

Media Release

8 October 2012

From Construction to Conservation – Blacks Fasteners - Helping to Protect the South Island Environment

An endangered native bird, the mōhua, has been given a new safe home on a Marlborough Sounds island thanks to a South Island company playing a key role in the Christchurch rebuild.

Blacks Fasteners is working with the Department of Conservation by supporting the relocation of the endangered New Zealand native bird species mōhua / yellowhead, onto the unique predator-free sanctuary of Blumine Island in the Marlborough Sounds. This is part of ongoing efforts to save the species from extinction.

The move will, for the first time, enable people to see the small songbird on a Marlborough Sounds island reserve. It also brings the mōhua close to where it was first painted by Captain Cook's naturalist George Forster in 1774 at Wharehunga Bay which is just a five-minute boat trip away.

The small insect eating bird, which lives only in the forests of New Zealand's South Island and Stewart Island, was one of the most abundant and conspicuous of our forest birds in the 1800s, but now it is the most threatened of its genus, Mōhoua.

A maximum of 40 mōhua will be caught in the Blue Mountains in Otago sometime in the morning of **(DATE TO BE CONFIRMED – around 10th October)**, by six "catching teams", with the birds then being transported by helicopter to Gore Airfield at around 10am, transferred to a small plane and then flying to Blenheim (approximately 2.5 - 3 hours depending on weather) where a helicopter will be waiting to take the birds transfer the birds directly to Blumine Island in the Marlborough Sounds, a 20-minute flight.

Blacks Managing Director Roger Black says it is incredibly important to him to support and conserve New Zealand's beautiful environment.

"I'm an outdoors man, always have been. To be in a position to be able to give something back to that great outdoors is fantastic," he says.

Roger says it is very appropriate that a South Island-wide company like Blacks Fasteners is supporting the transfer of such a vulnerable bird like the mōhua, from the bottom of the South Island to the top.

DOC Sounds Area Manager Roy Grose thanked Blacks Fasteners for its very valuable support in moving mōhua to the Blumine Island sanctuary where it was hoped the birds would establish and thrive as a new population for the species.

"The move is important for the endangered mōhua species but we are also pleased it will enable people to enjoy seeing this eye-catching yellow-headed and breasted bird in the Marlborough Sounds. We hope that as in years past, mōhua will be spotted flocking and

feeding with tīeke/saddleback, orange-fronted kākāriki and rifleman also on Blumine. We are extremely grateful to Blacks Fasteners for not only supporting mōhua but also for supporting the development of a 2.4 km walking track on Blumine which provides for easy exploration of its lush forest and historic remains of a World War Two military base, with stunning views and an enchanting chorus of birdsong along the way.”

DOC’s Linda Kilduff of DOC’s Sounds Area Office who has been organising the mōhua says on transfer day, much depends on the weather.

“With air and sea travel, we are very much at the mercy of Mother Nature but all going well, there should be no problems,” she says.

Linda Kilduff says the mōhua are said not be responsive to recorded calls until “they’ve had a bit of a feed first thing, but then hopefully”, she says “it’ll be all on!”

“We will put a good supply of live mealworms in each box to encourage the birds to eat (and stay hydrated) throughout their journey.”

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A Bit about Blacks:

Blacks Fasteners began trading in New Zealand in 1989 with the aim of supplying a comprehensive range of top quality fasteners at competitive prices to customers throughout New Zealand and beyond.

With a top team of trained professionals offering unmatched customer service, Blacks has grown to now located in five easily accessible locations around New Zealand - Nelson, Blenheim, Invercargill and two stores in Christchurch.

The huge range of fasteners in Black’s inventory is fully computerised, enabling on-the-spot answers to enquiries, fast quotation turnaround and efficient sales and dispatch to meet customers requirements.

With unmatched knowledge, experience and professionalism, combined with superior products and service, Blacks Fasteners is now at the forefront of the fastener industry.

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<http://www.blackfasteners.co.nz/Blacks-Sponsorship/sponsorship-conservation-sportcommunity>

Background: Mōhua



Yellowhead fledgling, Fiordland National Park.

Please credit: Michael Eckstaedt www.naturephoto.co.nz

Hi Res image available upon request.

Last century mōhua/yellowheads were one of the most abundant and conspicuous forest birds in the South Island. Today, mōhua only survive in small pockets of beech forest and are classified by the Department of Conservation (DOC) as nationally vulnerable. Mōhua are vulnerable to stoat and rat predation and populations have been particularly devastated by irruptions in rat numbers resulting from beech masts – heavy beech seeding that provides plentiful food for rats enabling more to survive.

