

Bird in the hand wins hearts of golden pair

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Last updated 05:00 05/03/2011



John and Janet Greenwood's family bought the naming rights for a kiwi chick at the Otorohanga Kiwi House for a 50th wedding anniversary gift for John and Janet. L-R Great grandson Samuel Dobbs (3), John and Janet Greenwood and great grandson Timothy Dobbs (4) with Asteryx the kiwi. Photo: DONNA WALS

It was a golden moment for a devoted Hamilton couple when they introduced Asteryx, the kiwi chick they had just named, to their great-grandchildren.

John and Janet Greenwood thought long and hard about the name of the western brown kiwi they were given the naming rights to for their 50th wedding anniversary last weekend.

"It was a complete surprise, we had no idea about it," Mr Greenwood said.

Their daughter, Roselle Dobbs, read about the Trade Me auction online from her home in China last December, and granddaughter-in-law Jessica Dobbs went through the "nerve-racking" process of placing the winning bid.

This week the names Elijah and Tabatha were considered by the Greenwoods but dismissed as silly, and four-year-old great-grandson Timothy's preference for Narnia-inspired Aslan was ruled out as well.

"Then Janet thought of looking at the kiwi's Latin name," Mr Greenwood said.

"We got (New Zealand naturalist) Geoff Moon's book out and found the Latin name was Apteryx mantelli."

The couple then came up with two derivatives – Asteryx for a male, and Mandy for a female, so when they were told the bird was a male, Asteryx it was.

After five decades of anniversaries, the couple had no need of more vases or platters, but it would be hard to find a couple better suited to have received this gift.

During his career, Mr Greenwood worked as a Lands and Survey Department ranger and for the Conservation Department. He is a keen nature photographer.

While working as a ranger in the 1970s, he was tasked with writing an environmental impact statement on whether a large aviary should be allowed to be built in Otorohanga.

"Impact statements were a fairly new idea back then. I sat down and I thought, how do you write something like this?"

He based it on the idea that if he lived in Otorohanga, he would like to wake up and hear the birds singing. Subsequently the aviary, which is central to the Otorohanga Kiwi House operation, was given the go-ahead.