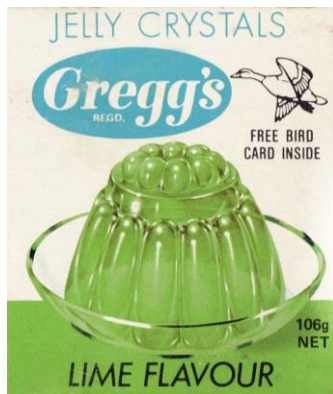




Battle For The Banded Rail

Newsletter December Quarter 2024

Were You a Jelly Card Collector in the '70s?



If so, you may recognise the banded rail artwork as one of the free cards that came with packets of Gregg's jelly crystals. Eileen Mayo, a Dunedin artist, was commissioned to create 36 watercolours for printed cards.

Thank You – Volunteers, Funders and Supporters

We held our annual volunteer lunch at The Playhouse in November to celebrate 10 years of habitat restoration and trapping. It was a wonderful occasion, and we were delighted that NBS, DOC, TDC and The Playhouse made contributions to support the event once again. They also know how valuable our volunteers are.



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 Results

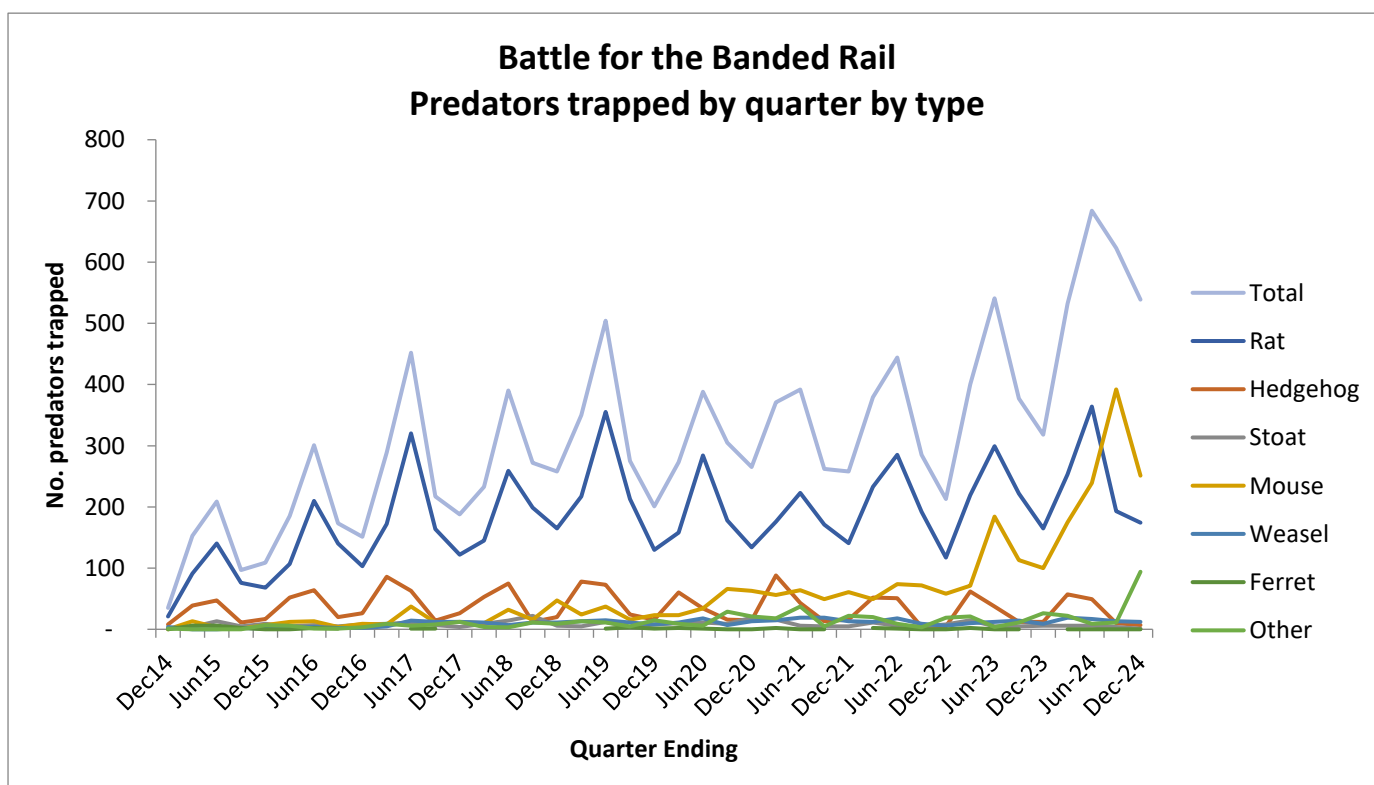
The total catch for the December quarter was 542 and is our highest quarter 4 recorded. Total catches since 2014 is now 12,893. There are 1,239 traps in the network.

