

Trapping Update

In the last newsletter I tentatively suggested that we may reach 5000 catches by the end of the year. We didn't quite make it; at 4978 we were 22 short. Now I will confidently predict that we achieve the 5000 in the next quarter. And then I will stop any form of predicting. The December quarter has always been lean for total catches; this one was the lowest since 2016, with 161 catches.

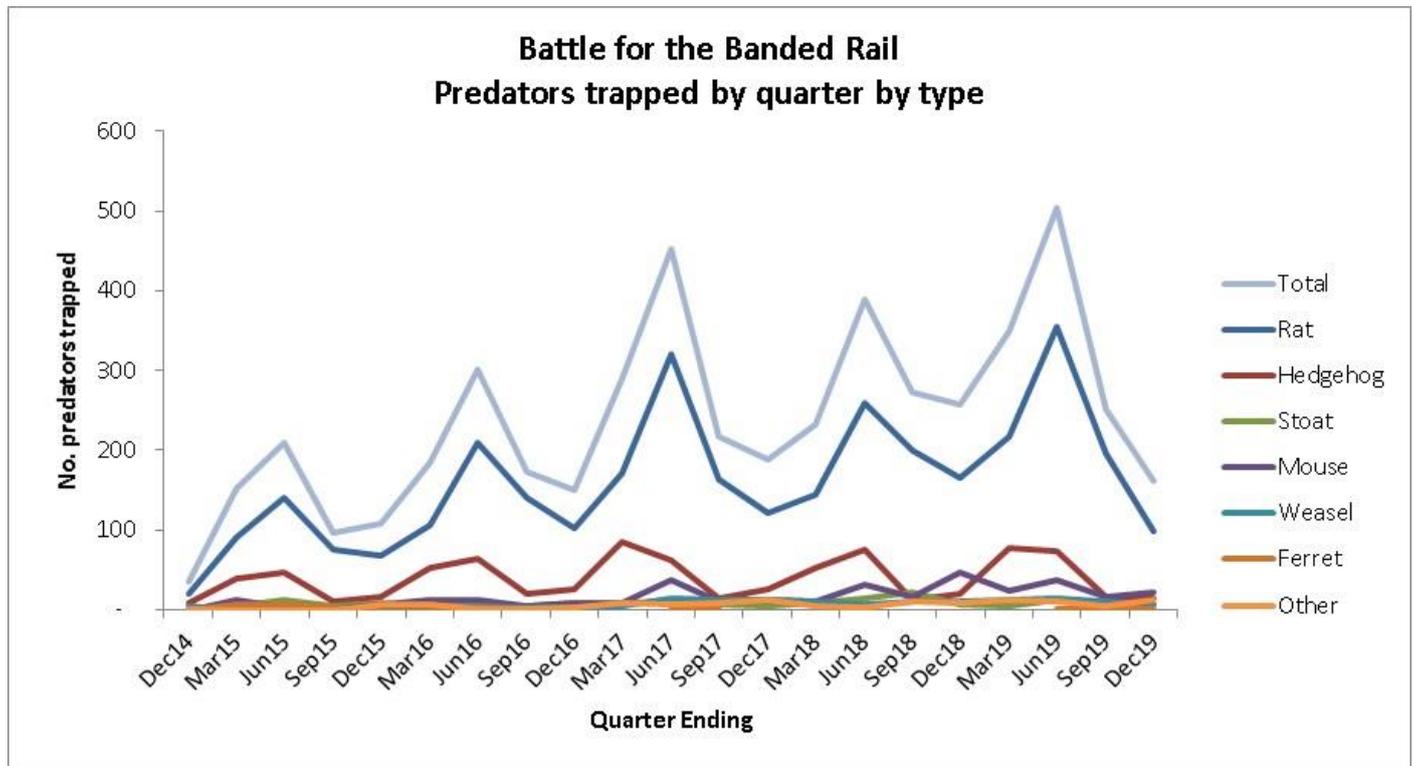
Trap Catches by Year

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	5-year totals
Rat	396	560	778	768	866	3368
Hedgehog	122	162	189	160	182	815
Stoat	32	25	31	51	26	165
Weasel	7	11	43	40	46	147
Mouse	24	38	68	105	99	334
Ferret	14	3	2	2	5	26
Other	8	11	35	27	42	12
Totals	603	810	1,146	1,153	1,266	4,978

The numbers of traps have increased from 337 in 2015 to 883 this year, which will be a big factor in the increasing numbers of predators caught. Hoddy peninsula seems to have fewer weasels compared with other areas. No weasels have been caught there since July 2018. Other areas have caught almost twice as many weasels than stoats in 2019. The trap with the most catches this year caught 11 rats. The total catch numbers are fairly evenly spread over the four trap networks, ranging from 281 to 340 catches.

