
A Big Pat On The Back For All Our Planters, Weeders, Trappers, Staff and Everyone Who Helps in Any Way: A Commendation Award from the Trustpower Nelson Tasman Community Awards 2017



Kathryn Brownlie and Gillian Bishop are looking very happy to accept the Commendation Award for the Heritage and Environment Section of the Trustpower Nelson Tasman Community Awards on June 26. Congratulations to the section winners, Mapua School's Tane's Ark, for their wetland restoration in Mapua, and runners-up, Keep Motueka Beautiful.

The Supreme Award went to Project Jonah for their stunning response to the mass whale stranding at Farewell Spit in February.

The Trustpower Awards are conferred in several categories to celebrate the often unsung volunteers in the Nelson Tasman area. We are proud to be one of the winners.

What Is This Banded Rail We Are Battling For?

Many of our volunteers have not yet seen a Banded Rail. They tend to be secretive lurkers, seldom venturing further than one metre from their rush habitat. You are more likely to have heard their harsh explosive *preep* call or the cackling alarm call, most often heard in the early morning or evening. So just a few facts about the Banded Rail (*Gallirallus philippensis assimilis*, or *moho pereru*) that may be of interest.

For information about the Battle for the Banded Rail please contact Project Manager, Kathryn Brownlie on 544 4537 or bandedrail@gmail.com
For trapping information or support contact Field Officer, Tracey Murray on 540 2227 or 027 286 5866 or bandedrail@gmail.com



They were common towards the end of the 1800s; one was even found in the Union Steamship Companies office in Wellington. In the 1970s and 80s the numbers declined seriously due to extensive wetland drainage (encouraged by government subsidies), and the failure of the short-lived boom in ferret farming, when many unwanted ferrets were released into the wild.

Today they are rare south of the mangrove areas, and it is thought that perhaps 200 live in the Nelson/Marlborough area, the only rail habitat in the South Island. A minority of these live round the Waimea Inlet.

In New Zealand other members of the Rallidae family include wekas, crakes, coots, takahe and pukeko. Its interesting to consider that in our immediate area the rail members of the family are in dangerously low numbers, while the pukeko, which is also a protected bird, is present in such large numbers that people sometimes surreptitiously shoot them out of the hunting season.

Don't mistake a weka for a rail. Weka, which are increasing in this area, are more than twice the size of rails, being 50 to 60 cm in length. They are definitely not lurkers, being more inclined to join in your picnic.

For further information see nzbirdsonline.org.nz/species/banded-rail

Planting and Weeding Update

By May 2017, after 2 years work, we had planted 12,319 plants. We expect to plant at least 6000 more in total over the nine locations every year. There have been 15 weeding sessions and 11 planting bees so far this year, with 5000 plants in the ground.

- Seven community and four school planting mornings have taken place.
- There was a record turnout of 35 volunteers to a planting at Research Orchard Road, and we have around 30 new volunteers this year so far.
- About 754 hours have been volunteered to habitat restoration in the April-June quarter.

The next planting day will be on Sunday 23rd July 9am-1pm at Stringer Creek on Westdale Road opposite The Playhouse Café.

Finally, a planting day on Saturday 29th July 9am-1pm at Dominion Embayment. Parking at 43 Apple Valley Road (between Bronte Road and Mapua Drive).

Bring gloves, a spade, drinking water. Morning tea will be provided. Watch for the new flag with our logo marking sites for planting days.

Thanks to Nelson College Preparatory School

Nelson College Prep has contributed to the project for two years. This year the four houses have planted nearly 1000 plants at Research Orchard Road. Here is the story from student Fergus McNeilly:

“Tasman House went tree planting at Research Orchard Road in Richmond with the aim of helping to create a better environment to help save the banded rail. The banded rail is a beautiful bird, that is sadly endangered, and I hope that this little bird will survive. “

Weeding Coordinator, Ash Oliver

Ash Oliver has been appointed as Weeding Coordinator to help Kathryn, our Project Manager. Ash also works for Project Janszoon and the Tasman District Council, and is keen to get stuck into our project as well. He will plan and coordinate working bees for weeding and plant releasing, do some weeding by spraying or physical means, and assist with planting if required. He will also be available to consult with residents who are interested in planting or habitat restoration on their own properties, and to recommend the appropriate options for them.

