



Save the Kiwi Impact Review

New Zealand's leading independent
kiwi conservation experts & advocates

February 2024

Conducted and prepared by Debbie Teale on behalf of Save the Kiwi
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Save the Kiwi is a facilitator and a connector. It engages others and builds capacity and capability in community groups nationwide. It is trusted, credible, and professionally run. It catalyses and significantly delivers a multiplier effect for New Zealand's conservation outcomes beyond the single species focus it is known for. All kiwi conservation dollars invested and spent deliver impacts more broadly into other conservation outcomes and biodiversity.

Debbie Teale

Introduction

New Zealand's leading independent kiwi conservation experts & advocates

The board and CEO should be proud of their team and achievements.

For the first time, a kiwi species has come off the Department of Conservation's threatened species list. North Island brown kiwi is now classed as 'not threatened' with a 'conservation dependent' caveat. While this is a significant achievement, the real success story is the wider impacts such as the restoration of habitats and ecosystems – all the other flora and fauna that benefit from the investment, focus, resourcing, and attention kiwi enjoy.

In the following, you will read how the change in status for North Island Brown Kiwi is directly attributable to the work of Save the Kiwi and those it partners with. But more importantly, you will read how the work done under the banner of kiwi has a much broader positive impact. Investment into the work of Save the Kiwi also strengthens other community and Māori-led groups nationwide and is a key player in the kiwi conservation system.

Save the Kiwi works closely with more than 50 projects and groups nationwide each year. This report captures some of the achievements of these collective efforts. In it, you will hear the voices and share the insights of some of Save the Kiwi's partners, the hard-working community and Māori-led conservation groups around the nation. The impacts described are not just Save the Kiwi's to claim but also reflect the hard work these groups do.

New Zealand trades on its 'clean green' image. It is essential to our industry, trade, exports, culture, lifestyle, and well-being. Therefore, we cannot ignore that almost 4,000 of our endemic species are threatened or at risk of extinction.

To change this situation, halt the decline in native species and achieve more comprehensive conservation outcomes, everyone has to play a part. The Department of Conservation (DOC) is not well enough resourced to deliver on the conservation outcomes that consecutive governments have tasked it with. Partnerships with professionally run organisations such as Save the Kiwi are critical to get the job done.

Save the Kiwi is a facilitator and a connector. It engages others and builds capacity and capability in community groups nationwide. It is trusted, credible, and professionally run. It catalyses and significantly delivers a multiplier effect for New Zealand's conservation outcomes beyond the single species focus it is known for. All kiwi conservation dollars invested and spent deliver impacts more broadly into other conservation outcomes and biodiversity.

There is excellent value in the independence of Save the Kiwi; it can go where the Crown can't, won't, or simply doesn't have the resources to do so. It uses its resources and knowledge to make some impacts directly and others through its investments and partnerships.

Save the Kiwi partners with the Department of Conservation (DOC) in the national kiwi recovery programme and receives funding for their collective goal to increase each species of kiwi by 2% per annum. In turn, Save the Kiwi effectively leverages this funding from central government through the support it generates from its corporate sector partnerships and philanthropic donations. It then invests these monies in projects run by community and Māori-led projects nationwide, adding additional support, specialist knowledge and further funding.

This one-to-many model for funding from DOC and other partners is a solid investment. Save the Kiwi is a good steward of partnership funds, with strong governance and a solid management structure. It applies expertise to help it distribute and invest wisely for outcomes. Its strong relationship skills and long-standing successful track record will see it continue to play a leading role in kiwi conservation efforts and the conservation system as a whole.

Debbie Teale, Independent Consultant, February 2024

The task

I was engaged to provide an independent view of the impacts being realised from the work of Save the Kiwi. Conservation is an area where funding is always tight, and measuring outcomes is tricky to define. In discussion with Save the Kiwi, we decided to use a qualitative approach to capture some of its key stakeholders' opinions about impacts to gain an understanding of impacts beyond actual numbers of kiwi eggs hatched, chicks released, hectares with safe habitat and predator control, etc which are already tracked and reported in the annual report.

