



Volunteer Lunch Invitation

Another planting season is over and it's time to celebrate the efforts of our volunteers and thank those who have contributed to make this project the success that it is.

If you have trapped, weeded or planted on the Waimea Inlet in the past 2 years, you are invited to join us on **Sunday 11th December from 11.30am at The Playhouse, Westdale Road**

Lunch will be provided, drinks to be purchased.

Thanks to TDC, DOC, NBS and The Playhouse for their support of this event. Please RSVP by 30th November to Kathryn <u>bandedrail@gmail.com</u>

Banded Rail Survey

We carried out our biennial banded rail survey in early September. It was a cool, clear and calm morning. Two weeks prior there had been high rainfall and flood events in the region. This meant the esturarine mud was very gloopy and surveyors reported moments of being stuck, more so than in the previous years!

Banded rail footprints were found at eight sites and a banded rail sighted during the survey near Pearl Creek. Many prints were found at three locations which suggests that multiple pairs of banded rail are present. All the areas with banded rail present are included in our trapping networks.



One surveyor, Marios, has written a delightful story of his morning on the estuary "Diary of a banded rail surveyor". It is included in this newsletter.

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

Trapping Results

There are 1,071 traps in operation. The total catch for the September quarter was 284. This compares with 262 for the same quarter last year. Total catches since 2014 is now 8,626.

Interestingly, this quarter had the lowest hedgehog catches we have recorded since 2015 with only 4 catches from 1,071 traps. The previous lowest was for the same quarter in 2015 when we had 11 catches from 502 traps. Did the floods wash them away perhaps?

Sector	Rat	Hedgehog	Stoat	Weasel	Mouse	Ferret	Other*	Total for	Total
								Quarter	since
									2015
Mapua to	61	2	-	2	1	-	1	67	2,157
Bronte									
Bronte to Hoddy	28	-	1	-	-	-	-	29	2,376
Peninsula									
Waimea West/	25	1	4	4	9	-	-	43	1,996
Appleby Hills									
Waimea Delta	77	1	-	3	62	-	2	145	2,097
to Monaco									
Total for quarter	191	4	5	9	72	-	3	284	
Total since 2015	5,566	1,206	270	302	946	34	302		8,626

Catches for Quarter 3 2022 Sector by Pest Type

* 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.



Trapping & Monitoring News from Tracey Murray Know your Mustelids

Mustelids are comprised of stoats, weasels and ferrets. They were introduced into New Zealand in the 1870s and 1880s to control rabbits. However, all three have become pests in their own right. By far the worst, in terms of their predations on native species, are stoats

It can be very confusing to tell the difference between a stoat and a weasel and many people will not have seen a ferret. DOC's 'practical guide to trapping' which can be viewed <u>online</u> is a very informative guide for lots of useful trapping information.

Weasel (at top in picture) is smaller and has a shorter tail that is all one colour. The line change between the white and brown fur is wavy or uneven.

Stoat (middle) has a definite black tip on the tail and the line change between the white and brown fur is smooth.

Ferrets are quite distinctive from the other two and much larger. Often as large as a cat but not often seen in the Waimea Inlet area.



Predator plague cycle





Predator plague cycle diagram: DOC

Awesome Halloween costume!



Live Let Live: Feral cat trapping in the Pearl Creek area

This year we set out 9 traps within the reserve and along the cycleway near the bridge that crosses the river. Unfortunately, it was bad timing with the August floods. During the first 2 weeks 4 cats were caught, but then 3 of the traps near the river got washed away in the floods, and we collected the others in, cutting the trapping time short.

Thanks very much to the volunteers who help with this each year.

Estuary Place trapline – help needed

One of our volunteers is heading away on a holiday and would like someone to take over checking her line while she is away. The dates are from end of November until the beginning of March. Please contact Tracey if you can help: pukeko92@gmail.com or 027 286 5866

Stop feeding birds bread, clean sugar water feeders daily

With daylight saving time comes longer days and the return of birdsong to our gardens. However, Birds New Zealand is concerned that a number of native birds are dropping dead because of how well-intentioned people are feeding them. Nathan Rarere asked Auckland regional representative Ian McLean about what they've noticed. Listen to the short interview on RNZ <u>here</u>



Sugar water bird feeder



Feed fruit to birds instead of bread





This movie on Wetland Restoration is being screened on November 21, 7.30pm at the Māpua Town Hall by a group called Local Matters. <u>Click here</u> for more information. The movie featured in the 2021 NZ International Film Festival. Watch the 4 minute <u>film trailer</u>

Habitat Restoration Update from Kathryn Brownlie

Planting Season

Another planting season is over. Since 2015, over 150,000 plants have been added to the margins and islands of the Waimea Inlet. There was a huge boost over the last three years provided by *One Billion Trees* which has funded 95,000 of these plants.

Volunteers have been a critical part of this achievement. Over 70,000 plants have now been planted by volunteers around the Waimea Inlet.

