

## Banded Rail Sightings



*Banded Rail on the Mārahau Estuary, taken from the boardwalk at the beginning of the Abel Tasman Track  
Photo: Tom Young*

We are getting reports more frequently of banded rail being seen on the Waimea Inlet. Most often these are from Redwood Valley Road, the road to Rabbit Island. Look out for them on both sides of the road before the bridge to Rough Island.

They are usually close to the edges of the rushes but have also been seen on the glasswort beds and roadside!

The best time for viewing banded rails is at dawn or dusk, or when a falling tide has exposed snails and small mud crabs, which are their preferred food.

## Picnic Cancellation

Sadly, we are unable to hold our event in February, which has already been deferred from November, in the Covid Red light setting. The purpose of the lunch is as a social gathering, and Tasman Environmental Trust advises that we should not host such an event.



Thank You!  
😊

While we can't tell you in person, we would still like to thank everyone involved in another successful year. Thank you to funders, landowners, TDC, NCC, DOC, Tasman Environmental Trust, the project team and especially our volunteer trappers and planters. Every single contribution is valuable to *Battle for the Banded Rail*.

Let's hope we can have a great celebration at the end of this year!

## Trapping & Monitoring News from Tracey Murray

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

## Trapping Results

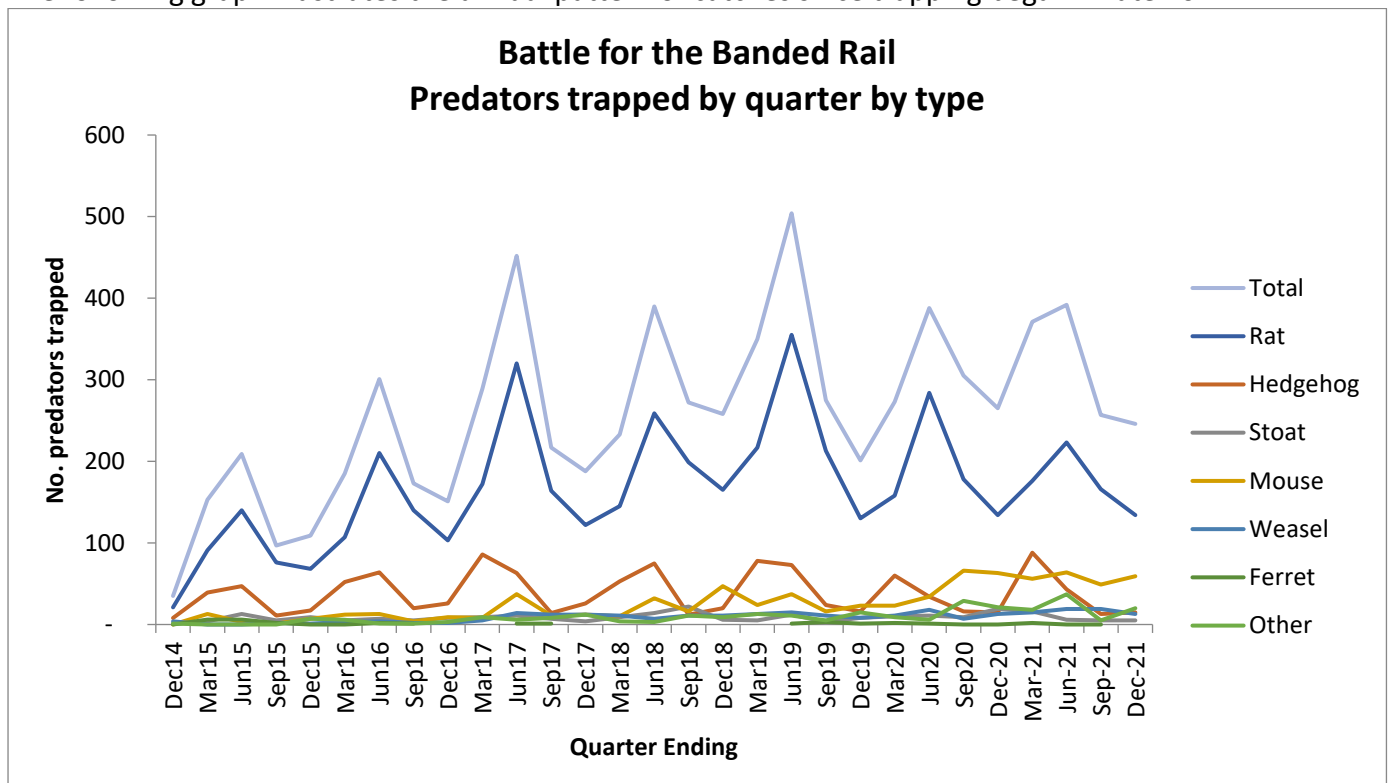
There are 991 traps in operation. The total catch for the December quarter was 246. This compares with 265 for the same quarter last year and 201 in 2019. Total catches since 2014 is now 7,539.