In this report, you will find the key insights or themes where participants identified Save the Kiwi as having a 'marked effect or influence' on the plight of the five species of kiwi, the work of other groups in this sector, or the 'system' as a whole.

I was also asked to identify if there are any gaps in Save the Kiwi's work or areas for improvement, which its partners and stakeholders identified in the course of this work, which would help with the ongoing development of strategy and work programmes. These were delivered to the board and CEO in late 2023 separately to this report and will be used to enable refinement of the work programme for 2024.

Limitation

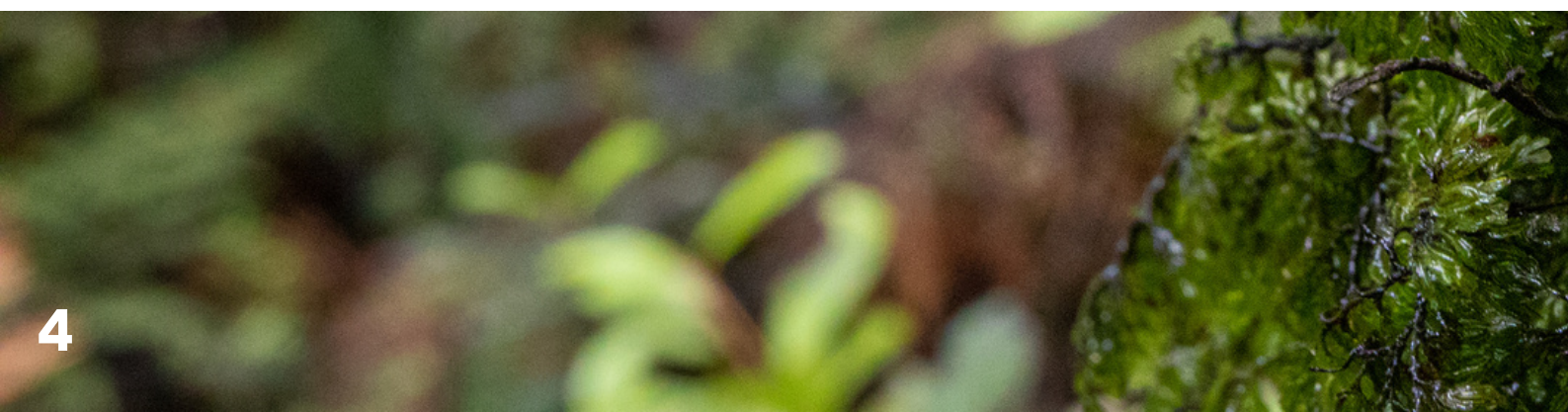
This qualitative research did not attempt to measure the impacts of the projects that Save the Kiwi supports beyond what was stated. Interviewees were not asked to provide data or evidence to support their claims. What is presented as fact is what interviewees told me. I have not further tested these for accuracy.

Process & participants

Participants were identified and contacted by the Trust [ER1] and approached in the first instance to ascertain their interest in engaging in this process. An initial 20 one-on-one video conference interviews were conducted, followed by three further follow-up discussions. Interviewees consented to be interviewed, and interviews were confidential so that participants could openly express their views.

Stakeholders primarily represented projects in the North Island, with a smaller number in the South Island and a handful from DOC. Most of these stakeholders have decades of experience in the sector. Some have worked with the Trust [ER2] since its inception, while others are newer in their involvement.

Participants expressed their appreciation for having the opportunity to participate in this review and to give feedback with the intent of helping the programme's ongoing success and evolution. There were consistent themes from almost all interviews, with a few but small set of divergent views.



Save the Kiwi's purpose & funding sources

Save the Kiwi shares a goal with the Department of Conservation (DOC), its long-time partner in the national kiwi recovery programme, to increase each species of kiwi by 2% per annum.