Catches by Year by Pest Type

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Ten Year Total
Rat	396	560	778	768	915	754	710	827	905	984	7,597
Hedgehog	122	162	189	160	191	125	160	112	123	123	1,467
Stoat	32	25	31	51	28	49	32	30	31	17	326
Weasel	7	11	43	40	47	49	66	45	45	61	414
Ferret	14	3	2	2	5	3	2	3	2	-	36
Mouse	24	38	68	105	100	186	230	253	470	1,057	2,531
Other*	8	11	35	27	44	65	83	51	62	136	522
Total	603	810	1,146	1,153	1,330	1,231	1,283	1,321	1,638	2,378	12,893

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

This graph illustrates the annual pattern of catches since trapping began in late 2014



Trapping & Monitoring News from Tracey Murray

Battle for the Banded Rail: Mouse Catches and Clarifying our Target Pests

While downloading the trapping catches for the last quarter, it was noticeable that the number of mouse catches have increased. These have increased from 470 in 2023 to over 1000 in 2024.

While some of these can be attributed to more traps out in the field, I have found that more volunteers are wanting to target mice. This is great if you are willing to add mouse traps to your DOC200 traps in the bait area (see photo) or add a separate trap box with mouse traps inside it. Adding a mouse trap to the box will act as a fresh bait lure and can be beneficial to attract a stoat or a rat into the trap. Please do not alter the sensitivity of your trap so that it will catch a mouse. This can potentially cause more bycatch of small birds.

Mice are not on the target species list for our project and have minimal impact on banded rail or other ground nesting birds around the estuary. Our trapping network has been designed with traps spaced out at 100m between each, and this is to cover the home range of a stoat. Rats have a home range of approximately 50m and a mouse approximately 25m. If you are catching mice in your DOC200 spaced out at 100m, you will be having no impact on the overall population of mice.

If your trap is catching mice, then it is unavailable next time a stoat or a rat or a hedgehog comes to visit. These are the pests that we are targeting and have the biggest impact on ground nesting birds.

Mice taking the bait out of the DOC200 trap can be frustrating to volunteers and I will be trialling some new tools on the market to see if they are worth purchasing for all our traps.

If your DOC200 traps are regularly catching mice, then they may be weighted/calibrated incorrectly. Please let me know if you have a problem with your traps going off when a mouse walks across the plate. We can get someone out to check that your traps are calibrated to go off at the correct weight. Thanks for considering all this and let's keep our eye on the targets!



Inside a DOC200 trap with a mousetrap installed on trap wall

Habitat Restoration Update from Kathryn Brownlie

Plant Releasing / Maintenance Schedule

We will resume our plant maintenance mornings mid-February. Plant maintenance involves hand clearing weeds from inside plant guards, straightening guards or removing them if the plant is big enough. We meet each Friday morning and on the first Sunday of the month where morning tea will be provided.

Friday 14 February	9-11am	Pukeko Lane
Friday 21 February	9-11am	Stringer Creek
Friday 28 February	9-11am	Cotterell Road
Sunday 2 March	9-11am	Manuka Island
Friday 7 March	9-11am	TBC
Friday 14 March	9-11am	62 Bronte Road
Friday 21 March	9-11am	Rain date
Friday 28 March	9-11am	Mataahua, cnr Dominion Rd
Friday 4 April	9-11am	Cardno Way
Sunday 6 April	9-11am	Research Orchard Road
Friday 11 April	9-11am	TBC



WSP Community Work Day

On a beautiful November day, 15 staff from WSP, a local engineering business, joined us at Hoddy Estuary Park to give all the plantings some TLC. It was great to be able to achieve so much and leave the park looking so good. Thank you WSP for choosing to give your time to give the habitat restoration on the inlet a welcome boost.



WSP staff and Banded Rail volunteers at Hoddy Estuary Park

Tash from WSP sent this lovely message afterwards:

What a cracker of a day on Friday.