### Catches by Year by Pest Type

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Seven Year Total
<b>Rat</b>	396	560	778	768	915	754	699	<b>4,870</b>
<b>Hedgehog</b>	122	162	189	160	191	125	159	<b>1,108</b>
<b>Stoat</b>	32	25	31	51	28	49	32	<b>248</b>
<b>Weasel</b>	7	11	43	40	47	49	66	<b>263</b>
<b>Ferret</b>	14	3	2	2	5	3	2	<b>31</b>
<b>Mouse</b>	24	38	68	105	100	186	228	<b>749</b>
<b>Other*</b>	8	11	35	27	44	65	80	<b>270</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>810</b>	<b>1,146</b>	<b>1,153</b>	<b>1,330</b>	<b>1,231</b>	<b>1,266</b>	<b>7,539</b>

\* includes rabbits, birds and unspecified catches from Goodnature A24 traps where the species caught is unknown

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



## Terracotta lures for traps

Due to the shortage of Rabbit erayz recently, I have some volunteer trappers trialling a different lure. It is a piece of porous terracotta that is soaked in an oil scented with a variety of flavours. We have tried a salmon oil and a chocolate oil so far.

It has only been a few weeks, but I can report on my own trapping results. I have 12 traps, and on my last check I had 2 rats and one large mouse. All 3 pests were caught in traps that were baited with the chocolate oil scented terracotta. It really is too soon for this to be conclusive but it could be a good sign!

The terracotta is refreshed by spraying the oil onto it each month to replenish the scent. There is the possibility of making your own terracotta pieces by breaking up old garden pots and saucers. Just a thought!



## Rat-trapping has a long history in Aotearoa

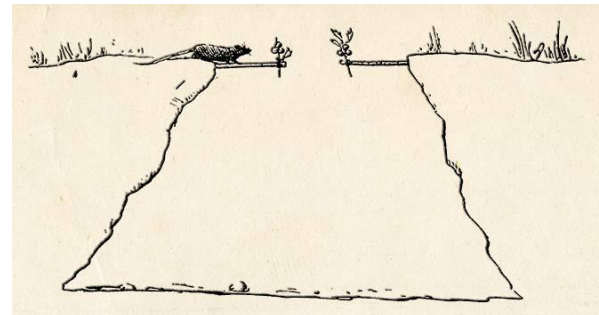
Rat-trapping started early in Aotearoa's history. The Polynesian ancestors of Māori brought the kiore across the Pacific in their voyaging waka, probably around the 13th Century AD and they soon spread across the land.



Kiore were eaten by early Māori, who treasured them as an energy-giving food source and delicacy. They were either skinned and roasted over a fire, or more elaborately baked while bound in a clay ball among the ashes, raked out and cracked open. The skin and fur remained stuck in the clay while the edible pieces were easily removed and eaten, save a couple of large bones and the tail. Often kiore would be preserved in fat and stored in calabash gourds, reserved for guests of Rangatira at special feasts.