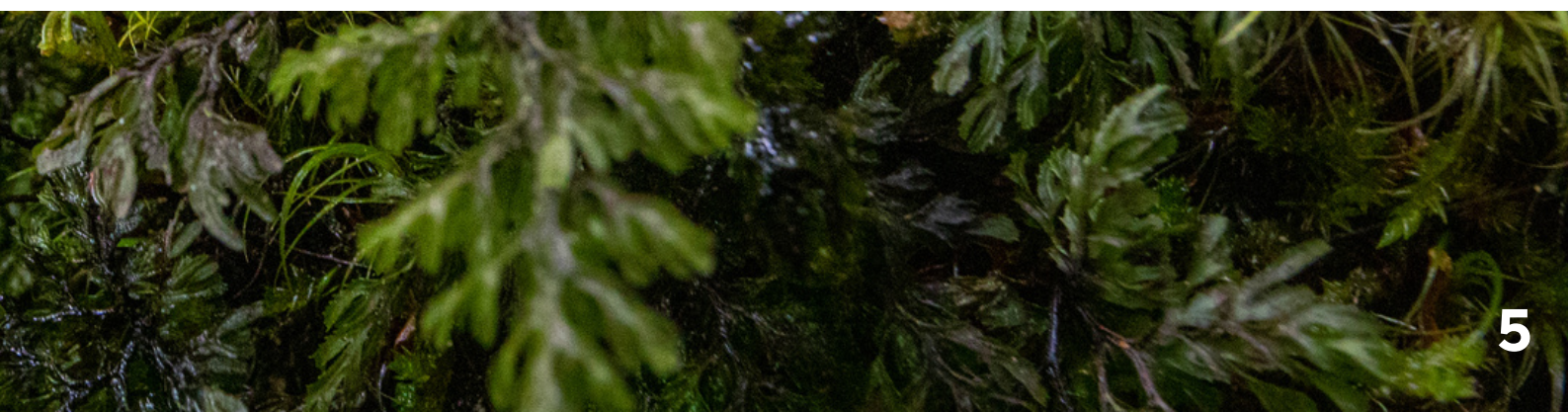
The government is Save the Kiwi's biggest funder. It is responsible for distributing these funds to the community from the successful 'Save our Iconic Kiwi' bid to Treasury by Kiwis for kiwi (as Save the Kiwi was known at that time) and DOC together in 2015. It has also administered and invested funds contracted through the Jobs for Nature scheme launched in the initial phase of New Zealand's COVID-19 response.

Additional funding is sourced through its long-term partnerships with corporations such as Jarden, Gallagher Insurance NZ (formerly Crombie Lockwood), Signature Homes, Comvita, and First Mortgage Trust to name just a few. Philanthropic donations and a newly established endowment fund further complement Save the Kiwi's financial position.

Save the Kiwi publishes its annual report, which captures a range of quantitative data and financial performance and can be found on its [website](#).

Save the Kiwi's impacts can be grouped into four key areas:

- The plight of the species;
- Gains wider than kiwi;
- Strengthened delivery in community groups;
- New Zealand's conservation system and government commitments.



The plight of the species

North Island brown kiwi now off the threatened species list largely thanks to Save the Kiwi & the groups it partners with

During this research I heard that the status of the North Island brown kiwi has been turned around in large part because of the work of the collective efforts of Save the Kiwi and the work of the projects it supports and invests in.

A kiwi species has come off the Department of Conservation's threatened list for the first time. North Island brown kiwi is now classed as 'not threatened' with a 'conservation dependent' caveat. The overarching view held by participants is that the change in status is due to the work of Save the Kiwi and its partners, the other community and Māori-led conservation groups who have been active in predator control, monitoring and translocations, Operation Nest Egg, advocacy and coordinating volunteer efforts.

Respondents reflected that Save the Kiwi has stayed true to its purpose and has spent the last two decades on initiatives that have bolstered and built kiwi populations to the point that we are now experiencing the return of kiwi back to places they haven't been in 100 years, including in unfenced spaces, and where people live and businesses operate.

I consistently heard that Save the Kiwi has been the key to driving this change in status due to how the organisation supports grassroots initiatives throughout the country.

When asked to expand upon why they believed that Save the Kiwi is responsible for leading and driving this change in status, I heard a range of reasons, including:

- Save the Kiwi is a knowledge bank, providing advice and support for community groups;
- The team goes the extra mile to provide funding and support and are seen to be professional, passionate and act with integrity;
- The team can have honest conversations and learn from past mistakes.