Everyone had such a good time out at the Park and enjoyed the fresh air, maintenance, company, knowledge and scenery!

And to be fair there was some tired and sore bodies afterwards- but not extreme!

Appreciate all your good work!

Before & After

2016



2024



We began planting rushes, *juncus krausii*, in the estuary bed at Research Orchard Road in 2015.

The plants are the tiny dots in the mud in the first photo. There have also been big changes on the far side of the embayment, most notably the removal of the blackwoods. This bank has been replanted in natives.

There are plans to plant several hundred more *juncus krausii* this year at Research Orchard Road at a low tide planting in June.

Plant Patch Koromiko - *Veronica stricta*

Conservation status: not threatened

Veronica stricta is a well know NZ native which was formerly known as *Hebe stricta* but was reclassified in 2022. *Veronica* is the Latin name of a legendary female saint. *Stricta* comes from the Latin word *strictus* meaning erect, stiff, narrow and very straight.

There are approximately 105 species of *Veronica* in our flora, NZ's largest genus of flowering plants. It takes on many forms from trees and shrubs to groundcovers and whipcord. They are a favourite of native insects and have co-evolved flowers to suit. The flowers are white or white tinted lilac, are bottle brush like and pleasantly scented.

Koromiko is endemic to New Zealand and can be found from coastal areas to the bushline in the North Island, and in Nelson, Marlborough and North Canterbury in the South Island. While it is hardy, it is best suited to full sun.

The astringent nature of the young leaves and shoots has been known to generations of Māori as a cure for diarrhoea and dysentery. Quantities of leaf tips were sent to Māori troops serving in the Middle East in WWII and soon the Pākehā troops demanded supplies to cure them of these diseases.

Veronica stenophylla, or narrow-leaved koromiko is another veronica naturally found in our local ecosystem. It is also found in the central North Island and in the top of the South Island through to Westport and Cape Campbell.

Since 2015, Battle for the Banded Rail has planted nearly 2,500 koromiko of both *veronica stricta* and *veronica stenophylla* around the Waimea Inlet.



Hebe stricta, by Nancy Adams.
Te Papa collection



Veronica stricta



Veronica stenophylla

Auckland Islands, the largest of NZ's subantarctic islands

by Blake Hornblow

Pest Free Maukahuka/Auckland Island



DOC and project partners are gearing up to restore Auckland Island (46,000 hectares) to a pest-free status. This is the final step in over 30 years of investment, research, and innovation in restoring the New Zealand subantarctic UNESCO World Heritage area.

Set to be one of the largest pest eradication projects in history, it is ground-breaking in size and new challenges. The scale and complexity translate into eight years of work and \$80 million. It's a project now being actively fundraised for by NZ Nature Fund.

Deep within the Southern Ocean, Auckland Island is a biodiversity hotspot, home to more than 500 species of plants and animals, over 100 of which are found nowhere else on Earth. Sadly, we are rapidly losing these precious plants and animals.

Populations of introduced feral pigs, feral cats, and mice have skyrocketed over the last 200 years and inflicted severe harm. Now, 32 native bird species are no longer found on Auckland Island but survive as vulnerable populations on nearby pest-free islands.

The investment in Auckland Island will provide over twice as much space for native species to thrive in the subantarctic – from 75,000 to 190,000 acres, the recovery of hundreds of native flora and fauna including the return of fields of iconic megaherbs, native insects, seabird populations as well as removing the impending risk of swimming predators arriving on nearby pest-free islands.

The island's remoteness, pest free status of surrounding islands and strict visitor protocols already in place means that there will be no ongoing costs to keep the island pest free and in its natural state. Once the pests are gone many rare endemic and native species are expected to re-introduce themselves from surrounding islands.

There is an excellent interactive story about this project – [Preventing extinctions and saving entire ecosystems](#). At the end the story you will find a [link](#) to a 6 minute video which is interesting and has stunning footage.



Blake is an Eradication Technician in DOC's national eradication team. He is also Tracey's son.

Project Spotlight

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.

Friends of East Mohua

A coastal forest filled with birds, streams and wetlands supporting diverse native fish and bird species and an ocean teeming with life is the vision of the Friends of East Mohua (FOEM).

They are a group of friendly ambitious locals working together to make this vision a reality. Many locals worked together to get the project up and running – raising funds, planting native trees, removing weeds, track building and trapping pests. Now they're expanding their hard mahi to have more impact from Motupipi to Wainui Bay.



Click [here](#) to see more on TET's website