

## 1000th Kiwi Chick Hatches

**Rotorua, 25 September, 2011** – Kiwi chick number 1000 has safely arrived at Rainbow Springs Kiwi Encounter hatchery in Rotorua taking a painstaking 5 days to break out of its shell.

The chick is from the Waimarino Forest near Ohakune in the North Island, and hatched at 3.05 pm on Saturday under the watchful eye of the forestry environmental manager who transported the egg to the hatchery, as well as a very excited tour group and Rainbow Springs staff. The chick weighed in at a healthy 386.2 grams, which is slightly above average.

Kiwi Encounter Kiwi Husbandry Manager Claire Travers says, "The hatch all went to plan and it's a perfect looking chick - with rather large feet and a top knot of feathers sticking up on the top of its head which is rather cute."

The chick will spend the next few days resting and drying out, fluffing up its feathers and getting acquainted with its limbs after being crammed into such a small space. The chick won't get its first taste of food for another five days or so surviving on the egg's nutritious yolk.

It is dad Kahu's 25th egg to come to the hatchery. Male kiwi are radio tagged for identification because they are the ones that incubate the eggs in the nest. The female leaves the nest once the egg is laid.

The arrival of this precious national icon signifies 16 years of dedicated work by the Kiwi Encounter team nurturing eggs brought in by Department of Conservation staff and volunteers from around the North Island as part of the BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust programme.

The kiwi eggs are kept safe and warm until they hatch allowing the newborn chicks to get a strong start in life away from predators such as stoats and cats. Once the chicks reach a healthy weight of around 1kg they are returned to the wild.

Kiwi Encounter began the season just over the three weeks ago with only a dozen hatches to go before reaching the 1000<sup>th</sup> milestone chick, and ever since the first kiwi chick arrived there has been a steady rate of hatches.

Rainbow Springs involvement in kiwi conservation began in 1995 with the arrival of an orphaned egg and the hatchery has grown over the years to become the largest kiwi hatching facility in New Zealand, successfully incubating and hatching brown kiwi eggs from around the North Island.

"We're very proud to be playing such an important role in the conservation of kiwi. The arrival of the 1000th kiwi at Kiwi Encounter is a great achievement and goes a long way to ensuring the survival of these amazing birds," Ms Travers says.

*BNZ Operation Nest Egg™ (O.N.E) is a powerful tool to reverse the decline of key kiwi populations. Eggs and chicks are harvested from nests to save them from stoats and cats. The young kiwi are returned to the wild when they weight about 1kg, big enough to fight off these predators. More than 1600 kiwi chicks have been returned to the wild since the programme began in 1994, with captive facilities and hundreds of field workers from DOC and community groups throughout the country contributing to its success. The BNZ Operation Nest Egg™ egg harvesting-chick rearing-return to the wild technique was developed for kiwi through research funded solely by BNZ and is now also used in other species recovery programmes.*

Caption:

Pic 272 Claire Travers and forestry environmental manager Kerry Oates who transported the egg to the hatchery.

**Rainbow Springs, Fairy Springs Road, Rotorua.**

**For further information or to arrange an interview contact:**

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