I heard how Save the Kiwi has a solid network of relationships, many of which have taken years to build. I learned that Save the Kiwi can work across geographical and sometimes philosophical boundaries to find pragmatic solutions. The organisation is also a connector in communities.

Stakeholders valued how Save the Kiwi has identified gaps in knowledge in the sector or what needs to be done and brought in specialists to bolster ability, provide support and build capability in the community, for example, on the topics of dogs, ferrets and forestry.

Described by the majority of respondents as one of the best organisations in the conservation arena, I heard that Save the Kiwi is a proven performer, has adapted and has been agile, responsive, proactive, practical and engaged. Because Save the Kiwi is independent, it is perceived by most respondents to be able to be innovative and think differently in the way that it can support the projects it works with.



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"One of the lead organisations in the sector doing things well, in fact doing a better job than most."

DOC Staffer

"They are good at getting corporate support; this relies on good relationships with CEOs and reflects well on their team and delivering on what corporates want."

DOC Staffer

"Save the Kiwi is a successful entity with strong corporate engagement skills, reflected in the sponsorship funding gained and long-term working relationships."

DOC Staffer

"Brown Kiwi is off the endangered list because of the efforts of Save the Kiwi."

DOC Staffer

"If we didn't have an organisation like Save the Kiwi advocating for us, we would be in trouble."

Community Group

"They do a wonderful job – we are very, very fortunate to have them in our corner backing us."

Community Group

"The fate of the North Island Brown Kiwi has been changed due to community efforts, not DOC."

DOC Staffer

"There is a huge need for an organisation like Save the Kiwi. The fact they've employed specialist knowledge for us to access on ferrets, dogs, and forestry demonstrates that they are leading the current issues to prevent future problems."

Community Group

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The change of status of brown kiwi is a win for one of the five species

Most work respondents focused on was for the North Island brown kiwi, which has been an enormous success story. However, there was widespread concern that the change in the status of North Island brown kiwi means that Save the Kiwi could become the victim of its own success.

They expressed that funding is targeted when there is a problem. Once the situation starts to be 'fixed', funding is taken away – but by stopping the work, the issue is circular and resurfaces. Community groups repeatedly stressed that “one year of not setting traps can undo years of work” and that they “are concerned about possible cuts in funding for kiwi work”.

Community groups were concerned that DOC funding may stop and that any reduced funding or slowing of work would take kiwi conservation efforts backwards. This was a concern shared by some of the DOC respondents to this work.

The North Island skew in the participants meant fewer mentions of work focused across the other four kiwi species. However, participants were conscious that there is enormous potential to do more for these other species, and support is needed in the South Island.



"The South Island projects need more resources, of course, Save the Kiwi does too, but we sometimes feel forgotten and that our work is too hard, so it is of huge value to us that we can reach out to Save the Kiwi for their specialists and also attend their hui."

Community Group

"We understand that Save the Kiwi's funding has had it tied to doing more work in the North Island, and also that many of the challenges to kiwi occur within proximity to humans and their dogs, so perhaps the South Island with wide open spaces is too tough to tackle? We are very keen to see more support down here."

Community Group

"I am worried that with the ongoing pressure on our department to meet so many conservation needs, and to cut costs, that funding to Save the Kiwi may be reduced or even cut off, that could possibly lead to us reversing or undoing so much of the progress we collectively made."

DOC Staffer



Gains wider than kiwi

Work to protect kiwi helps the whole ngahere

Impacts are more expansive than just increasing the numbers of kiwi. I consistently heard that the work sweeps up other species, delivering impacts more broadly into other conservation outcomes and biodiversity. Projects referenced the work extending to creating ecosystems and helping natural biodiversity, flora and fauna to thrive.

Stakeholders reference the Save the Kiwi team's physical, financial and emotional support.

Save the Kiwi was successful in being contracted to distribute a large amount of funding under the Jobs for Nature funding that was established under the previous government. Respondents talked about the massive difference beyond nature or conservation outcomes. Jobs for Nature allowed Save the Kiwi and the projects it, in turn, invested in to expand and have a more significant impact.

