

# Nelson Tasman Conservation Volunteers

# NEWSLETTER

MAY 2018

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Will Rickerby has handed over management of the newsletter to Tasman Environmental Trust. Ro Cambridge will now be collating and editing the newsletter on behalf of the Trust.

Please send news, reports or photos to Ro Cambridge at [newsletter@tet.org.nz](mailto:newsletter@tet.org.nz) by the end of each month - preferably in Word or Excel, or with text pasted into the body of your email.

## IN THIS ISSUE:



### SEEING IS BELIEVING - STOAT PURSUED AND ATTACKED BY TUIS!

Rod Markham recounts seeing tuis attacking a stoat In his report, from Kaiteriteri Mountain Bike Park.



### DOC ANNOUNCES NEW PREDATOR FREE 2050 TOOLKIT FOR TRAPPERS



### TRAPPING & ACTIVITY REPORTS FROM THE FOLLOWING GROUPS:

#### 1. Battle for the Banded Rail

This group has noticed that the lowest number of catches occurs in the fourth quarter of every year. They would like to know if other trapping groups have observed the same pattern.

#### 2. Faraday Rodent Trapping

#### 3. Fish & Game

#### 4. Friends of Rotoiti

#### 5. Reservoir and Jimmy Lee Creeks

#### 6. Will's Gully Conservation Group

#### 7. Faraday Rodent Trapping

#### 8. Bryce Buckland

#### 9. Forest & Bird

#### 10. Ron Argue



### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Results of a survey of fernbirds on the Waimea Inlet undertaken for Tasman Environmental Trust

Detailed info on acoustic monitoring of great spotted kiwi by Friends of Rotoiti

## WILL'S GULLY CONSERVATION GROUP

Update supplied by Will Rickerby willrickerby@gmail.com

During the month Kevin and I helped out at Rabbit Island talking to a number of school groups about what we do. Then we had another local school come up the gully to help with planting and we told them about our trapping and revegetation efforts.

Some weed spraying done and we are now pretty well up to date. All TDC donated plants (250 odd) have been planted. Kevin Piper donated, and has planted over 100 natives, Len Davenport (a neighbour) also donated 14 hebes.

John Wilson, one of our trappers, reports that as someone at Summerset Village was feeding sparrows, a falcon swooped down out of nowhere, picked up one of the sparrows, and was gone, all in a flash.

John reports seeing wekas around the village too.

Our catches for April were 4 mice and 10 rats.

## RESERVOIR and JIMMY LEE CREEKS

Update supplied by Sue Marren sue\_marren@hotmail.com

|         | Reservoir Creek March | Reservoir Creek April | Jimmy Lee Creek March | Jimmy Lee Creek April |
|---------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Possums | 0                     | 3                     | 2                     | 1                     |
| Mice    | 0                     |                       | 0                     | 2                     |

## BATTLE FOR THE BANDED RAIL

Update supplied by Kathryn Brownlie bandedrail@gmail.com



210 predators were captured in this quarter, somewhat fewer than in the same quarter last year. Trappers have now accounted for 2798 animals since the programme began.

Note that a largest number of mustelids were trapped in the Waimea West/Appleby Hills sector - 17.2% of the total catch for that sector.

Our data shows that the lowest number of catches occurs in the fourth quarter of every year. It would be interesting to know if trapping by other groups shows the same pattern.

| Sector                    | Rat        | Hedgehog     | Stoat       | Weasel      | Ferret      | Other *     | Total for Quarter |
|---------------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Bronte/Mapua              | 17         | 20           | 0           | 3           | 0           | 4           | 44                |
| Hoddy                     | 50         | 14           | 2           | 0           | 0           | 0           | 66                |
| Stringer/Bronte           | 11         | 2            | 0           | 0           | 0           | 0           | 13                |
| Waimea/West/Appleby Hills | 48         | 15           | 6           | 8           | 1           | 9           | 87                |
| <b>Totals</b>             | <b>126</b> | <b>51</b>    | <b>8</b>    | <b>11</b>   | <b>1</b>    | <b>13</b>   | <b>210</b>        |
| <b>% of Total</b>         | <b>60%</b> | <b>24.3%</b> | <b>3.8%</b> | <b>5.2%</b> | <b>0.5%</b> | <b>6.2%</b> | <b>100%</b>       |

**NOTE:** \*Other includes mainly mice, and also rabbits, possums, birds and "unspecified catches"

## FARADAY RODENT TRAPPING

Update supplied by Ross Cullen

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Forty-one catches reported from 25 traps, although the figure may be higher. Some additional trapping may have occurred but not reported in time for this newsletter.

## DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

Update supplied by Wendy Sullivan, Predator Free 2050 Ranger,  
Northern South Island wsullivan@doc.govt.nz

To support your trapping work, DOC has developed a new Predator Free 2050 toolkit. It aims to be a one-stop shop for information on trapping, suppliers, monitoring and other resources.



WEBSITE ADDRESS: [www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/predator-free-2050/](http://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/predator-free-2050/)

## FRIENDS OF ROTOITI

Update supplied by Peter Hale on behalf of the F.O.R. Communication Group

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April was another quiet month, as fortnightly checks have ended for most our lines. Checks are now being made monthly between May and October.

Seven of our members have begun the massive task of analysing the recordings from the 13 acoustic recorders which were placed in the Park in March.

Greater detail about the acoustic monitoring programme for Great Spotted Kiwi (GSK) can be found in the [READ MORE](#) section at the end of this newsletter.

Or here the Friends of Rototiti website: [www.friendsofrotoiti.co.nz/great-spotted-kiwi](http://www.friendsofrotoiti.co.nz/great-spotted-kiwi)

### ROTOITI TRAPPING REPORTS

VILLAGE TRAPPING (Approx. 300 Traps)

|                      | Rat | Mouse | Stoat | Weasel | Bird | Sprung | Line Total |
|----------------------|-----|-------|-------|--------|------|--------|------------|
| Black Hill Contour   | 3   | 14    |       |        |      |        | 17         |
| Black Hill Walk      | 1   | 7     |       |        |      |        | 8          |
| Black Valley Walk    | 1   | 12    |       |        |      |        | 13         |
| Gibbs Walk           |     | 5     |       |        |      |        | 5          |
| Holland Street       | 1   | 9     |       |        |      |        | 10         |
| Lodge Road           |     | 7     |       |        |      |        | 7          |
| Moraine Walk         |     | 6     |       |        |      |        | 6          |
| Peninsula Nature Wlk | 5   | 48    |       |        |      |        | 53         |
| Peninsula Ctr Line   | 2   | 7     |       |        |      |        | 9          |
| Robert Road          | 1   | 9     |       |        |      |        | 10         |
| View Road            |     | 8     |       |        |      |        | 8          |
| Ward Street          |     |       |       |        |      |        | 0          |
| Water Tank           |     | 8     |       |        |      |        | 8          |
| Catch Total          | 14  | 140   | 0     | 0      | 0    | 0      | 154        |

POSSUM TRAPPING

|                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| Village        | 0         |
| Mt Robert Rd   | 1         |
| Rainbow Valley | 5         |
| Speargrass     | 0         |
| Whisky Falls   | 5         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>11</b> |

## STOAT TRAPPING

|                                | Stoat | Weasel | Ferret | Rat | Hhog | Rabbit | Bird | Cat | Sprung | Line Total |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|-----|------|--------|------|-----|--------|------------|
| Mt Robert Rd 17 traps          |       |        |        | 1   |      |        |      |     | 2      | 3          |
| Rainbow Valley 89              | 2     |        |        | 1   | 1    |        |      |     | 5      | 9          |
| Rainbow Valley Trial 152 Traps | 3     |        |        | 12  | 4    |        |      | 3   | 8      | 30         |
| Speargrass 26 traps            |       |        |        | 9   | 1    |        |      |     | 1      | 11         |
| Tophouse Rd 43 traps           | 1     |        |        | 1   | 2    |        |      |     |        | 4          |
| Whisky Falls 82 traps          |       | 1      |        | 11  |      |        |      |     | 3      | 15         |
| Catch Total                    | 6     | 1      | 0      | 35  | 8    | 0      | 0    | 3   | 19     | 72         |

## FISH AND GAME

**Update supplied by Jacob Lucas**

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Our catches for April, from the Eastern end of Moturoa/Rabbit Island) are as follows::

| Mice | Rats | Hedgehogs | Stoats |
|------|------|-----------|--------|
| 11   | 5    | 8         | 1      |

## KAITERITERI MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

**Update supplied by Rod Markham of the Predator Trapping Group**

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### TUIS ATTACK STOAT!

In February when I was in St Arnaud walking towards DOC HQ I heard the danger cries from a couple of tuis and a rabbit ran out of the bush into the DOC carpark pursued by a stoat with the tuis close behind.