One Billion Trees was managed by Julie Newell, who having seen the 95,000 plants get into the ground, has finished working with Tasman Environmental Trust. We thank Julie for this incredible achievement which involved working with volunteers, students, clubs, business groups, landowners, TDC, DOC, NCC and contractors.



Julie Newell

Plant Releasing & Maintenance on Friday mornings – We Need Your Help!

Our schedule for the coming weeks is:

Friday 28 th October	Bronte Peninsula (92 Bronte Road East)
Friday 4 th November	Hoddy Estuary Park
Friday 11 th November	Hoddy Peninsula DOC Reserve (57 Hoddy Road)
Friday 18 th November	Rough Island wetland
Friday 25 th November	Bronte Peninsula DOC Reserves (22 Bronte Road East)
Friday 9 th December	Cardno Way
Friday 16 th December	Maisey Embayment (372 The Coastal Highway, near Westdale Rd)

Bring drinking water, a weeding tool if you have one you like to use and wear gardening gloves. We will also have tools available. 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.

Maintenance is an important part of habitat restoration to make sure the plants thrive. Each Friday morning it's very satisfying to come away knowing we have made a difference.



Plant Patch

Toetoe

Conservation status: not threatened



The giant tussock grasses of toetoe with their cream flower plumes on tall stems are an iconic part of the New Zealand landscape.

Austroderia is a genus of five species of tall grasses native to New Zealand, commonly known as toetoe. Richardii is named after Achille Richard (1794-1852), a French botanist who described several New Zealand plant species.

The five discrete species each have marked differences in their distribution:

Austroderia richardii found in wet places, stream, lake and forest margins from sea level to subalpine habitats in the South Island. Austroderia fulvida is the North Island equivalent.

Austroderia toetoe restricted to swamps and wet ground in the North Island south of Tauranga

Austroderia splendens our largest toetoe, is a species of lowland sand dunes cliffs and rocky places and is confined to Northland, Bay of Plenty and Waikato

Austroderia turbaria grows in sphagnum swamps and on peat on the Chatham Islands. This species is nationally critical.

Māori traditionally used toetoe for several purposes:

- leaves were used for weaving mats and baskets

- the long stems, or kākaho, were used to line the walls of their homes to create a neat insulating finish

- the hollow stems were used for arrows for fishing and hunting, straws, pipes and frames for kites - Kākaho are still used in tukutuku panels as the vertical stakes, bracken stalks or strips of totara as horizontal rods and the pattern woven in harakeke



Tukutuku panel

Telling the difference between Toetoe and Pampas

Pampas is a South American invasive grass and often confused with toetoe. Pampas colonise sprayed, burnt, slipped and disturbed sites and quickly becomes dense. It replaces groundcovers, shrubs and ferns and creates fire hazards and provides habitats for possums and rats. It is a pest! Pampas was originally planted for shelter belts. A rule of thumb to tell the two apart is that toetoe flowers before Christmas.

	Toetoe	Pampas		
Flowering time	Spring	Late January to late May		
Flower head	Drooping, pendulous	Erect, dense		
Plume colour	White/cream	One species is pink/purplish		
Leaf	Won't break when tugged firmly	Breaks		
Leaf blade	Prominent veins either side of midrib	Only fine, indistinct veins either side of midrib		
Midrib	Continues into leaf base	Does not continue into leaf base		
Base of plant	Dead leaves don't form spiral	Old brown tightly curled, fracture leaf debris like wood chips		



Common pampas & purple pampas





Austroderia richardii

Celebrating Our Volunteers: Dave Landreth

Interviewed by Anne Hilson

Dave came to retire in Ruby Bay seven years ago after working in Christchurch in the police force for 32 years, and subsequently managing the Fraud section of the Ministry of Health.

Before he retired, he had not undertaken any conservation work, but has been planting for the *Battle for the Banded Rail* since responding to an advertisement soon after he arrived here. In that time, he has noticed a large increase in the number of volunteers planting.

About two years ago his neighbour, Warren Inwood, decided Dave needed a bit more involvement, and enticed him into trapping as well.

Dave services two lines. One is on Bell Island, and the other closer to home, was a new line set up with help from Tracey. This one runs from the end of the housing on Stafford Drive to the Bluffs and McKee Reserve. Since March 2021 Dave has caught 79 rats and three hedgehogs on this line, with two or three each time he checks.

He uses DOC 200 traps, and a bait made up with dehydrated rabbit, and peanut butter (supplied by Pic's Peanut Butter).

Recently Dave found that several ripe lemons near the top of his lemon tree had been munched by an unknown opportunist. His stepson's advice was to set a trap beneath the tree; he caught four rats over the next few days. For anyone with spare lemons it could be worth a try!

Dave sees that schools are making more of an issue about threatened species. His grandsons often accompany him on his trap line tours and are very keen and knowledgeable about the natural world.