I also heard that the funding enabled Save the Kiwi to bring onboard specialist skills that all community projects can and do tap into.

Stakeholders stressed the importance and value created by the Jobs for Nature funding that Save the Kiwi invested in projects. Beyond building much-needed skillsets, respondents talked about the scheme delivering social benefits, including employment prospects and job certainty, jobs in smaller communities, confidence and pride, social connection, and cohesion.

The funding created stable jobs in some rural communities, including for our younger workforce, our rangatahi. Respondents talked about how they used the budget to build both capacity in employment and capability. They could attract talent who would not ordinarily consider conservation a career choice. They have brought their experience and skills from other sectors. They've been creative and developed new ways of working. I also heard about new tools and technologies.

These funds helped with administrative costs for some projects, a first for a few projects. This funding enabled more robust processes, records, and reporting.

Stakeholders relayed that Save the Kiwi was able to fund more specialists who bring more scientific and technical knowledge and approaches. Community groups appreciate being able to access this knowledge and the ability to use more evidence-based decision-making to help drive their work forward. They noted that as more and more of the advancements in technologies are being held in private hands, along with the projects, this access to specialists who can collaborate and not be tied to DOC's role as regulator and rules means that there may be more significant gains for kiwi and other species.

Projects directly referenced the Jobs for Nature funding as crucial in allowing them to contract and pay for local professional help rather than rely on volunteers. The result was that projects have been able to be more demanding regarding standards, expected outcomes and timelines. The result is better value and impact for the dollars invested.

A lesser-referenced impact was the funding supporting behaviour change and advocacy work, which is much needed to help the mindset shift that conservation is everyone's responsibility.

A small subset of those interviewed noted the importance of Save the Kiwi's work as being important for the New Zealand economy, and they made direct links to our 'clean green' image. They talked about tourists coming to New Zealand to see our beautiful and unique landscapes and that therefore we cannot risk slowing down our investment into the predator free movement and restoration projects, whether at the single species level, or at an eco-system or large landscapes.

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“We know that when we work in our community, we are aiming to achieve environmental benefits, but we also deliver social and economic outcomes through employment, and sometimes we are giving someone a go – a first-time employment opportunity.”

Community Group

“Save the Kiwi brings more knowledge to the table than just kiwi, they help us more broadly with our eco-system-based approaches and we are just so grateful to have them provide us so much extra support than they need to.”

Community Group

“The support we get has enabled us to employ staff which has been great for our community, but also, we were able to pay a decent wage and have managed to attract in some great skilled people.”

Community Group

“When we do predator control work with Save the Kiwi we also work with other groups like Predator Free NZ and we are not just helping kiwi but every other bird and species in our forest.”

Community Group

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Strengthened delivery in community groups nationwide

Partnering with Save the Kiwi builds capability & capacity in community & Māori-led conservation groups

The community and Māori-led conservation projects identified various ways that Save the Kiwi helps them to deliver on their individual and collective aims.

The sustainability of funding is a challenge for everyone in the conservation sector and was one of the most significant concerns reported. Most respondents placed huge value on the provision of funding from Save the Kiwi that helps them run their projects. The funding helps create jobs and is used for project planning, translocations, and predator control. Some groups also received Jobs for Nature funding that came through Save the Kiwi that they said they would not have been able to access directly.

The second area repeatedly noted was utilising Save the Kiwi's technical and specialist knowledge and team members. Stakeholders consistently spoke of the value and impact delivered through this expertise and skills Save the Kiwi has and shares. They spoke of how it ultimately builds capability and improvements in practice in the sector, and at the grassroots level of communities.

I heard how the Save the Kiwi team supports and enables projects nationwide and is noted as being available and responsive at any time of the day. Their specialist knowledge and regional coordinators are highly valued. These help build more knowledgeable practitioners at the grassroots level.

Save the Kiwi also has dedicated resources that many projects lack, for example, in communications, which some projects tap into, and would like to do more of.