As soon as the stoat was in the open the tuis attacked it, aggressively diving at its head like a couple of small magpies. The rabbit went one way, the stoat the other with the tuis still on its trail. It was interesting to see the birds are fighting back. Their behaviour seemed practiced and organised!

### TRAPPING

In January we added a trap line around a swamp area adjacent to Martin Farm Road to protect a small population of Banded Rail.

Some of the traps are along the road edge and like the traps along Easy Rider (part of the great taste trail) they are more accessible and many of these traps are set off or interfered with. Fortunately the novelty and interference frequency seems to wear off after a few months.

We suffered no damage from the recent storms apart from a few traps under water.

The final quarter of 2017 followed the traditional pattern of low catches however this picked up in Jan-March 2018 with 5 stoats and 20 rats (compared to 7 and 4 in 2017, and 5 and 6 in 2016) a distinct increase in rat catches along the tracks close to the Riwaka-Kaiteriteri and Martin Farm roads.

Rat activity is continuing to increase with 3 stoats and 19 rats reported for April so far , previously the highest April count was 2 and 4.

## FROM BRYCE BUCKLAND

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### Welcome to winter!

#### TRAPPING

Here is an update of catches in the last 2 months, a comparison of the same 2 months last year, and grand totals. Rats kills have been slow over the last few months, but rats seem to be making a comeback and we got 73% more for the same period as last year.

|                  | This Year                                  | Last Year | TOTAL<br>(since we started) |
|------------------|--|-----------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Rats</b>      | 76 (73 of which were killed in tree traps) | 104       | <b>2483</b>                 |
| <b>Possums</b>   | 6  | 12        | <b>901</b>                  |
| <b>Mice</b>      | 17   | 10        | <b>627</b>                  |
| <b>Stoats</b>    | 1  | 1         | <b>30</b>                   |
| <b>Weasels</b>   | 1  | 3         | <b>40</b>                   |
| <b>Hedgehogs</b> | 1  | 8         | <b>117</b>                  |

A question that pops to mind: As we keep the numbers of Ship Rats under control, is it likely we will start to see more Norway Rats? Norway Rats like water a bit more and are quite happy to live in riverbanks and even in the sea. Norway Rats have a much shorter tail and have smaller ears than the Ship Rat, Ship mate - a Ship Rat's ears will cover its eyes.

As demonstrated by number of rat kills, tree traps continue to show their worth. I have a feeling that mice may be robbing the good ol' Pics Peanut Butter from them. Whitey Wood are starting to flower and seed up now, so the rat family will be keen to harvest ... and so are we!

I have now found a source of rose oil which doesn't cost too much, so have ordered some along with other possum lures. Today I caught a lovely big fat rat and a super looking, winter-coated silver grey possum. The best looking possum for a year or two.

I am now building more trap boxes for another order of DOC 150's.

#### OTHER NEWS & GOSSIP

Cows on Grampians are making a huge mess and damaging the edges of walking tracks (not to mention their large poos.) They seem to eat only the best of feed and don't touch the weedy stuff.

It's a shame that sheep were removed from Grampians (because of dog attacks) because as a result we have a weed problem, a year round fire risk, and more of our returning Weka being hammered by un-restrained and un-controlled dogs. Most dog owners are OK, but the non excellent ones are a serious worry.

DOC will be amongst the government departments which the Ombudsman will be investigating to see how they well they meet the requirements of the Official Information Act.

Round stones have been popped up on Ward Beach by the earthquakes. Go to the beach and turn left to see them. Quicker to see than Moeraki.

Crayfishers at Ward Beach are being chased away by a conservation group. Were F & B perhaps involved? The area used by crayfishers is not a nesting habitat for Doterill. Conservationists would do far better work by controlling the dozens of dogs on Ward Beach, cleaning out the feral cats that patrol the sea front.

I have been looking at a lot of conservation projects around the South Island. None of the traps I checked were set. One project I have checked for several years (where Kiwi are in serious decline) traps have not been set or re-baited for at least 4 years.

I am dismayed at the number of feral cats in the South Island. At Mt Cook they seem to roam free. DOC staff seem aware but not taking action.

According to The Press (7<sup>th</sup> April) the estimated length of rivers in NZ which are un-swimmable rivers exceeds 14,000 km!! Lakes Hayes and Forsythe are now closed to swimmers because of pollution.

The cause is not only farm runoff and warm temperatures, but the effect of coarse fish, Canada Geese and Black Swans . If you've ever see the poo of a Black Swan you'll get my point. They are surely the dirtiest bird on the planet. Swans don't even look tasty.

