



Road sign in Coromandel

We will know we have been successful when road signs like this one appear around the Waimea Inlet!

Photo: Emilie Hope

Local sightings reported by Grace Sutherland

"Yesterday, Tuesday 23rd Feb, at 9.30 am, I was about to return home with my partner after an hour of bird watching by Rough Island.

Our car was parked on the roadside/cycle track, south end of the bridge. We were just about to get into the car when I spotted a Banded Rail in the open on the muddy bank opposite. It was walking about undisturbed investigating the water line, so we were able to have a good look at it for 4 or 5 minutes - until another car went past and it scuttled away.

That was our first sighting of a Banded Rail so this was very exciting.

No photo, sorry."

And then a week later....

"Our Nelson U3A birding group watched 3 spotless crake scuttling about for about 20 minutes on the tidal margin near the road not far from where we had seen the banded rail. (Identified from our birding book).

Such sightings are a great reward for taking the time to look.

I hope they reflect the value of work being done by pest trappers."



Photo: nzbirdsonline.org.nz

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

Trapping & Monitoring News from Tracey Murray

Monitoring Results

We have just completed the Autumn monitoring using tracking tunnels and ink cards in 5 embayments where there is regular sign of Banded Rail. These areas are: Waimarie near Manuka Island, Maisey Embayment, Stringer Embayment, Dominion Embayment and Mapua Inlet.

The first set of 12 cards out were baited with peanut butter and left for 1 night, and the second set of 12 cards with fresh meat and left out for 3 nights. Almost all the cards regardless of the bait, were covered in mice prints. Additionally:

11 cards had hedgehog prints, and were attracted to both the peanut butter and the fresh meat

12 cards had rat prints and were also attracted to both baits

1 weasel was detected at Dominion Embayment and was attracted by fresh meat

3 cards showed that lizards or other insects had entered the tunnels.

No stoats were detected during monitoring this time. The volunteer checking the DOC200 traps at Dominion Flats has reported catching a stoat and 3 weasels there in the previous month. Hopefully the weasel detected in this more recent monitoring will enter a trap shortly!

Thanks to those volunteers who took part in this, as it is quite a time commitment but very helpful feedback for the project.



Hedgehog



Weasel

Bell Island Trapline – Volunteer needed

A new volunteer is needed to check 50 traps on Bell Island. This is a long line and takes approximately 3hrs to check. Although the site of Nelson's effluent ponds, the traps are sited around the outside of the island and it is a pleasant walk with a shell bank at one end which is a nesting area during spring for the Caspian tern.

The island is only accessible by a causeway, 2hrs each side of low tide, and through a locked gate which is opened remotely by calling a number to ask permission to enter.

If you are looking for a more challenging trap line and are flexible during the day to work in with the tides then this is the trap line for you!

Please contact Tracey for more information ph 027 286 5866.

Resolution Island trapping January 2021 by Blake Hornblow

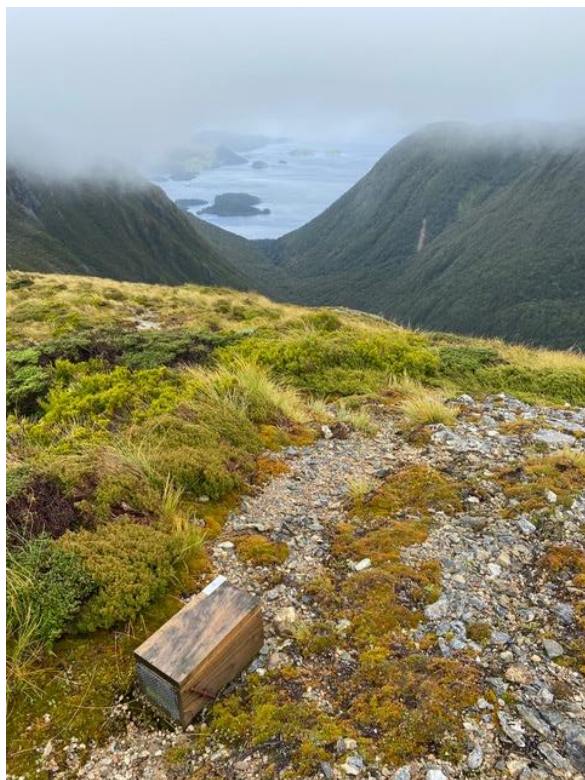
Volunteering for conservation in southwest Fiordland's Dusky Sound

Volunteering can take you to the most amazing places and give you opportunities and experiences you can't get from work, or as a tourist or even from a personal adventure. This summer I was lucky enough to volunteer with DOC Te Anau's biodiversity team on one of New Zealand's most extensive and significant conservation projects. The pest and predator control of Resolution Island and greater Dusky Sound.