The annual National Kiwi Hui is seen as incredibly valuable. It provides an opportunity for knowledge sharing and building networks, and often ensures that the people on the ground in communities feel that they are not alone in their work. Some are exhausted, and the hui energises them and gives them a sense of belonging to something bigger.

The hui was referred to by many as an immense value add to the community groups. The range of topics covered, the exchange of ideas, and the sharing of what technologies are being developed around the nation are significantly beneficial. Many commented that they are out in the field often and do not get time to share what they are doing with others or hear about advancements. The hui helps improve awareness, build skillsets, and enables a connected network of kiwi practitioners.

I repeatedly heard of the value that Save the Kiwi plays as a conduit between community groups and DOC.

There is widespread understanding that DOC is underfunded and resourced, and that results in some processes being slow. This can be hard to engage with when you are a volunteer group, not necessarily with the resources, time, knowledge, and skills to navigate the bureaucracy.

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“If there is only one thing that we always need, it is funding. I asked our board of trustees before being interviewed what to say – and they said ask for more money.”

Community Group

“Save the Kiwi's team of experts giving us access to what we need when we need it is invaluable. We do not have the funding to pay for experts. Once we know what to do, we can get on with it.”

Community Group

“We struggle for resources. We must do everything from chase funding to being on the field. Therefore, dealing with DOC's paperwork and requirements sometimes feels too demanding or could be the straw that breaks our backs. Save the Kiwi help us with this and quite frankly that ensures we can do the hard mahi in the field.”

Community Group

“DOC can be hard to deal with when you don't have technical knowledge and are starting out. They are also short on resources, and getting advice or consistency from office to office is hard. So we value having Save the Kiwi to help us work through what is required.”

Community Group

“We value being given advice and expertise at place, at our home, and then we can work with our people with confidence.”

Community Group

“Working with DOC is not easy, and DOC's job is hard.”

DOC Staffer

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New Zealand's conservation system & government commitments

Strategic partner for government & other funding partners

The majority of respondents were clear that for every dollar invested in Save the Kiwi by DOC or other funding partners, the dollar value of the returns delivered for kiwi and conservation outcomes are far greater. They referenced a multiplier effect occurring.

This investment, therefore, delivers a more significant impact than what DOC or any other funder can do on its own. By multiplied, that means that Save the Kiwi adds financial and other resources and specialist knowledge and helps build capability in the community. Additionally, Māori-led and community partners add their resources and local funding they attain from their own, often local, supporters.

Participants described this multiplier effect as an effective way for government and DOC to use its partnerships to facilitate a greater return on investment and value for the nation. A lesser mentioned impact of the work of Save the Kiwi and its partners is supporting the government to meet its international obligations and commitments, such as in New Zealand's first Emissions Reduction Plan. Only one respondent referred to Save the Kiwi specifically impacting and delivering on Action 4.2: "Establish an integrated work programme to deliver climate, biodiversity and wider environmental outcomes".

However, when some respondents were asked whether Save the Kiwi should alter its strategy beyond a single species focus to more specific climate change, there was acknowledgement that there may be more funding sources if work was 'pitched as a climate change project'. Caution was also made as to a radical change in strategy such as this. A key reason for success has been a single-focus and sustained effort.

Respondents note that Save the Kiwi is good at engaging volunteers as well as funding.

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“We all know that DOC is underfunded and resourced and can barely cover the basics, so they need us and our teams of local volunteers out in the field doing the species work, and we need specialist knowledge that doesn't get tied up in bureaucratic rules and processes.”

Community Group

“Save the Kiwi is delivering greater impacts than DOC can do on its own.”

DOC Staffer

“I decided I wanted to do something practical and to volunteer. When I rang Save the Kiwi I did not expect to get a call from the CEO who literally found me a way to donate my time and skills.”

Volunteer

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Independence & ability to work across places & stakeholder groups

Partners see strength in Save the Kiwi as it is not the Crown nor the regulator, and can go and work across boundaries and with people who may not always come together. I heard Save the Kiwi can work in spaces and in ways other organisations can't, won't or don't.

Most respondents spoke of Save the Kiwi acting with integrity in working with Māori/iwi. They also referred to more efforts being undertaken recently to improve the organisation's cultural awareness and tikanga.