DOC is protecting mōhua populations using pest control at a number of mainland sites, including the Landsborough Valley in South Westland, the Blue Mountains and Catlins in Otago, and the Eglinton Valley in Fiordland. Populations have also been established on predator-free islands to help secure the survival of the species.

For a threatened species, mōhua fortunately has a relatively high reproductive rate so it has good potential for recovery. Each year they can lay up to four eggs and once these have hatched and fledged the pair can raise another brood.

Mōhua, distinctive for the beautiful splash of bright yellow that covers its head and breast, is an incredible little bird, one of the real characters of the bush. They create a lively presence with their melodic calls, chatter and bustling feeding in flocks. But the species' habit of roosting, as well as nesting, in small holes in trees unfortunately puts it at great risk - there is no way out when predators appear at the door.

Mōhua in the Marlborough Sounds

Mōhua were recorded and first described in the Marlborough Sounds in 1774 at Wharehunga Bay, only minutes away by boat from Blumine Island. It was here that Captain Cook's naturalist, George Forster, first painted mōhua.

A remnant surviving Marlborough Sounds' population of mōhua was discovered in 1986 above 900m on Mt Stokes, which at just over 1200 metres is the highest point in the Marlborough Sounds. The population peaked to around 90 birds in 1999 after 10 years of stoat control by DOC. But after winter 1999 the population's numbers were found to have been decimated as a result of a beech-mast rat plague. The following spring mōhua were discovered to be extinct on Mt Stokes.

Four birds from the populations though have survived through being moved by DOC to Nukuwaiata, one of the Chetwode Islands in the Outer Sounds, in spring 1999. They

included one female which has paired with males and bred young. A small number of mōhua continue to live on the island.

The move of up to 40 mōhua to Blumine Island will set up a second Marlborough Sounds' island population and one that will be visible to the public. Public visitation to Blumine, an open island reserve, is encouraged; Nukuwaiata though is a nature reserve closed to public access to protect its rare and endangered species. The Blumine Island population will be important to the future of mōhua in the Marlborough Sounds. DOC aims to use it as a source population for moving mōhua back to the mainland or to contribute to new island populations.

Blumine Island

At 401 hectares, Blumine Island/Oruawairua is Marlborough's largest predator-free island reserve. It rises to a height of 298 metres. The island has scenic reserve status and is situated in outer Queen Charlotte Sound, 22 km north-east of Picton.

The island was extensively cleared for agriculture in the past but its cleared forest is now regenerating. Blumine has diverse forest cover with about one-third of the island still in original mixed beech/podocarp/broadleaf forest while the remainder is chiefly tall kanuka/broadleaf forest which has been regenerating since the 1930s.

Mice were eradicated on the island in a 2005 DOC operation that also targeted rats on nearby Pickersgill Island. Stoats were also cleared from Blumine and trapping is in place to catch any stoats that might swim to the island from nearby Arapawa Island.

South Island saddleback/tieke and endangered orange-fronted parakeets/kākāriki have been moved to Blumine since it became a predator-free sanctuary. It is also home to large numbers of the threatened giant snail *Powelliphanta hochstetteri bicolour*.

There was a military base on Blumine during World War Two as part of a coastal defence network in the Marlborough Sounds. Two large naval gun emplacements, tracks, buildings, foundations and other remains of the time can be seen today. Visitors to Blumine are struck by the loud chorus of birdsong that greets them. As well as supporting the move of mōhua to Blumine, Blacks Fasteners has also supported the development of 2.4 km walking track on the island which provides for easy exploration of its lush forest and historic military base remains. There is also a camping area for overnight stays.



Blumine Island – Google Maps.

About Blacks Fasteners:

Since 1989, Blacks Fasteners have supplied a comprehensive range of top quality fasteners at competitive prices, supported by an experienced and professional sales and service team, to customers throughout New Zealand and beyond.

The head office is located in Christchurch but the company has offices across the South Island in Invercargill, Christchurch, Nelson and Blenheim.

Blacks supplies the engineering, construction and manufacturing industries with a range of bolts, screws, nuts and other fasteners and the company is also focussed on “giving back” to the community and the environment. Blacks has a proud tradition as a socially responsible business and where possible and practical supports local communities. via sponsorships built around Community, Sporting and Conservation causes and activities.

http://www.blacksfasteners.co.nz/Blacks-Sponsorship/sponsorship-conservation-sport-community_1.2055

For more information please contact Ali Jones on 027 247 3112