Tamatea / Dusky Sound has a massive archipelago of ruggedly beautiful islands that is brought to life by west coast rainforest that covers every possible habitable space. These islands are home to amazing bird life

including recovering populations of kākāpō, kiwi, mohua & tīeke/saddlebacks. The dominating feature in Dusky Sound is Resolution Island, not only is it huge in landmass its rugged mountains reach up to nearly 1000m (quite a sight to a volunteer who has to walk up and down each day). 'Reso' (as it is known) conservation is all about the stoats. I was surprised to learn, that quite incredibly the stoats regularly swim the 550 plus meters across Acheron Passage from the mainland to Reso. Making it an incredibly tough conservation project, so high intensity and continuous trapping is needed to keep stoat levels under control. Thus allowing as many native species to thrive as possible. Deer and mice are also present on the island but are not direct threats to birds so aren't targeted. The island is completely rat free.



Trapping teams spend a week on Reso walking and trapping the entire island 4 times a year. I was one of the teams for the summer monitoring trip in January staying on DOC's vessel the Southern Winds. Each morning we set off with a map, boxes of eggs, meat and all the other trapping and safety kit for a day in the hills checking about 60 traps. The island is dotted with huts as some traplines require overnight trips walking from one side of the island to the other. I got to do a solo overnighter and spend the night at Mt Wales bivi, up at just over 600m elevation after walking in from Duck Cove. We picked the best weather for the overnighter so I started with the sun on my face as I lifted a heavier pack than usual and made my way slowly up the valley stopping every 100m to check the DOC 200 traps, and GoodNature A24's. However I was also getting interrupted by Kaka and flocks of mohua and brown creepers who love the sound of their own voice! I had to constantly get my camera out.

I can see why these birds love the forest so much; enormous rata tower over the tannin stained rivers and I found it difficult to pick the best spot for a swim and some lunch.

After a long day without catching any stoats I made it up to the hut just before sunset and enjoyed an evening in solitude appreciating the beauty of wild Fiordland. The next morning was up to Mt Wales summit in blustery conditions and then a long muddy descent to the Northern side of the island to wait with the sand flies for a pick up. Luckily on this trip I didn't catch any stoats as all captures have to be bagged and carried out and then sent to a lab so that they can be genetically tested to see if it is a new arrival to the island or offspring of a previous aquanaut. This a really good tool that helps the team gauge their trapping success but also makes for some very smelly backpacks when we catch something... We caught about 20 stoats on this trip which was about average for a quarterly check but still disappointing to see so many had made it to the island.

This week was an incredible experience to see the outcome of over a decade of intensive conservation work on Resolution Island walking among mohua was an inspiring feeling as I knew I was now part of the future success of the Island's endemic fauna. To learn more about the project and Dusky Sound I would recommend the new book Tamatea Dusky by Peta Carey.



Photos: Blake Hornblow

Blake is a marine science MSc student at Otago University and is Tracey's son.

Trapping Results

There are 950 traps in operation. The total catch for the March quarter was 319. This compares with 273 for the same quarter last year which was affected by Covid restrictions on checking traps. The previous highest Q1 catches was in 2019 with 350. Total catches since 2014 is now 6,605.