*Kiore or Polynesian rat (Rattus exulans)*

Early Māori developed ingenious rat traps to catch them, one being a pit trap (*rua torea*) as illustrated here. Kiore walked across the stick to the bait and slipped into the pit, where they were collected by a trapper



Kiore were hardy rodents who found plenty to plunder in their new home, and became a threat to many native plants and animals. Today, kiore are considered a pest by the Department of Conservation, as they harm native plants and animals. The rats are removed from islands where endangered species such as tuatara are living.

Ship rats and Norway rats arrived with Europeans. In comparison to kiore, who were regarded by Māori as relatively clean animals which lived mainly on insects, fruits, eggs and chicks, the European rats were said to have described as “detestable creatures, mischievous thieves, house-gnawers, garment-destroyers, with an abominable habit of defecating on articles of food, absolutely disgusting creatures”.

Introduced ship rats and Norway rats have taken over from kiore on most of the mainland since the 1890s, but a few kiore populations are left, scattered in remote areas or on islands. Two islands in the Hen and Chickens group, Mauitaha and Araara, have now been set aside as sanctuaries for kiore.

To read the full article [Click here.](#)

Information sourced from *Te Ara/The Encyclopedia of New Zealand* and *Predator Free NZ website*

## Habitat Restoration Update from Kathryn Brownlie

At this time of year we are focused on maintenance and planning for the next planting season.

Each Friday a few volunteers meet for 2 hours at one of our planting sites to carry out tasks such as freeing plants of weeds, standing plant guards up straight or removing the guards if the plant is big enough.

In November we spent a morning at the Rough Island Wetland working alongside Waimea Water staff to remove 1,700 plant guards from their wetland restoration project. We will recycle them for our plantings this year. A win-win collaboration which sees the wetland plants released and over \$2,000 saved and our funding stretched a bit further.



Community planting days should kick off in May and will be scheduled for most weekends through winter and into spring. We will publish the schedule in our next newsletter.

## Plant Releasing & Maintenance on Friday mornings

Our schedule for the coming weeks is:

Friday 11 <sup>th</sup> February	Dominion Embayment (access 43 Apple Valley Rd East)
Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> February	Research Orchard Road
Friday 25 <sup>th</sup> February	Cardno Way, Bronte Peninsula
Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> March	Manuka Island
Friday 11 <sup>th</sup> March	Mapua
Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> March	Bronte Peninsula (74 Bronte Rd East)
Friday 25 <sup>th</sup> March	Rough Island Wetland
Friday 1 <sup>st</sup> April	Bronte Peninsula (92 Bronte Rd East)
Friday 8 <sup>th</sup> April	Hoddy Estuary Park



Bring drinking water and gardening gloves and a weeding tool if you have one you like to use. We also have tools available for you to use. If you are interested in joining us at one or more of these mornings, you can let me know or just turn up.

I send out an email earlier in the week to confirm the Friday location to our 'Weeding Group'. If you would like to be added to this distribution list, please let me know.

## Covid-19 Red Light for Plant Releasing

We operate *Battle for the Banded Rail* under Tasman Environmental Trust's policies and guidance.

We are able to hold our Friday plant releasing mornings as we are working outside and are a low risk activity. However, we must keep 1 metre physically distanced and face coverings are recommended.

Vaccine passes are required.



*2 year old planting on Bronte Peninsula*



## Salisbury School

*Battle for the Banded Rail* has been working with Salisbury School since the early days of the project. Tasman Environmental Trust wrote a great article about the school’s conservation heroes and its environmental work.

*“Salisbury School in Richmond has been supporting environmental restoration in Nelson Tasman for decades—propagating, growing and donating native plants; landscaping its premises; and supplying eco-sourced seeds. Salisbury’s nursery has provided plants for both TET’s Waimea Inlet Restoration Partnership and Battle for the Banded Rail initiatives. Which is why, as far as we’re concerned, the entire school is a Conservation Hero!”*

