Kokako chicks hatch in Auckland?s Ark

Title North Island kokako chicks have hatched in the Ark in the Park open sanctuary ? the first time the threatened birds have bred in Auckland?s Waitakere Ranges for 80 years. The hatching of the two chicks, discovered on Monday, is being celebrated by staff and volunteers at the Ark, where a nest was discovered late last month. The kokako reintroduction has been a close collaboration between Forest & Bird (BirdLife in New Zealand), the Auckland Council and West Auckland iwi, Te Kawerau a Maki, at the Ark, which is 20 minutes drive from central Auckland at the Cascades Kauri Park, near Swanson. ?This is great news for the kokako and great news for Auckland,? said Forest & Bird North Island Conservation Manager Mark Bellingham. ?This is a tremendous reward for the staff and all the volunteers who have put in so much work since the kokako were first reintroduced to the Ark last year,? Dr Bellingham said.

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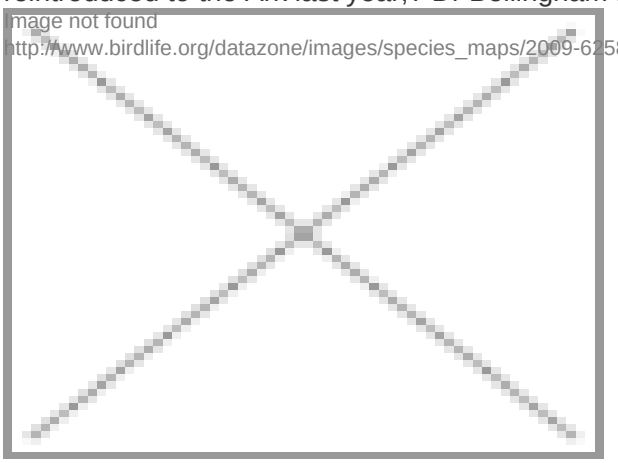

Range of the Kokako.

?The next challenge is to keep predators away from the chicks until they fledge in about four weeks,? he said. The parent birds, named Maurice and Kowhai by workers and volunteers at the Ark, were transferred from Pureora Forest in the King Country in September last year. They had been a close couple for nine weeks before the nest was discovered on November 23 by Forest & Bird field staff. Pest control is carried out throughout the 2,300 hectare sanctuary and volunteers have intensified trapping efforts around the nest. Stoats, rats and cats are likely to be the major threat to the hatched chicks. Forest & Bird staff and volunteers have also been searching for any other nests built by the 22 kokako that have been transferred into the Ark. The first six kokako were transferred to the Ark from the King Country in 2009 and this year 14 more came from the King Country and two from Tiritiri Matangi island in the Hauraki Gulf. Hopes have been raised that this will be the first of many breeding seasons for Maurice and Kowhai and other kokako in the park. Dr Bellingham said it is hoped the population in the Ark will start growing in a self-sustaining way in the next three or four years. The Ark in the Park sanctuary aims to restore some of the lost diversity of the forest and wildlife in the Waitakere Ranges. Possum control has allowed forest vegetation to recover and intensive control of rats, stoats and wild cats has enabled work to restore some of the bird life. Among other species reintroduced to the Ark are whitehead, North Island robin, and hihi (stitchbird). This has been achieved with Forest and Bird volunteers putting in more than 8,000 hours a year managing biodiversity in the Ark in the Park project area.