Like many of our volunteers Dave is not overly familiar with the Banded Rail. He thinks he "may have seen one" but isn't sure about it. He'll be interested to hear the results of the recent biennial survey and what progress has been made since the last one.



Dave believes the aim of the Predator Free New Zealand by 2050 movement is unlikely to be achieved. But that it is a rallying cry for yet more educative work on biodiversity in schools, and in the population generally. The fact that we seldom see animals such as the Banded Rail, makes us realise just how fragile they are.

Asked if he had a message for his fellow B4BR volunteers he simply says, "keep up the good work".

Diary of a Banded Rail Surveyor by Marios Gavalas

The fourth bi-annual banded rail survey took place on a sunny September Sunday morning on the shores of the inlet. Some volunteers wore gumboots, others opted for sneakers. All were eager to get stuck into our survey transects and spy the elusive banded rail.

Banded rail expert, Graeme Elliott, who grew up on the shores of Waimea, took us on a brief excursion at the edge of the rushes, crossing shallow creeks and avoiding the muddy patches. With heads down and bums up, resembling the waders feeding on the exposed mud-flats, we attuned our eyes to the distinctive banded rail footprints. Thanks to Graeme's experienced eye, sure enough after a few minutes we all stopped, enthralled by a positive footprint sighting. Knowing now to look for a train of muddy prints, in line and in the shape of arrows, we felt confident to tell our rails from our stilts.



Project leader, Kathryn Brownlie gave a safety briefing – stay in pairs, let her know when we were out safe, be off the water in good time before the tide comes in. And

Banded rail footprints

just in case we got stuck, fall to the ground and roll over. It was a cursory comment, which could have gotten lost in the excitement, but it somehow stuck.

Paired with experienced surveyor, Anne, we dropped one vehicle at the finish point and drove together to a grassy strip alongside a flax swamp. Glad of the Red Bands and noting how wet it was underfoot, we descended a bank onto the inlet edge. Where were those footprints?

The serene bay housed plenty of mud snails, pukeko foraging on the grassy margins and a wide strip of rushes where banded rail could feed. But the only footprints were ours. And it was these human footprints that started to cause concern. With every pace the depth of gumboot penetration into the muds was getting deeper and the effort required to lift our feet out was getting greater. Before we had time to change course, we were stuck!



Dedicated banded rail surveyor, Anne Hilson, embraces the mud!

Anne, a fit and able woman, but with weakened knees from a lifetime of adventure, was struggling to remove herself from the sticky mud. I moved closer to help, leaning over to grab the top of her boots and supply the added strength to extract her suctioned feet. By now Anne was sinking and every movement only deepened our troubles. My hands slipped and I fell over on my backside, mud splatters coating my clothing. Was this the time to take Kathryn's advice and roll over? One last effort, now embracing the mud (our new catchphrase) and with satisfying squelches out popped one foot and then the other.

With appearances more resembling mud wrestlers than field surveyors, we gingerly chose a safer route on the firmer gravels. Our bonding experience with both mud and each other primed our senses for the search, but with the incoming tide, it was only our footprints that were covered.

Some weird stares came my way at the vege shop. But knowing I had done my bit for banded rail trumped the vanity. Next survey, I'll be in overalls and with shoes taped to my feet.



The Rail Trail Project

We are not alone! The Rail Trail Project is working on the coastline of the Upper Waitematā Harbour in Auckland with its aim to bring back moho pererū/banded rail and other shore birds by creating a predator free coastline. The coastal and migratory birds that once flourished in this area include moho pereru (banded rail), pūweto (spotless crake), kōtare (kingfisher), NZ dotterel, tōrea (variable oystercatcher), turnstone, kuaka (godwit), white-faced heron, pied stilt, banded dotterel and Caspian tern.

Tracey & I recently met online with a few of their team to share information and some inspiration for our projects with some similarities. One of their issues however, is a lot of the estuarine coastline has mangroves and they need to float some of their traps!

Other environmental Groups active in the Upper Waitematā include Herald Island Environmental Group, Living Whenuapai, Sustainable Poremoremo, Greenhithe Ecology Network, Habitat Hobsonville, Kaipātiki Project and Pest Free Coastsville.

Find out more here

Waitemata Harbour (in the turquoise area)





Battle for the Banded Rail is just one of Tasman Environmental Trust's current projects. Here is another project working with its local community in our region.



Pest Free Onetahua has a bold ambition to bring an abundance of birds and other native wildlife back to North West Golden Bay. It's a long-term shared community vision to enable future generations the chance to enjoy a wealth of native wildlife in this wāhi tapu - a sacred place, rich in Māori traditions and ancestral stories.

The predator eradication programme, funded by Predator Free 2050, covers an area stretching from Farewell Spit south to the Whanganui Inlet. Farewell Spit is home to thousands of birds and is a wetland of international significance. Predators threaten many of these birds and Predator Free Onetahua's mission is to completely remove possums, rats, stoats and feral pigs from the spit by 2025 and prevent their return.

Read more about this project on Pest Free Onetahua's website here