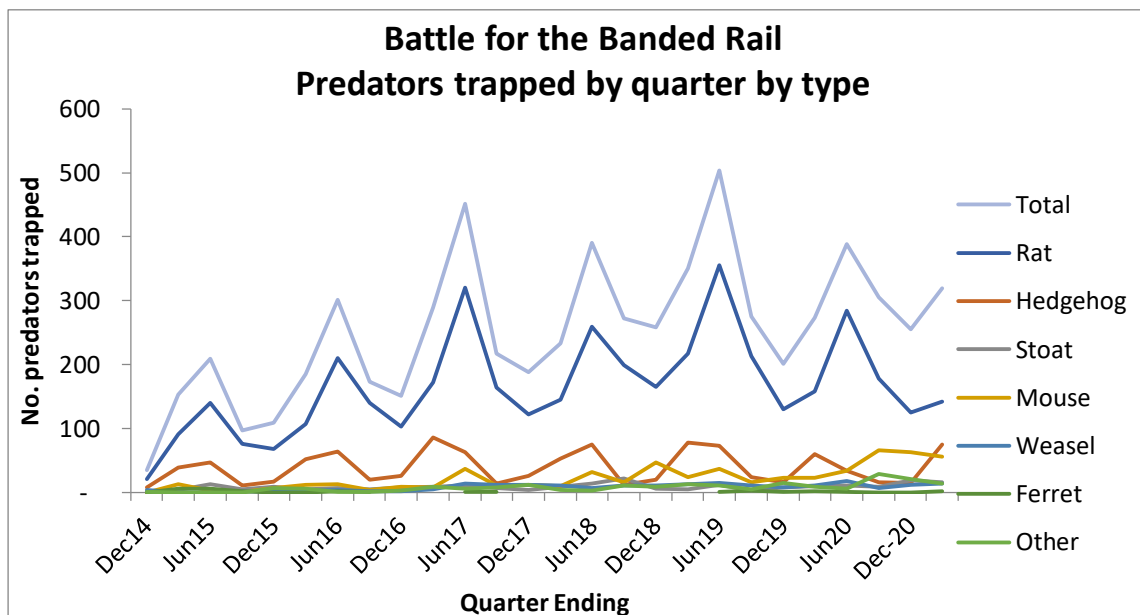
Catches for Quarter 1 2021 Sector by Pest Type

Sector	Rat	Hedgehog	Stoat	Weasel	Mouse	Ferret	Other*	Total for Quarter
Mapua to Bronte	27	24	4	2	2	2	-	61
Bronte to Hoddy Peninsula	37	8	1	2	1	-	1	50
Waimea West/ Appleby Hills	37	26	5	5	1	-	9	83
Waimea Delta to Monaco	41	17	6	5	52	-	4	125
Total	142	75	16	14	56	2	14	319

*"other" includes rabbits, birds and unspecified catches

We now have six Goodnature self-resetting traps on the Pearl Creek Reserve wetland. We know how many strikes they have had, but have no idea of what species has been dispatched. The evidence is most likely taken away by hawks or other predators. These catches are included as 'unspecified'. A camera is being set up at the moment so that we can hopefully see some action and know what is being caught.

The following graph illustrates the annual pattern of catches since trapping began in late 2014.



Mono Rail



Habitat Restoration Update from Kathryn Brownlie

We have another busy planting season coming up starting on Sunday 23rd May. The full schedule is on the last page of this newsletter. With 4 months of planting to orchestrate, Julie & Kathryn will be sharing the running of the planting mornings.

Plant Patch

Since my involvement with *Battle for the Banded Rail* I have become more interested in the plants in our estuarine environment. For this newsletter I have chosen to research the abundant glasswort that grows on our estuary beds.

Glasswort, beaded samphire

Ureure

Salicornia quinqueflora

Conservation status: not threatened

Glasswort grows just below and above the high tide mark, where it gets submerged by the sea. Its secret to survival is its thick, fleshy stems, with leaves that are shrunk down to tiny bumps.

Glasswort gets its common name because it could be burnt to produce soda ash, which was used in glassmaking. This occurred from the 16th century until the first half of the 19th century.



Glasswort's hardiness allows it to grow where few other plants can compete with it, and it's found around much of New Zealand's coast. A surprising find is that it also grows in the Maniototo plain in Central Otago, about 70km inland! The reason is because of special soils found in parts of Central Otago. Over millions of years, salts eroded from rocks and accumulated deep in the soil, and because Central Otago is so dry, these salts weren't washed out by the rain. In places, patches of this ancient salty soil became exposed at ground level, and whole communities of tiny native plants and insects developed on it.

A NZ foraging website says that when steamed glasswort is like a salty asparagus and very crunchy in texture. It can be added to salads or eaten on its own just blanched with butter. Apparently it is absolutely delicious!!!



