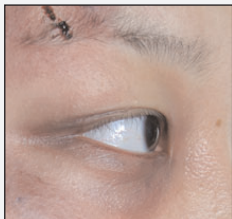


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ISSN 1176 4740

Written and edited by student journalists on the Graduate Diploma in Journalism and Bachelor of Communication Studies courses at AUT University. Views expressed are those of the editorial team and not of the university.

PUBLISHED BY:  
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# Miniature bats find new home at zoo



**SAFE HAVEN:** Auckland Zoo's newest arrivals once numbered in the millions, but there are only 50,000 left.

By Sam Stewart

Auckland Zoo is now protecting endangered bats as part of its native conservation programme.

The zoo is now home to 12 native short-tailed bats (pekapeka) that were moved from Kapiti Island to increase their chances of survival.

Zoo staff are pleased with how the 15g mammals have taken to their new surroundings.

"They've settled in really well. It's amazing for us because none of the staff have dealt with bats like this before," says the zoo's fauna team leader, Andrew Nelson.

The Department of Conservation (DoC), Auckland Zoo and iwi are involved in the operation that aims to keep the

genetically unique species of bat breeding successfully.

In 2005 and 2006 DoC took pregnant bats from Waiohine Valley to the National Wildlife Centre at Pukaha Mount Bruce.

Once the newborns had been weaned, the mothers were returned home while the offspring were sent to Kapiti Island.

However, the young bats became infected with a disease causing large ear lesions and as a result could no longer navigate properly using echo.

They have since had operations to remove ear tissue.

"For us it is brilliant to get involved with another native conservation programme," says Nelson.

DoC is disappointed that the bats were unable to establish on

the island but is grateful for the zoo's help.

"Having the bats at the zoo gives us a unique opportunity to develop skills in captive husbandry and to work with zoo staff to investigate the causes of the ear lesions," says support officer Lynn Adams.

"It will hopefully also enable us to reintroduce this species to secure sites in the wild."

The species had an estimated population of 12 million in New Zealand before the country was inhabited by settlers.

Short-tailed bats now number just 50,000.

"Projects like this continue to show the uniqueness of New Zealand wildlife and the inspirational efforts going ahead to protect them," says Nelson.

# Boost for Pacific media research

By Vaimoana Tapaleao

AUT University's Pacific Media Centre is set to be launched today, promoting media research within the Pacific region.

The centre aims to stimulate research into contemporary Maori, Pacific and ethnic media and culture.

The director of the centre, associate professor David Robie, says there is a need for more reporting on the Pacific and Asia-Pacific region.

"The under-reporting of this region is due to lack of awareness within New Zealand, which is ironic seeing as we've got the largest vibrant and thriving Pacific community in the world.

"So our media should reflect this."

Established in April, the Pacific Media Centre was born out of a research initiative within the university's School of Communication Studies.

"The Pacific Media Centre was set up to promote media research in New Zealand, with the empha-

sis being on projects based on Maori, Pacific and indigenous media," Robie says.

**"We want to see research backing stories with relevance."**

Several research projects currently being supported by the centre include a documentary investigating the political econo-

my of the media, and one on nickel mining in New Caledonia.

Another project being supported is an audio-visual report on the development of the 5000ha Ngati Hine forestry block in mid-Northland in the 1970s.

"We're trying to support journalists doing their work as well as getting people together to support each other's work.

"We want to see research backing stories with relevance," Robie says.

The Pacific Media Centre, part of AUT's Creative Industries

Research Institute, also publishes the *Pacific Journalism Review*, a journal looking at media issues in the Pacific region.

Robie wants the Pacific Media Centre to stimulate discussion.

"I hope the centre will be a boost for media debate, discussion and research," he says.

The launch of the centre coincides with this year's Pacific Islands Media Association conference, completing a day focusing on Pasifika media and research.