

MESSAGE FROM RT HON HELEN CLARK

I agreed to accept the position of Patron of Friends of Flora, because I support their mission. Community-based organisations like Friends of Flora do very important work alongside the Conservation Department to help protect New Zealand's endangered flora and fauna.

Friends of Flora have been working tirelessly since early 2001 to do just that. Their dedication and hard work has ensured the continued presence of a number of native bird species in the flora catchment area of Kahurangi National Park. For example, the presence of the rare and endangered blue duck (whio) has been supported there, and a sustainable breeding population is being created.

Friends of Flora have also taken on the ambitious task of re-introducing the great spotted kiwi into the catchment. The Society hopes to raise future funding for this project to establish a sustainable breeding population.

Each month, up to fifty volunteers make the journey into this beautiful and unspoilt mountain area of New Zealand to check and rebait traps, monitor kiwi, and perform many other tasks to ensure the on-going success of this significant conservation project. With more than 600 trapping stations in the 5,000 hectares of rugged terrain, Friends of Flora is the largest community conservation trapping project in the country.

Funding agencies are under increased pressure from community conservation groups because the Department of Conservation's budget is less than it was. As more such groups form to try to fill the gaps left by DOC, it will be harder for any one group to get the funds necessary to continue with their projects – unless philanthropic funding increases.

I fully support the Friends of Flora and the steps they are taking to ensure that critical conservation projects can be funded.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Helen Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Helen Clark

Patron.

2 April 2012.