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The introduction and naturalisation of birds

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Translocation of birds as a conservation tool in New Zealand

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The relocation of animals was first used for conservation purposes over 100 years ago when Richard Henry moved kakapo *Strigops habroptilus* and kiwi *Apteryx australis* to Resolution Island (off the south-west corner of New Zealand) to save them from the ravages of introduced stoats *Mustela erminea* (Hill & Hill 1987). Other translocations took place in the interim but it was during the 1960s that research was applied to this management approach to species conservation. The first scientific approach came when Atkinson and Merton (Atkinson 1964) studied the habitat use of North Island saddlebacks *Philesturnus carunculatus rufusater* before this species was translocated from Hen Island (its sole island habitat) to another island. Techniques were developed in this transfer which helped save the South Island sub-species *P. c. carunculatus* when it was threatened by rats *Rattus rattus* which had been accidentally introduced to their native islands. Subsequent translocations have secured the status of the saddleback which was the first species to be taken off the New Zealand red data listing through direct conservation management (King 1981).

Translocations have become a regular feature of endangered species management in New Zealand. These are made either directly or through captive breeding projects. However, much more time is spent designing species recovery plans which invariably include either translocations and captive breeding or both. A set of policy guidelines has been established by the Department of Conservation to ensure that due consideration is given to all aspects of translocation proposals (Anon 1990). The translocations are carefully monitored to follow the successful establishment or to determine why a liberation has failed.

Most translocations have involved land birds or waterfowl but more recently some experimental work has begun with seabirds, particularly black petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni* and fluttering shearwater *Puffinus gavia*. The former is to aid an endangered species but the second is to develop a technique for such projects which could be applied to endangered species (Bell 1995).

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