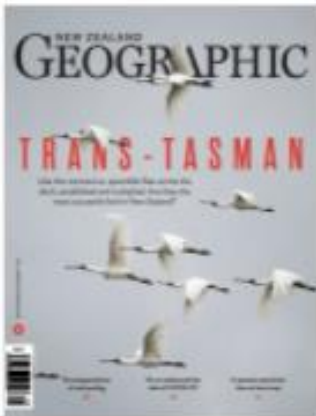
*Stately heritage trees line the driveway into Salisbury School. Planted by settler William McRae shortly after his arrival in Nelson in 1850, the oaks, pears and cedars all carry preservation orders. According to Mary Ellen O’Connor in her book, Salisbury School: A Lesson in Special Education (2008, Te Whanau O Salisbury), they constitute “the most important historic collection of trees in Richmond.”*

[Click here](#) for the full story



## Meet the Spoonbills

New Zealand Geographic’s November/December 2021 issue had a great article and photographs of spoonbills in the Waimea Inlet written by Dave Hansford.

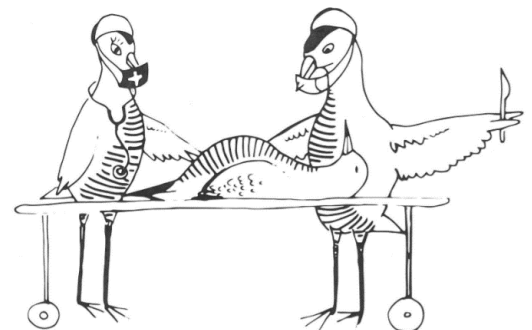


*“They arrived here from Australia without fanfare, flying across the ditch for no reason anyone has been able to deduce. But they liked the look of the place, decided to stay, and started a family. Now, they’re one of New Zealand’s most successful bird species.”* [NZ Geographic website](#)



## Bird Collective Nouns – from Forest & Bird magazine

- ▶ A **gliding** of Antipodean albatross
- ▶ An **ecstasy** of tūī
- ▶ A **plummet** of Australasian gannets
- ▶ A **pantheon** of bar-tailed godwits
- ▶ An **echo** of moreporks
- ▶ A **hoon** of kākā
- ▶ A **chime** of riflemen
- ▶ A **freeze** of bittern
- ▶ A **committee** of white-fronted terns



Rail Bypass

## Dusky Sound - Kayaking and Birding Trip 12-24 January by Tracey Murray

The dawn chorus was deafening, and there were so many Kaka that we often didn't look up to admire them as they soared high above us with their screeching calls. There were also the curious robin, tomtit and bellbird close by. Flocks of brown creeper in the bush, as well as Kereru, long tailed cuckoo, and fantail. We also had the wonderful experience of observing a flock of 15 Mohua, or yellow head, which are endangered, but recovering in numbers on one of the 700 islands in Dusky Sound.



I have just returned from 12 days in Dusky Sound where a group of us helicoptered in to a beach on Resolution Island and kayaked around the islands and inlets and coves. We camped where we found a suitable beach, and at times had to wait out some bad weather. The changing moods and colours in the sky and sea added to the incredible feeling of the huge ice sculptured granite topped mountains. Thick uncut bush covered the slopes, occasionally giving way and causing a slip which left a scar running down to the sea.

Dusky Sound is full of history and was a landing spot in 1773 for Cook's ship 'Resolution'. The ship anchored in Pickersgill Harbour for 4 months and made contact with Maori while in Dusky Sound.

Richard Henry also left his mark here, he was made NZ's first official conservation ranger in 1894. Resolution Island was set aside as NZ's first nature reserve in 1891. Richard Henry lived out on Pigeon Island where he transported up to 700 kakapo to try and save them from the stoats that had invaded the mainland. Sadly, the stoats eventually swam across to the islands and he gave up on his quest to save them.

Resolution Island and Anchor Island are now pest free, and the difference in the bird life here was very noticeable. Anchor Island is now a kakapo sanctuary and has 58 birds breeding there. Many other islands in Dusky are now trapped by DOC, or by some commercial tourist operators, and hoping to become pest free to add to the growing number of safe havens for our vulnerable birds.