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

The following graph shows the cyclical nature of numbers of predators caught per quarter since the inception of the trapping programme.



Another Banded Rail Sighting , Caught on Film!

Our trapping efforts are paying off!

Last week Tracey was crossing the Rabbit island causeway and was lucky enough to catch sight of a Banded Rail in the rushes. After stopping to have a closer look, it was soon joined by 2 chicks, and then another 3 adults and another chick emerged from the rushes nearby. 7 Rails all seen at once! They wandered along the edge of the rushes for about 30 metres, and then came out into the open and began feeding on a mud bank.

She watched them for about 20mins until a Hawk swooped down and they ran for cover. “It was wonderful to see them feeding their chicks and running back and forth with food for them”.

Check out the video of them on Facebook, or the Tasman Environmental Trust website link [Click here](#)

New Volunteers Are Needed. Any Offers?

We have 2 existing trap lines that need new volunteers to take them over in the next few months.

- One is opposite to the Mapua Drive turn off and has 13 traps
- Another is accessed from Pukeko Lane just before Research Orchard Rd and is 16 traps. This one requires checking at low tide. Both of these take approximately one to one and a half hours to check; once per month minimum.
- In light of the Banded Rail sighting near the Rabbit island causeway, it would be good to put in more traps here too. This would be a new line and possibly 16 traps. Is there a volunteer for this one too?

Update on Habitat Restoration



At Bronte Peninsula in November for the annual site reviews

Plant releasing and weeding mornings

We have a few Friday mornings coming up **starting this Friday:**

Friday 31 January, 9-11 am, Research Orchard Road

Friday 14 February, 9 – 11am, Hoddy Estuary Park

Friday 28 February, 9-11am, Bronte Peninsula. Access from 92 Bronte Rd East

Friday 13 March, 9-11am, site to be confirmed

Friday 27 March 9-11am, Dominion Embayment. Access from 43 Apple Valley Road

Bring drinking water, gloves and a hand weeding tool. Even if you can only spare an hour it would be great to have you along. If we need to postpone or cancel due to bad weather we will send an email out by 8am on the morning if you are on our weeding group list. Let us know if you would like to be added to it.

Volunteer Lunch

Our annual volunteer lunch was held at The Playhouse in early November. Over 50 attended, the weather was beautiful and The Playhouse once again provided a yummy lunch. We are pleased we can offer this opportunity to thank our volunteers – especially the opportunity to include the trappers who work in isolation. It's great to see everyone getting together without the planting and trapping clothes!

Thanks again to TDC and DOC for their contributions in supporting this event.

Planting Natives Brochure

We now have copies of our brochure available. It gives an overview of *Battle for the Banded Rail*, information on restoring estuary margins, a suggested plant list and contacts for further information. We plan to distribute them to properties bordering the Waimea Inlet in the coming weeks. If you are keen to get hold of a copy sooner let us know. Thanks to the Lottery Grants Board whose funding covered the production costs.



Planting Natives

WAIMEA INLET



Mapua Dawn Chorus

Recently Tracey has taken over the coordination of the Mapua Dawn Chorus, which is an urban trapping project started in 2018. The project aims to have trapping in at least every second backyard in the Mapua township, and extending along to Ruby Bay and other surrounding areas.

The traps used in this project are either a Good Nature A24 self-resetting trap, or a snap trap in a tunnel.

It is hoped that over the next few months Mapua Dawn Chorus will be set up on trap.nz and the locations of traps plotted, to show this project to other local groups, and to start collecting catch data.

[Click here](#) to go to the Mapua Dawn Chorus Facebook page

Fernbird Sighting

Gillian was recently walking round her garden, checking her traps, and something caught her eye in a Plagianthus. A Fernbird! They aren't very shy, so it flitted about in the bush and she was able to see it come and go, and confirm that it had a long tail and was in fact a fernbird.

"Then when I was walking away, I heard it calling. So nice."