Photos: Kathryn Brownlie

Celebrating Our Volunteers: Neville Henry

Interviewed by Anne Hilson

Neville Henry is the consummate busy and fulfilled retiree. After an interesting working life in education, he returned to Nelson and set about planning a new lifestyle including voluntary conservation work for no less than three organisations, and membership of several interest groups concerning the arts, geology, history, science and Japan, among others, aiming to be active both mentally and physically, and be helpful to the community.

His first B4BR working bee was at Manuka Island, in 2017, followed by one at Research Orchard Road a week later. This led on to working with Keep Richmond Beautiful, and later with Forest and Bird.

Neville has tallied his activities. Last year, for example, he attended fifty-four working bees, of which twenty-seven were for B4BR, twenty-six for Keep Richmond Beautiful, and three for Forest and Bird. He checked a trapline on Rough Island (13 traps) sixteen times, and one at Greenacres (21 traps) twenty times.

At Greenacres he had only a few kills each line check in the last 12 months, but so far this month, April, has got a stoat, five rats, and four hedgehogs. And forty-eight golf balls.

Some of the golf balls were already dead, having been killed by a mower, but the survivors were cleaned up and returned to the Golf Club. Oh, and he also collects rubbish as he works, a truly multi-tasking conservationist.

Neville was born and raised in Nelson, and after training as a primary school teacher, spent twenty-eight years teaching in North Taranaki. While principal of Egmont Village School for ten years he had an early experience of caring for the environment, overseeing the school's famous daffodil bed, which was first planted in 1920 by returned servicemen from the First World War. During the Depression the school began selling bunches at a roadside stall, funding school activities and supporting charities. The same bed is going strong today.

A change of focus followed, with contract work in education in Japan, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia. With no new contracts appearing in late 2013, he prepared to retire in Nelson and signed up to buy a house, only to be redirected to a contract in Malaysia eighteen hours later.



Neville with a Pinus radiata group bonsai



Fortunately for us, he returned for good a year later and joined the three conservation groups, Science Society, Historical Society, the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy discussion group, Nelson Decorative and Fine Arts Society, and others. Truly a Renaissance man.

Thank you so much, Neville, for your energy and enthusiasm in helping the Banded Rail population and its friends.



Come and join us at a Community Planting Day on the Waimea Inlet in 2021

Sunday 23 rd May	9am – 1pm	Bronte Peninsula on Stringer Embayment Access from 62 Bronte Road East. Park on Bronte Rd
Sunday 13 th June	9am – 1pm	Manuka Island Follow sign to Manuka Island from Redwood Road
Sunday 20 th June	9am – 1pm	Bronte Peninsula North Park on Cardno Way (off Bronte Road East)
Sunday 27 th June	9am – 1pm	Stringer Creek Westdale Road opposite The Playhouse Café
Sunday 4 th July	9am – 1pm	Hoddy Peninsula DOC Reserve Access from 57 Hoddy Road. Park on roadside edge Hoddy Road
Sunday 11 th July	9am – 1pm	Pukeko Lane Parking and access from Pukeko Lane
Sunday 18 th July	9am – 1pm	Research Orchard Road Reserve
Sunday 25 th July	9am – 1pm	Matahua Peninsula Park on Apple Valley Road East, access from #43
Sunday 1 st August	9am – 1pm	Mapua Embayment/Seaton Valley Stream Access and parking at 126 Aranui Road
Sunday 15 th August	9am - 1pm	Hunter Brown Reserve, Rough Island
Sunday 22 nd August	9am - 1pm	Reservoir Creek Embayment Park at Aquatic Centre, walk through highway underpass to estuary
Sunday 29 th August	9am - 1pm	Hunter Brown Reserve, Rough Island
Sunday 5 th September	9am - 1pm	Greenslade Park, Rough Island
Sunday 12 th September	9am - 1pm	Hunter Brown Reserve, Rough Island

Please bring gloves, spade and drinking water. Wear solid footwear and clothes suitable for the weather conditions. Morning tea will be provided .

Battle for the Banded Rail is a project working with local communities to increase the number of banded rail and other estuarine birds on the margins of the Waimea Inlet by restoring habitat and trapping predators.

For more information email us at bandedrail@gmail.com or phone Kathryn 544 4537

