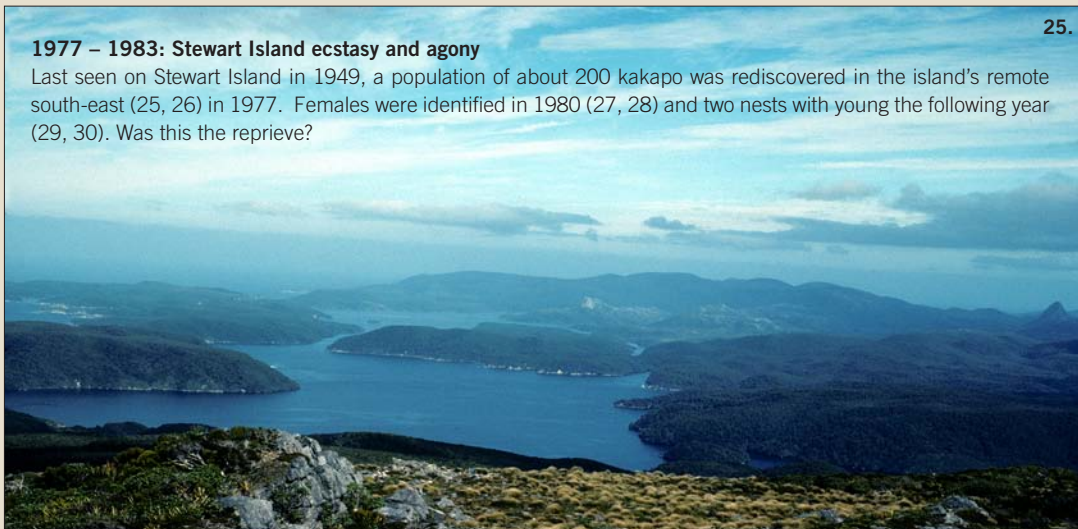
24.

Of five males relocated to islands (22, 23) only "Richard Henry" remains alive 31 years later (24). His genetic contribution is crucial to the future of kakapo.

### 1977 – 1983: Stewart Island ecstasy and agony

Last seen on Stewart Island in 1949, a population of about 200 kakapo was rediscovered in the island's remote south-east (25, 26) in 1977. Females were identified in 1980 (27, 28) and two nests with young the following year (29, 30). Was this the reprieve?

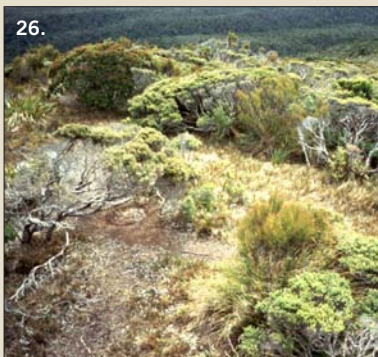
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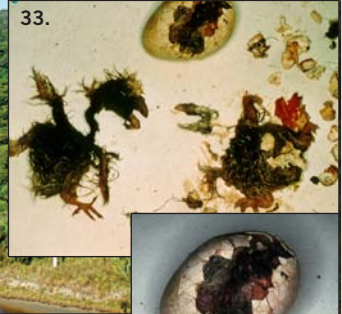
31.

When 18 monitored kakapo were killed by feral cats in 1982 (31), Stewart Island was no longer a safe haven. All surviving birds were removed.

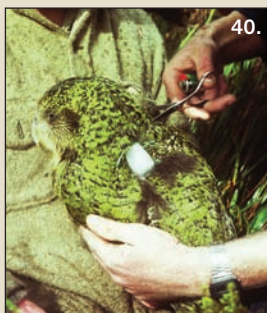
**1983-1995: Transfer to islands**

61 birds were transferred to Maud, Little Barrier and Codfish Islands (32). Survival was high but breeding was poor. Pacific rats, present on Codfish and Little Barrier Islands, predated eggs and chicks (33, 34), and when food supplies failed, chicks starved. "Close-order management" was introduced: breeding females were given supplementary food (35), rats were controlled near nests (36), and starving chicks airlifted to captivity (37) at Auckland Zoo.

32.



Hand-rearing "Hoki" (38, 39) established a new and vital management technique.



### 1995-2005: Road to recovery

Close-order management intensified. Cleared of rats, Codfish Island became the focus of all kakapo breeding and management. All birds carry radio-transmitters for continuous monitoring (40, 41), rimu fruit abundance (42) is measured to predict kakapo breeding, and male booming behaviour (43) closely followed. Nests are guarded by volunteer nest-minders (44), eggs candled and checked for cracks (45), and poor nest sites improved (46)





**Hand-rearing**

Chick growth and feeding in the wild is monitored(47,48). While fostering chicks from struggling to proficient mothers has been successful (49), the ability to incubate kakapo eggs (50) and successfully raise the hatchlings (51, 52) and malnourished wild young (53) has proved vital. Hand-reared young comprise 40% of all chicks fledged 1990 – 2005 and 20% of the total population.

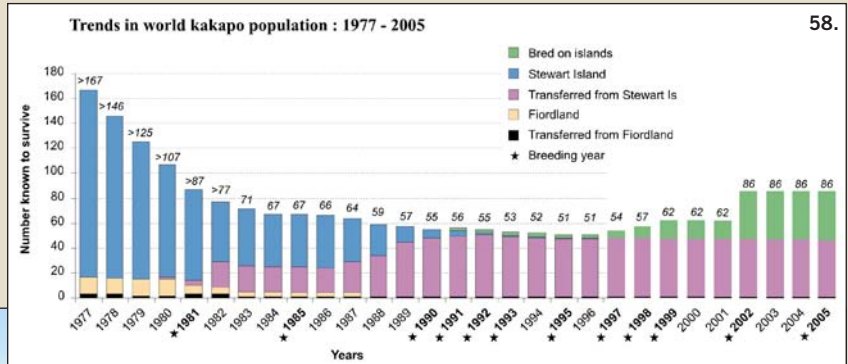


“Hoki”, the first hand-reared kakapo has laid and successfully raised a fostered chick (54).



**The Future**

“Richard Henry” (55) fathered 3 chicks -2 male, 1 female - in 1998 (56), to date the only transfer of Fiordland genes into the next generation. Ensuring his further breeding, and that of his progeny (57), is a priority. So too are breeding years like 2002 (58).



Stoats were eradicated from Anchor Island (59) in 2002, and kakapo have since been released there. The removal of all mammals from nearby Resolution Island (59, centre left) has commenced. **One hundred years on, with Dusky Sound again a focus for kakapo conservation, is Richard Henry's vision about to be realised?**

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