I also heard that Save the Kiwi is an important bridge or conduit to DOC and can question DOC where there is just cause or reason to do so. It can be harder for smaller projects to do this when they think there may be something odd or just difficult to navigate. This may be seen sometimes as causing some chaffing, but as the leading independent advocate for kiwi community partners, expect this from Save the Kiwi.

Respondents conveyed that Save the Kiwi can sometimes think differently or act faster than DOC.

Save the Kiwi can work nationwide due to its network of relationships, which in many cases are decades old. I was told there are deep and lasting relationships with key agencies and linkages to iwi, hapū, and community groups. While the majority of respondents said that they believe Save the Kiwi has good working relationships with iwi and hapū, there was too small a sample who represented Māori-led projects, to say whether this is a view held by iwi and hapū.

Clearly, impact and influence in conservation, particularly in working with a taonga species, is not always transactional and measurable in numbers alone. There is immeasurable value and strength in relationships as it is the collaboration of all players in the system which determines the success of the survival of the species. I was told that, increasingly, there is a shift and reliance on private, community, and Māori-led work.

Relationships are also vital to ensuring funding from sources other than government. Respondents rate the skills that Save the Kiwi demonstrates in this area and refer to long-standing corporate sponsorships.

Save the Kiwi plays an important role in bringing additional resources into kiwi conservation efforts that may not necessarily partner with government agencies, or the amount they bring is too small for the agency to go through the funding processes it must follow. This independence and proven ability to bring on partners such as corporates, bringing more funding, skills, staff and resourcing, and connections into communities helps deliver increased efforts and outcomes.

I heard that Save the Kiwi is a good steward of funding, with a strong board of trustees and governance. Furthermore, it has a solid management team and structure. It applies expertise to help it identify what projects to support and invests wisely for outcomes. Its independence, strong relationship skills and long-standing successful track record has seen it be key to a change in the status of the North Island brown kiwi.



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“Save the Kiwi is a team of professionals delivering us a hands-on way of making sure our funds deliver on making a difference to kiwi conservation efforts.”

Funding Partner

“Empowers community groups and builds capability at place where it is required.”

Community Group

“Sometimes this work gets so lonely out in the field, and yet you get a call from one of the team from Save the Kiwi and you realise you’re not on your own and your efforts are not only acknowledged but they can answer your queries or connect you to someone with the same challenges.”

Community Group

“Everyone is scrambling for crumbs, at times it is dispiriting, this is a challenge for Save the Kiwi as well, we all know.”

Community Group

“There is patch protection right now, the looming cut in funding heightens everything, and at the same time, we believe the Predator Free funding may come to an end.”

Community Group

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Trusted voice & advocates

Save the Kiwi has played a successful role advocating for kiwi conservation measures for many years. As an independent group with communications resource and expertise, I heard how important it is for this role to continue. A handful mentioned that Save the Kiwi is the voice taking kiwi conservation efforts to the world whether that be via as a spokesperson in the media or at events such as one hosted recently in London by KEA.

There was widespread support for the recent introduction of the dog specialist and support of kiwi avoidance training, but caution that the big picture issue of dog management needs to be taken on collectively by other agencies and players as well. Save the Kiwi has a role but not the budgets to be able to self-fund behavioural change campaigns which can cost millions of dollars. Nor does it have the appropriate legislative levers or tools to provide deterrents or penalties to owners when dogs are out of hand.

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“We have limited resource and certainly no-one that specialises in communications so we rely heavily on Save the Kiwi to do our story-telling and promote what we are doing as a project, and the collective aims of all of us hand on projects.”

Community Group

“Sometimes we need to work with other agencies to help us with owners who are not aware of the damage their dogs wreak, and that they are liable, and that we could actually put the dogs down for straying into areas we manage.”

Community Group

“It would be great to have more support to tackle problems like roaming dogs. I think we can do more, and DOC should draw a firm line on roaming dogs on conservation land, Kill them. Under Section 59 of the Dog Act if dogs are loose who are a danger to people or wildlife then they can be killed. Need to get tough. Save the Kiwi may have to convince DOC to take a stronger line on dogs.”

