



Seeing a family of weka successfully raising their young in her Nelson (Atawhai) garden was the impetus for Kathryn Marshall to start thinking about what she could do to support other native birds.

"The weka were able to thrive because of a local pest trapping programme in the surrounding Nelson hills. That made me think that maybe there was something I could do to help bring back our native birds."

Kathryn's original goal was to bring back the mohua, or yellowhead – a once locally common bird we are now only likely to see on the \$100 note and not in our garden or a local reserve. Current populations survive in remote South Island forests and on predator-free islands, but Kathryn's aim is to bring them back to the more accessible areas of the top of the South, by providing predator-proof nest boxes.

"Mohua are particularly vulnerable to predation on the nest so they are an obvious target. I did a lot of research and spoke to many experts and Peter Gaze suggested that it would be good to start with a bird like the rifleman, and develop a box for them, and then work our way up to the mohua."

Kathryn has had advice and input from her father, and from ornithologist Peter Gaze, Meg Rutledge of Nelson's Natureland and members of the Waimea MenzShed, who agreed to make the boxes. Together, with the use of research papers, the team have developed predator proof nest boxes for the rifleman and the kakariki which are now being deployed around the top of the South.

The rifleman box has a tiny 2.5cm entry hole which stoats and rats cannot squeeze through. The kakariki box has a specially designed pipe entry that the birds like, but pests cannot access.

"Each bird has its different nesting behaviour and requirements so the challenge is designing something that works for each specific species. That's where the collaboration between Natureland, the MenzShed and Peter Gaze has produced such fantastic results for us.