

Island welcomes once-in-130-years baby

The first orange-fronted parakeet to fledge in the wild in the North Island in about 130 years has been confirmed on Tuhua/Mayor Island.

The species is critically threatened, and has been extinct in the North Island since the late 1800s.

In late 2009, the Tuhua Trust provided a safe haven the birds by facilitating their return to the North Island — with support and gifting from Ngai Tahu hapu, Ngai Tahuuriri.

Confirmation of the project's success came when Department of Conservation ranger John Heaphy recently sighted and photographed a juvenile bird on the island.

Mr. Heaphy said the youngster hadn't been long out of a nest, and he was able to watch it for several minutes before it flew about five metres and crash-landed with wings outspread on the next branch.

He said it was likely other juvenile parakeets had also fledged this summer. So far 63 birds have been released with the support of the Isaac Wildlife Trust and BDG Synthesis Ltd.

Tuhua Trust Board chairperson Magda Williams says the news is tremendously exciting, and a major step towards achieving 'Te Whanau A Tauwhao ki Tuhua hopes that populations from Tuhua will assist in re-establishing the species back to the mainland.

"Given its predator-free status, Tuhua is a perfect habitat for the orange-fronted parakeet, and now we can see



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RARE BIRD: The first orange-fronted parakeet chick sighted on Tuhua.

PICTURE: JOHN HEAPHY / DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

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Ms Williams says the board is playing a major role nationally by contributing to the restoration of a number of

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TUHUA TRUST BOARD CHAIRPERSON

threatened native bird species. Tuhua is also home to a small but thriving population of North Island kiwi, pakeke (native brown teal), and toutouwai (North Island robin), as well as tuatara.