Community Group

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Changing context

Most of the interviews were undertaken in the lead-up to the 2023 election. Respondents talked about their concern over the uncertainty of ongoing funding, budget cuts, and a potential decrease in focus on conservation. Most spoken with were nervous about reduced funding for the sector. They were very conscious of the Jobs for Nature funding ending, which will have a detrimental and destabilising effect on themselves and Save the Kiwi, impacting what everyone can deliver.

Respondents are also aware that not enough money goes to DOC. They talked about how DOC holds vast land estates, around a third of the country, and yet receives only a small amount of funding for resourcing and for critical things such as predator control. They referenced how New Zealand is therefore standing by watching species decline and that, by default, the role of conserving species is falling to private landowners and sectors. Therefore the role of entities such as Save the Kiwi with nationwide networks and strong relationships are vital to support government to deliver on conservation outcomes.

Traditionally, this sector is seen as low paid and undervalued. It relies heavily on volunteers to get the work done. When they discussed the challenge of attracting talent, they spoke of the sector being undervalued, that conservation is not seen as a serious career.

They acknowledged that volunteers often do the work and that it is time to stop relying on goodwill. There is always a problem with getting any operational funding to keep an entity going – and yet government is relying on volunteers to get the work done for New Zealand. These volunteers have traditionally been older and Pākehā.

Most of the respondents in this work spoke of the crucial role Māori landowners and iwi play in the conservation space. With the changes in the sector I heard how all groups, including Save the Kiwi, need to find ways to engage younger people and those with a better understanding and/or open mindset to the Māori view and with a commitment to Te Tiriti.

At the same time however, there is also the rise of highly skilled, professionally run projects, wealthy philanthropists, and changing technology. Projects talked of new technologies such as apps for things from monitoring the traplines to recording bird calls.

A common theme in the conversations was that a lot of the experience and modern, or advancing, technologies are sitting outside of the government agencies. I heard that sometimes, Save the Kiwi, its community partners and other NGOs have to work together to drive for advancements that DOC can't. That these groups work well together in finding ways to share resources and knowledge. These technological advances are happening in private hands and projects. There may be lags occurring now with the legislation being behind these advancements.



“When we first came into conservation all the projects we knew of were run by volunteers and retirees, now we are seeing young professionals and billionaires working to save our environment and using or developing systems and technologies we only hear about at the annual hui – times are changing.”

Community Group

“DOC can do a strategy to save a species, or ecosystem, but it has limited resources to implement. We are essentially watching DOC managing the decline of species – just monitoring them as they die. We must have groups like Save the Kiwi dedicated to restoring species and habitats.”

Community Group



"This one-to-many model for funding from DOC and other partners is a solid investment. Save the Kiwi is a good steward of partnership funds, with strong governance and a solid management structure. It applies expertise to help it distribute and invest wisely for outcomes. Its strong relationship skills and long-standing successful track record will see it continue to play a leading role in kiwi conservation efforts and the conservation system as a whole."

Debbie Teale

About the report author

Debbie Teale

Debbie Teale is an independent communications and strategy consultant with extensive experience across the private and public sectors. She works alongside senior leaders providing strategic guidance and advice. Debbie also specialises in conducting independent reviews and assessments that deliver tangible and actionable recommendations.

Debbie's clients know her for delivering quality work and meaningful outcomes. Her most recent independent reviews were on conducted on behalf of Predator Free NZ Trust, Biosecurity New Zealand (Ministry for Primary Industries) and the Ministry of Defence.

In Debbie's 30+ year-career, she has worked with many public and private organisations including Bank of New Zealand, Biosecurity New Zealand, NZTE, The Warehouse Group, Vero, Vector, Carter Holt Harvey, Oji, The Treasury, Auckland Council, New Zealand Customs, Hobsonville LandCo and The Human Rights Commission.

She has long had a passion for conservation work having headed the nationally recognisable non-profit, Project Crimson Trust for five years. In 2019 she helped establish The Aotearoa Circle, a private-public environmental partnership, following a period running the Office of the Chief Executive for the Ministry for the Environment.



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