Interesting update from Predator Free about what wee dirtbags hedgehogs are. Like rats with spikes. Now the Tasman region has been found to have Myrtle Rust and MPI declare they have lost the battle. Oh nice!

It's been a strange year for wasps. They seem to have spent a short time feeding on protein then quickly went back to carbohydrates. This means the Vespex (Wasp Wipeout) program only had a brief time to be effective and wasps continue to be extremely prolific. This means more hibernating queens and probably a bad wasp season next year.

The West Coast, after many wasp-free years, is now infested with them. At Haast I questioned a chap about his bumper sticker "1080 Kills Bees". I pointed out that bees are not interested in cereal baits, but wasps would probably eat them. So , why is it that the place is still over-run with wasps? Some very robust scientific research shows that bees are fairly safe from 1080, but there's also a lot of false claims and innuendo about with no ready proof that it kills them. Oh dear..

Experiments have shown that Rats don't like crappy peanut butter but they do like the good stuff ((who said rats have no taste?) Many thanks to Pic's for the yummy peanut we use on our traps. Rats are just dying for it.



That's' most of the news and views from my desk. Keep up the good work team. Take care out, there's rats about.

## FROM RON ARGUE

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### APRIL PEST TALLY

Valhalla Traps : 2 rats, 1 mouse / Alongside Reservoir Dam: 1 rat, 2 mice / Saxton Valley: 2 possums, 1 rat

## FOREST & BIRD

Update supplied by Gillian Pollock

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### TRAPLINE RESULTS FOR APRIL

Mice : 5 Rats: 2 Hedgehogs: 4

## RESULTS OF FERNBIRD SURVEY ON WAIMEA ESTUARY

**Information supplied by Ingrid Hutzler**

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This survey was conducted for the Tasman Environmental Trust in late January in order to investigate fernbird distribution and abundance in relation to habitat size and quality within wetland areas of the Waimea Estuary.

It was undertaken with the help of volunteers from the community, and Birds NZ members. Twenty-one with potential fernbird habitat were surveyed using call playback. Vegetation types and predominant plant species were recorded.



A total of 43 bird species were encountered and entered into eBird [www.ebird.org/content/newzealand/](http://www.ebird.org/content/newzealand/) Interestingly, no weka were found at any of the sites, although they have become widespread around the Nelson region over recent years.

The top three sites with best habitat quality and size were O'Connor Creek Delta, Manuka Island and Whakatu Drive (Monaco). Although the majority of sites have suitable habitat, only one fernbird was sighted at the O'Connor Creek Delta, along the cycleway between Cotterell and Redwood Roads. There were no signs of pairs or breeding.

Predation is most likely the main limiting factor in fernbird survival and nesting success in the Waimea Estuary. Other studies have shown that mammalian predators have a major impact on fernbird. A review of the current predator control regime, the addition of feral cat and mice control, and an ongoing pest monitoring scheme will assist fernbird to recover in this area.

This survey provides vital baseline data, which can be used to detect changes in fernbird distribution and abundance over time, and as an indicator to measure overall success in response to predator control and habitat restoration.

A special thanks to Tracey Murray and to all the to all the keen volunteers who assisted with the field work!

## READ MORE ...

**Longer or more detailed news and information appears in this section of the newsletter.**

## GREAT SPOTTED KIWI ACOUSTIC MONITORING

**Supplied by Peter Hale on behalf FRIENDS OF ROTOITI**

CONTEXT:

Great spotted kiwi (GSK) were first introduced to the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project (RNRP) in 2004. Intensive monitoring of these translocated kiwi occurred over the next ten years with territories mapped and

breeding success monitored. Monitoring of kiwi within the RNRP has shown that productivity is low, about 1 chick per year, and that adult mortality is low. As a result, we expect the population to be growing very slowly. To supplement this population and to increase the number of founder adult kiwi to the required 40 individuals, twenty adult GSK will be translocated into the RNRP over the next three years. Prior to these translocations it is necessary to establish where GSK territories currently are within the RNRP so these can be monitored for change with the introduction of new kiwi. It is also important to begin long term monitoring to monitor the population trend of GSK within the RNRP. Both of these activities will be undertaken using acoustic recorders due to the low call rate of GSK in the RNRP. Acoustic recorders will be deployed in March 2018 to determine current GSK territories and then in March 2019 and 2020 to determine how territories change. Following the completion of translocations recorders will be deployed annually in March to monitor long term changes in the GSK population. GSK peak calling is between November and March. While peak period of calling during the night is often the two hours before dawn for GSK it is unknown whether this is the case for GSK within the RNRP. As most GSK call rate monitoring occurs in the four hours after dusk, rather than before dawn, the RNRP will also carry out its monitoring during this time.

