

kākī/black stilt

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Kākī are tough. In summer they live in up to 40-degree heat and in winter their feathers can freeze in minus-20 temperatures.

Kākī or black stilt (*Himantopus novaezelandiae*) is one of the world's rarest wading bird and found only in New Zealand.

They are critically endangered and in 1981 there were only 23 left in the world. By 2020 there were 169 wild adult birds in the Mackenzie Basin.

The Department of Conservation's kākī captive breeding facility near Twizel and the Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust collect eggs from wild and captive kākī pairs. They then hatch and raise the chicks to be released into the wild at about nine months old. They have helped bring kākī back from the brink of extinction.

Now Te Manahuna Aoraki is helping kākī too, by expanding trapping in the Tasman, Cass, Godley and Macaulay River systems to protect them from predators. Kākī released into these areas now have their best ever chance of survival.

While other riverbed birds migrate, kākī stay in the braided rivers year round. They are vulnerable to predators like stoats and feral cats especially when they breed as they nest on the ground.



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Kākī start breeding when they are two or three years old and can lay as many as four eggs in each clutch.



© Cody Thyne

Kākī eggs weigh around 25g (about half the size of a standard chicken egg).



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When they hatch, kākī chicks have excellent camouflage with mottled brown backs and a white chest.

As they become adults, feathers darken to all black, their legs change from grey to red, and their eyes change from brown to red.

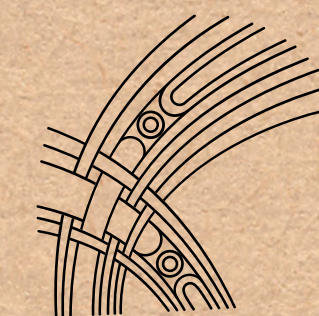


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About Te Manahuna Aoraki

Te Manahuna Aoraki is a conservation project protecting the landscapes and threatened species over 310,000ha of the upper Mackenzie Basin and Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park (that's nearly three times the size of Auckland, and twice the size of Stewart Island/Rakiura).

Find out more on www.temanahunaoraki.org



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