

MEDIA RELEASE 27 OCTOBER 2021: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ROTOROEA

An Island of Restoration

TRAVEL EXEMPTION GRANTED FOR TRANSLOCATING KIWI

Four kiwi chicks were released at Rotoroa Island today as part of a programme to save the endangered species.

Saving our national icon is essential conservation work, so there was a border exemption for these four kiwi to travel to predator-free Rotoroa Island in the Hauraki Gulf.

Currently under Level 3, Rotoroa Island is open to day visitors for outdoor recreational activities. All visitors are asked to scan in on arrival and stay in their bubble.

This morning, the kiwi chicks (the youngest just 17 days old) made the 6-hour journey from their hatching sites (from the Crombie Lockwood Kiwi Burrow in Taupo and from the National Hatchery in Rotorua) across the South Auckland border, then by boat transfer to the island sanctuary.

The four chicks are named Will, Nena, Kapow and Baffle. The youngest Nena is only 17 days old (and weighs 311g) and the eldest, Will is 68 days old and weighs 540g.

“It’s a real privilege for Rotoroa Island to be home to these precious taonga at the kiwi’s most vulnerable stage of life. Being a wildlife sanctuary and a predator free island, we can protect and nurture them until they are big enough to fend off a predator. So we act as a kind of kōhanga/creche until they grow up. It takes a village to raise a child but it will take the whole country to save the kiwi species - so we are really proud to play our own part in this.” Jo Ritchie, Ecologist, Rotoroa Island Trust.

Chicks in the wild have about a 5% survival rate; the process of taking kiwi chicks to kōhanga/creche sites is known as Operation Nest Egg. Operation Nest Egg has been very successful over the past few years, with chick survival rates reaching over 99%.

Rotoroa Island has been part of this Kiwi Recovery Programme for 8 years and works closely with partners Thames Coast Kiwi Care, Kiwis for Kiwi and the Department of Conservation. It is able to be part of ONE because the island underwent massive transformation and is now a predator free wildlife sanctuary. It’s amazing to have this wildlife sanctuary with this endangered species just an hour from New Zealand’s biggest city.

While the island is open now to the public for day visitors, these kiwi releases are currently limited to essential staff only in accordance with the government's current covid restrictions.

Once it's safe to hold gatherings, the Trust looks forward to welcoming public to witness future kiwi releases. Island Rangers ask that if anyone is out boating with their dog to please leave it onboard when coming ashore - kiwi have a strong smell, no breastbone and are often near the coast on Rotoroa so are very vulnerable to dogs.

Rotoroa Island offers a variety of stunning coastal walks, stunning safe swimming beaches, a museum detailing the island's fascinating history and a range of accommodation from vintage inspired holiday homes to a boutique hostel. The island facilities, along with the regular ferry service run by Fullers360 will recommence in line with government guidance once advice is provided that visitor travel for Hauraki Gulf island destinations can return.

For more information:

Angela Bishop

Marketing Advisor, Rotoroa Island Trust

E - angela@rotoroa.org.nz

M - 0274 513936

www.rotoroa.org.nz

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