#### PURPOSE:

1. Establish locations of existing GSK territories within the RNRP prior to translocation of new adult kiwi into the population.
2. Determine how territories and distribution changes with introduction of new adults.
3. Carry out long-term population trend monitoring using acoustic recorders annually.

#### METHOD:

For long-term monitoring, the recorders must be deployed at exactly the same location (site and position on a tree or post) in the same month of the year, and at the same start and finish time each time. Monitoring should be carried out in the period a week either side of the new moon as the relationship between calling rate and phase of the moon is complex and varies between species, and possibly between habitats and situations. This standardisation reduces the number of variables, making it easier to detect any real differences in call rate. Monitoring will be carried out before the translocation (March 2018) and then once translocations have been completed at annually in March.

Fifteen recorders will be deployed within and around the RNRP in March for 15 nights. Recorders will be deployed one week before the new moon, and retrieved a week after the new moon. FOR volunteers will deploy as many recorders as possible. Depending on how many volunteers are available and ability DOC staff will likely have to deploy recorders also. Recorder sites will be GPS marked, a yellow labelled triangle put up on the closest tree, two pieces of orange flagging attached to the branch where the recorder was hung and a photo taken. This will ensure recorders are placed in the exact location each year.

In 2018 recorders monitoring will run from the 10<sup>th</sup> of March to the 25<sup>th</sup> of March. Recorders can be put out before and collected after these dates but only nights from 10-25<sup>th</sup> will be included in monitoring. In 2018 from the 15 nights of recordings the 13, 15, 22, 23 and 24<sup>th</sup> will be the five nights excluded due to high disturbance.

#### RECORDER SET UP

1. Programme all the recorders the day prior to monitoring with following:



- a. Check time and date are all correct
- b. Programme 1 recording session to start at 2030 and finish at 0030 on the low setting
- c. Check SD card

#### FIELDWORK

1. Remove paper tabs from batteries on the morning of the operation before issuing so that recorders are activated before leaving the office.
2. Navigate to each pre-marked location point by GPS, at the site is a yellow triangle attached to a tree with the site ID and then two pieces of tape hanging from a branch. Attach the recorder to the branch where the tape is attached.
3. Record the recorder ID for each site.
4. When retrieving recorders remove from branch and check that yellow triangle is still present and that tape on branch is in correct location. Record the recorder id from each site.
5. When back at the office return recorders to the designated downloader.
6. Downloader is to download all recordings on the day of collection and store on the RNRP harddrive and backed up onto the FOR harddrive.

#### ANALYSIS MANAGEMENT

1. Before data is analysed the 15 nights of recordings will be quickly scanned by a staff member and the 5 nights with the greatest noise interference, based on the colour of the background noise will be set aside.
2. Data will be analysed by volunteers both on site and at home.
3. Volunteers will be issued with recordings to analyse via USBs storage devices from the RNRP harddrives, and then analysed on Audacity.
4. Data will be recorded by volunteers onto excel spreadsheets that will then need to be collated. Hard copies will be stored in the bio office.

#### ANALYSIS OF RECORDINGS

1. Each site will have a folder containing subfolders of nightly recordings. Within sub-folders recordings are stored in 15 minute blocks.
2. Go through each 15-minute recording and for each record:
  - a. The number of male and female calls, and their strength on a 1–3 scale (1 being strong with a very clear outline, 3 being very faint).
  - b. The number of duets (where a bird responds within 10 seconds (but usually much less) after the end of a call sequence by a bird of the opposite sex).
  - c. In cases where a call is interrupted mid-sequence (as often occurs during great spotted kiwi duets), record it as one call if the bird resumes calling mid-sequence and two calls if the birds restart their call from the beginning.
  - d. Record background noises on a 0–3 scale (wind = calm to strong; rain = none to heavy; and other (e.g. sea, rivers, insects, other animals, aircraft) = no interference to very noisy). Note that although some of these other noises would ordinarily affect human listening, the kiwi calls will likely still be clearly visible on the spectrogram because their frequency ranges are often very different.
3. Only record complete 15-minute recording periods. If a count is halted part-way through a 15-minute block (e.g. if heavy rain starts and obliterates any chance of seeing kiwi calls), that complete block should be set aside. Record why the period could not be analysed.
4. Make notes about any recordings that you would like double checked.