If you want to know more about this special area, the recent book titled 'Tamatea Dusky' by Peta Carey is a great read, and filled with beautiful photographs.



## Plant Patch

Estuary Needle grass - *Austrostipa stipoides*

Conservation status: not threatened

In Latin australis means 'southern', and stipa 'fiber'. Stipoides means like Stipa, which is another grass.

On our salt marshes, which are the areas on the edge of estuaries and where there is little wave action, three types of plants are present – herbs, tussocks and rushes. *Austrostipa stipoides* is one of the tussock grasses.

It has a few common names: Prickly spear grass, Coastal immortality grass, bugger grass. These irreverent names apparently came from a couple of botanists (with a good sense of humour). The names refer to the indelicate surprise that the sharp tips of the leaves can cause if one unwittingly comes into contact with them.

*Austrostipa stipoides* is native to the coast of New Zealand. In the South Island it only occurs within the Nelson province. In the North Island it can be found from Te Pahi (Cape Reinga) to northern Taranaki and Ohiwa Harbour (near Whakatane). It is then absent until Nelson. It also occurs in the southeast of Australia, including Tasmania.

It is found on salt marshes, the edges of beach dunes and sea cliffs. It tolerates strong winds and sea spray.

Some other facts about *Austrostipa stipoides* are:

- It is the only native species we share with Australia (*NZ Botanical Society Newsletter 1997*)
- It is an example of a plant that requires resistance to achieve its full affect. Without salt winds and dry conditions, it can become floppy and eventually peter out.
- *Battle for the Banded Rail* has planted 400 *Austrostipa stipoides* as part of its habitat restoration to date



*Austrostipa stipoides* in the Waimea Inlet

## Celebrating Our Volunteers: David Kemp

*Interviewed by Anne Hilson*

David has enjoyed working under the guidance of Battle for the Banded Rail, taking part in plantings and maintenance of indigenous plants on estuary margins local to Mapua.

Since moving to Mapua in 2002 he has developed an affinity with the region which goes back to his ancestor, Thomas Roil who arrived Nelson with his family in 1842 on The Bolton, to work as a farm labourer under the New Zealand Company regime. Through the hard work and knowledge of these people of the land, they started the process which changed swamp into the productive land we know today, and that continues in his flourishing vegetable garden.



About five years ago after helping in a planting day at the Hoddy Estuary Park, (north of Research Orchard Road on the Coastal Highway), he took it on himself to nurture those plantings, and now enjoys calling in there on his way home from town to do a spot of weeding, releasing plants from their protective guards, and generally caring for the area.

This is an initiative he would like to encourage others to do, and become more associated with their local natural world, be it some bush, a stream or estuary margin, walking track or local park.

While employed as an art teacher in Hastings, in 1981 David attended a bronze casting summer school with the legendary Jens Hansen, and the passion involved in the casting process encouraged him to develop his own home foundry, which led to his fulfilling a dream - to become a self employed artist working in painting and sculpture, and casual art teacher.

As a member of Hastings Community Arts Council he was very much involved in the reimagining of Hastings as a cultural community, which others fortunately bought into and processed through into the vibrant town centre it enjoys today.

Besides the work he does for Battle for the Banded Rail, he advocates for getting more Art into the community, and what he calls “civilising the public domain”, by which he means making it more useful, and accessible to everyone. The initial success is the versatile seating outside the TDC Library in Richmond.

Keen members of the Motueka Community Board have picked up on his ideas and, working with TDC staff, have transformed the entrance to Thorp Reserve, and with the Menzshed, have made a community inspired seat in Memorial Park, behind the library.

One of his contributions to public art is a large topiarised shrub as a Kiwi with an egg, on the right-hand side of Higgs Road, Mapua, just up from the library.

While leaving home at 8.30 on a Friday or Sunday morning is not something he would normally do, attending a planting or maintenance effort is rewarding in that “it gives me a sense of belonging, an opportunity to have a positive involvement in the natural environment, to visit new local places in the fresh atmosphere of morning, and to expand my local positive social contacts”.

Many of us would feel the same way.