Trapping Progress

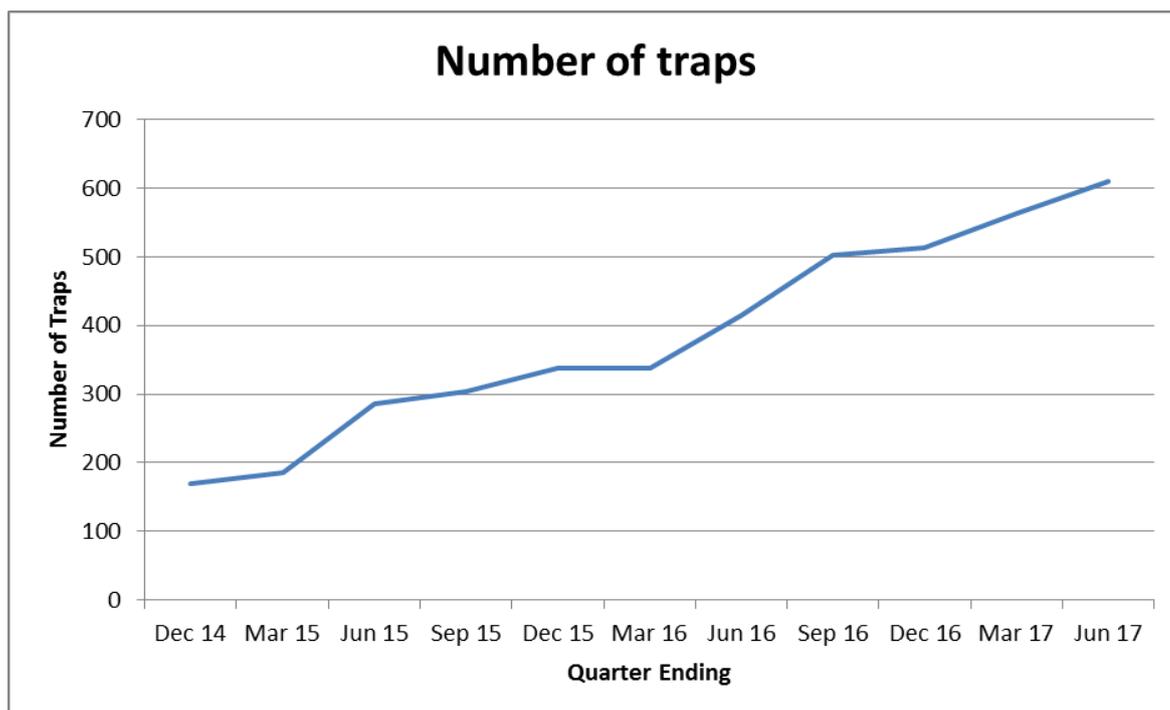
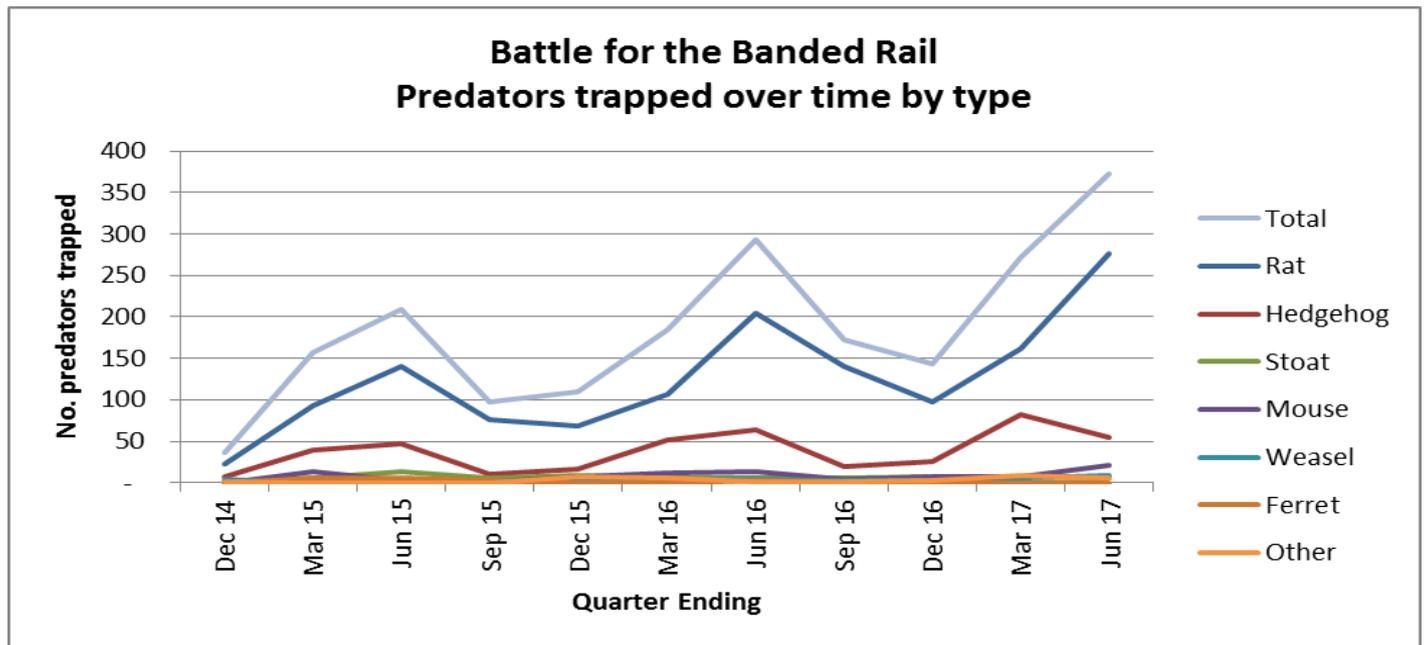
Summary Of Trap Catches April-June 2017

Sector	Rat	Hedgehog	Stoat	Weasel	Other*	Total for Quarter
Hoddy	50	6	1	1	2	59
Stringer/Bronte	54	2	0	0	1	57
Bronte/Mapua	79	17	0	4	9	109
Waimea West/Appleby Hills	94	29	5	4	15	148
Total	277	54	6	9	27	373
% of Total	74%	14%	2%	3%	7%	100%

“Other” is mainly mice, and a rabbit, a bird and a possum.

