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Guest speaker

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The kiwi: the ultimate endemic

Some 41 species of endemic birds (38% of the land and freshwater species) have become extinct following human colonisation of New Zealand. This rate of loss is amongst the highest recorded anywhere in historic times, and gives New Zealand the unenviable reputation of being a world leader in extinction. In general, the ancient elements of the avifauna with few close relatives elsewhere have fared badly, while the modern elements have persisted. Overall, the bird community of New Zealand has undergone massive change in the last 2000 years. Flighted species have taken the place of flightless ones; real mammals have taken the place of mammal-like birds; and introduced birds have taken the place of extinct natives. The large predators have disappeared, largely without substitution. It is now hard to find traces of the original inhabitants in mainland forests, but some do remain. These remnants are the species of special interest, the gems that must be protected for future generations to enjoy.

Among the extant birds of New Zealand, kiwis have the highest levels of endemism, and thus are arguably our greatest avian treasures. Despite being ancient and flightless, kiwis have proved to be extraordinarily resilient, with 3 of the 4 species still extant in mainland forests. Nevertheless, kiwis are declining at about 6% per year, mainly because of predation by stoats (*Mustela erminea*). The nature of the relationship between stoats and kiwi is described in detail in the talk.

The task of conserving some of the remaining populations of kiwi in mainland forests is a daunting one. Ongoing, large-scale, predator control is expensive. Public attitudes to conservation will ultimately determine the extent to which further declines are tolerated. Indifference, rather than predation, is now the biggest threat to kiwi in mainland forests.

Seabird translocations - learning from past mistakes

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This talk mainly discusses the diving petrel (*Pelecanoides urinatrix*) project on Mana Island (3 transfers of chicks between 1997 and 1999), what went wrong, what was successful and the lessons we learnt about transferring small seabirds. Recent updates from the monitoring project to see if birds are returning to Mana Island will

be presented. The grey-faced petrel (*Pterodroma macroptera*) and Pycroft's petrel (*Pterodroma pycrofti*) translocation projects will be discussed briefly, including what happened and the lessons learnt for future transfers of these species.