



🕒 10 AUG 2017 ✎ EMILY HEBER

Conservation Win for the Critically Endangered Kakī

The Kakī used to be widespread throughout New Zealand but invasive predators have made it one of the world's rarest wading birds. Conservationists have stepped in to save the species.

New Zealand's endemic Black Stilt, also known as the Kakī, has been brought back from the brink of extinction thanks to conservation efforts. The native bird was once widespread throughout New Zealand waterways but invasive predators such as stoats, possums, hedgehogs, ferrets, and feral cats finished the population. By 1991 only 31 wild individuals and four breeding pairs remained.

The Critically Endangered bird is considered one of the world's rarest wading birds and a living treasure in Māori culture. Kakī breed and nest along the riverbeds and wetlands in New Zealand where they contribute to the health of the ecosystem. Known for their black plumage and long pink legs, the species is easily recognizable.



Black Stilts are considered to be the world's rarest wading bird. Credit: [Craig McKenzie](#)

Now, thanks to a captive breeding and reintroduction program by New Zealand Department of Conservation and partners, the population has more than tripled, reaching 106 individuals in the wild. **Wes Sechrest**, Chief Scientist and CEO at Global Wildlife Conservation commented:

...We look forward to the day when Kākī chicks are once again naturally fledging in the wild throughout their historical range—the sign of a truly sustainable population.

The program built aviaries that provided suitable habitat for captive breeding and close monitoring, which gave the population a much-needed boost. The establishment of more aviaries is expected to increase the number of birds the program can rear and release. Conservation efforts for the Kākī offer hope that one day, a thriving population of the iconic bird will be found along New Zealand's rivers and wetlands.

Featured Photo: New Zealand's endemic Black Stilt also known as the Kākī. Credit: [Glenda Rees](#)

Source: [Global Wildlife Conservation](#)

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Emily is a recent graduate from UC Santa Barbara with a BS in Zoology. As a student, she discovered that she had a passion for the conservation of endangered species and their ecosystems. Her background in informal education has allowed her the opportunity to share her passion for animals with others, something she seeks to continue doing while working with the communication team. In her spare time, Emily enjoys exploring the amazing hiking trails found in Santa Cruz and tries to SCUBA dive whenever possible. Emily is excited to join the Island Conservation team and to help share the amazing work that is being done here.