Trappers have now accounted for 1665 predators since the start of the programme. Mice are proving to be a problem, eating the baits and sometimes triggering the traps and getting caught; thus denying a spot for a “real” predator. Tracey has some tea infusers available to thwart the mice; just put the bait inside one of these. Let Tracey know if mice are a problem for you. (Contact details on front page of newsletter).

History of Trap Catches over Time, by Quarter



These two graphs show how catches have varied over time. The main variant is the number of traps, which is climbing steadily. Tracey has acquired 200 new traps. When the last 94 of these are placed we will have nearly 700 traps in the field. All current lines have been extended, and new ones set up on Dead Man's, Best, and Bell Islands.

You can also see seasonal variations. Hedgehogs in particular are caught in small numbers in winter, because they tend to hibernate.

Trapping Best Practice

Tracey has a best practice document which she will provide on request. Some major points include:

- Use dehydrated rabbit, hen eggs, peanut butter or a combination/alternating approach. Peanut butter is available from Tracey, kindly supplied by Pic's Peanut Butter.
- Change baits monthly (It can help to change type of bait periodically to attract trap-shy individuals)
- Watch for mice interfering with baits. Tea infusers are available from Tracey to put bait into and prevent mice taking it
- Checking the trap. There is a very good video that describes how best to set a trap.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kABskKb1NzE&feature=playerembedded>
- Place traps to enable practical access for the checker, in discreet locations that limit interference from the public and reduce the risk of being misplaced by high tides. Rats and mustelids tend to like to tunnel. PVC pipe or drainage pipe near traps can encourage predators to enter.
- The standard for checking traps is **fortnightly**. During heavy seeding years or as results identify high predator numbers, checkers may be asked to check traps more often. This may be particularly important during the breeding season.
- **Please contact your trap coordinator if you are unable to check your traps.**
- Take care when rebaiting traps. Ideally unset the trap, then replace the bait. Use gloves.
- Use gloves when handling dead animals, to prevent possible contact with disease.
- Trap maintenance. Keep the entrance clear of vegetation, remove fur etc after catch and clean with wire brush occasionally to ensure springs, trigger arm and plate are clean.



This is a new project aiming to increase the bird life in Mapua village by trapping rats and other predators. Abby Boffa is coordinating the venture which is funded by Predator Free New Zealand and Kiwibank. At this stage she has sold approximately 50 Good Nature A24 self-resetting traps and 60 Victor rat traps in tunnels. We are very grateful to Don Sullivan who has donated the tunnels, which keep the traps from pets and small fingers and also encourage the rats to enter; rats love tunnels. If you live in Mapua and would like to participate in the project you can contact Abby via the Mapua Dawn Chorus Facebook page, email mapuadawnchorus@gmail.com, or mobile 027 277 1171.

We are also planning to do a Mapua-wide survey using chew cards to assess the rat density and distribution.

Other News

Health and Safety: Leptospirosis

Lepto is caught by exposure to the urine of infected animals, such as rats. Symptoms are flu-like and require treatment with antibiotics. Trappers can minimise their risk of catching Lepto by wearing gloves when handling dead animals.

Volunteers Needed For a Fernbird Survey

We are planning a survey of the Waimea Inlet for fernbirds, in order to better understand their distribution in the Inlet and establish the number present at selected wetland sites. This will happen in early 2018 and will be supported by TDC and the World Wildlife Fund. We do not have details about what will be required as yet, but are looking for volunteers to help. If you would like to help contact Tracey Murray at pukeko92@gmail.com. It was described by Buller in 1888 as “one of our commonest birds”. It has been adversely affected by widespread destruction of wetlands and is now considered a threatened species. A small insectivorous bird about 12 cm in length, it is unlikely to be confused with other species owing to its thin scruffy tail.

For more about the fernbird go to www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz/species/fernbird

New Sighting of Banded Rail

A Banded Rail has recently been sighted near the causeway between Mapua village and the Leisure Park. It is many years since rails have been seen there. Great news.

Request for Feedback

We welcome feedback from our readers. Let us know what you like about our newsletters. What is in too much detail, or not enough. Are there subjects you would like raised, or discussed? Anything you want to know more about? Do you want to hear about other likeminded projects? Every comment welcomed. Please send to Anne Hilson at Hilson.wilkinson@xtra.co.nz

And Finally: How to Tell Your Weasel from Your Stoat