Information on, and many more photos of the Fernbird can be found on www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz. Anybody sighting or hearing a Fernbird can help by reporting it to their local DOC office or by letting us know.



Photo: nzbirdsonline.org.nz

Rails on Great Barrier Island, and a New Book

Gillian was pleased to get this book given to her when one of her family was visiting Great Barrier Island and found it in a local book store. An email exchange with the author followed.

There are a lot of banded rail on Great Barrier and Mike and Margot Scott reported *“The other day we had a rail chick inside the house! It had tucked itself up to hide behind a bag on the floor. Such a light, soft velvety puffball it felt as it had to be gently removed and released outside.*

We are installing a fly screen/security back door to discourage them, as once inside they panic when they realise they have been noticed.

The garden has to be a little wild to preserve their nesting habitat, as they wander confidently among us when weeding or cutting up fish fillets, then scuttle away with the prize.

I think the battle you are waging is extremely worthwhile as well as being arduous and very hard work. I suspect it is the absence of mustelids which is the main advantage of Great Barrier Island over the main islands. I see you have caught significant numbers of mustelids in your programme. Even here the mortality rate for rail chicks is high. Unfortunately there are domestic and feral cats here. Good luck with your programme.”

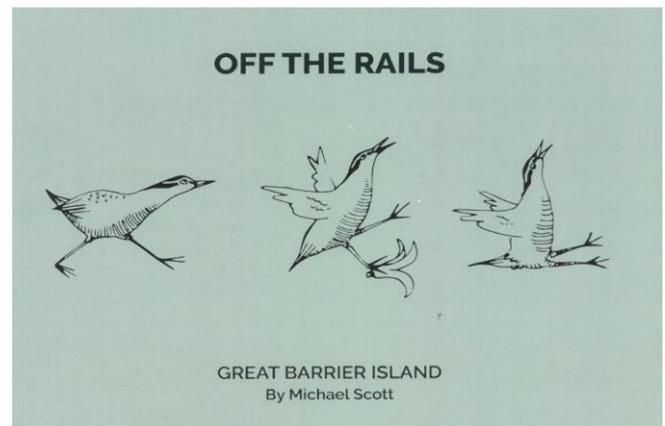
The book is well illustrated with cartoons; the one shown here on the cover is called “Derailment”.

If you would like to get a copy of the book you can email margotandmikescott@gmail.com . They will then email you their bank account details so you can deposit \$31 (\$25 plus \$6 postage) and they will send you a book.

We will include some of the cartoons in our newsletter (with their permission). They have extended an invitation to any of the Battle for the Banded Rail folks who are visiting Great Barrier Island to call in and see them, and the local rails.

The Laugh of Death

One of the Banded Rail calls resembles laughter, and its Māori name, moho pererū, also mimics a laugh. In Maori tradition, when the demigod, Māui, tried to pass through the body of Hine-nui-te-pō, the goddess of death, the pereru laughed and woke her, bringing death to Māui and to the world.



Tasman District Council Consultation on the Draft Kingsland Forest Development Plan

The Kingsland Forest covers about 150 hectares on the Barnicoat Range behind Richmond. Approximately two thirds of it is in Pine plantation forestry, due to be harvested over the next few years. One third is in gullies of regenerating native forest that is being restored through more planting and pest control by volunteers. It is a popular area for walking and mountain biking.

The Council is asking for feedback on their draft proposal to phase out the production forestry in Kingsland Forest and replace it with a combination of permanent native forest and exotic woodland. There are also 3 other options on the table; retaining the forest as a Pinus plantation, retiring it from plantation forestry and replanting in exotic species, or retiring it from plantation forestry and replanting it entirely with native species.

The forest is the least profitable of all the Council forests.

Most of our Battlers would possibly be interested to comment on this plan, for one or more of the following reasons;

- Support for another group of volunteers for conservation
- Increasing diversity
- It would be a common landscape development with the neighbouring Silvan Forest
- Aesthetically it would maintain a green backdrop to Richmond
- Improvements to stormwater management (which ultimately has an impact of the Waimea Inlet)
- Reduce the flow of sediment into the Inlet when plantations are harvested
- Improvement of recreational facilities.

Details can be found on the Tasman District Council website. There you will find the long version, the short version, and a very handy consultation form that makes a response very easy!

That's all for now.....

...and here is Mike Scott's Rail about to take a curtain call...

