

Robins Return to Maungatautari

A small crowd of MEIT staff, trustees, volunteers and well wishers was on hand on Friday 6 May 2011 to welcome the first translocation of 40 North Island robins (19 females, 21 males) to the Maungatautari Ecological Island. Wally Papa offered a short karakia before the birds were individually released into their new environment, one free of relevant mammalian pests.



The robins were captured in the Pureora Forest during a 10 day MEIT operation conducted in association with the Department of Conservation (who were also capturing robins for translocation to the Coromandel Peninsula). The entire operation involved much logistical planning as the robins were trained and fed during the weeks leading up to their capture. This little bird is about to learn that there is no such thing as a free lunch (*photo Jocelyn Dawkins*)

At Pureora their final capture and subsequent custodial care involved some 35 people - MEIT staff, DOC staff, graduate students and volunteers who carefully trapped the birds, which were then weighed, measured, sexed and banded by Massey University's Dr Kevin Parker. They were then transferred to overnight care, separately accommodated in a specially modified pet carrier complete with mesh ventilation screens, forest floor litter, perch, food and water containers. Whilst in captivity breakfast, lunch and dinner was provided by attendants who made up meal packs of 50 mealworms and 10 wax moth worms per bird.

As a joint operation the exercise was a resounding success with both parties contributing equally and enthusiastically to the overall cause. The Pureora Forest is well managed by DOC and provides a rich population of rare and endangered bird species that can easily support such translocations.

Right: The robins arriving at Maungatautari
L to R Chris Smuts-Kennedy, Bryan Jenkin,
Gemma Green, Kerry Payne, Jocelyn Dawkins,
Kevin Parker



Below: MEIT trustees Gordon Stephenson and
Tao (Ted) Tauroa release the final two birds.

