

Pukenui Forest Ranger Report 14/02/2019

Boy is it hot!! It doesn't feel like long ago we were praying for warmer weather but now it's here we're pleading for the cooler days to come back! As usual the wildlife doesn't seem bothered as the birds energetically bounce around the branches almost tauntingly as we struggle our way up the steep hills. This month we have as always continued the battle with the pesky critters of the forest, begun removing transmitters from the kiwi and Ben has introduced two new volunteers to the forest!



First light of the day, Ben and I often start very early this time of the year, best to beat the heat!

Trapping:

Data summary 2018:



Ben holds Wracky during a transmitter change.

Sam lugs two stoat boxes up the hill at Coronation Reserve, back breaking work!

MONTH	WEASEL	STOAT	RAT	CAT	HEDGEHOG	FERRET
JANUARY	0	10	50	0	6	0
FEBRUARY	0	7	22	0	5	0
MARCH	0	6	49	0	6	0
APRIL	0	5	52	2	5	0
MAY	0	3	40	0	4	0
JUNE	1	1	21	0	5	0
JULY	0	2	22	0	2	0
AUGUST	1	3	28	0	1	0
SEPTEMBER	0	1	39	4	1	0
OCTOBER	4	3	54	0	6	0
NOVEMBER	0	4	35	0	4	0
DECEMBER	1	4	44	0	2	0
TOTAL	7	49	455	6	47	0

Data summary 2019:

MONTH	WEASEL	STOAT	RAT	CAT	HEDGEHOG	FERRET
JANUARY	0	5	39	2	10	0

2017-2018 Comparison:

Table 1: 2017-2018 data comparison.

PEST	2017	2018
WEASEL	1	7
STOAT	26	49
RAT	273	456
CAT	8	6
HEDGEHOG	22	47
FERRET	1	0
TOTAL	331	608

2018 ended with a grand total of 564 pests caught within the forest and the surrounding buffer. 354 rats were caught within the forest 101 on the buffer, 24 stoats within the forest 25 on the buffer, 3 weasels in the forest and 4 on the buffer and 4 cats on the forest edge and two on the buffer. Great job to all those involved with the predator control team! 2019 has started much the same as 2018 ended with 5 stoats, 39 rats, 2 cats and 10 hedgehogs caught thus far. The majority of these rats were caught on the buffer with only a handful being caught within the forest, hopefully a sign the December toxin operation toppled a few within Pukenui!

Toxin/bait stations:

The December toxin operation finished without a hitch and we have brought in the trail cameras to see how the bait station modifications held up. From the footage gathered there definitely seemed to be an improvement as there were less rats making it into the possum toxin. One piece of footage was almost comical as a rat continued to jump off a tree root time and time again in hopes of reaching the bait station only to slip back off every time it got a grasp. Another piece of interesting footage was at a bait station which had no attention whatsoever from the rats but did from the possums. This footage showed possums coming to the bait station and feeding on toxin just as we would like however there was an issue, not one possum got a lethal dose! This leads us to believe not only are the rats an issue, but the possums may also have become toxin shy. To combat this a change in toxin is often the key and is something we will investigate for future operations.

Kiwi monitoring:

All the kiwi remain much the same as they have the last few months and all seem very settled in their respective pieces of Pukenui paradise! We have begun to capture them all for transmitter removal with mixed results. We started with Matarau whom is still living nearby Woods Rd Quarry and was fairly tricky to locate as the signal bounces quite badly in this area. She was down a long tunnel much too long for our arms to reach so we resorted to digging in from the top which was a success, her transmitter was removed, tunnel repaired and she was released back in to said tunnel. Our second target was Lovie whom we located with a fair amount of ease capturing her however was another story. She like Matarau had a nice long tunnel however hers had multiple entrances and was within a fallen hollow tree. This of course made digging in to it a lot trickier but we eventually found a soft spot in the

wood and started digging through. We found her but when we attempted capture, she somehow managed to get pass one of the blocked entrances and lead us on a wild goose chase throughout the forest. Before going home for the day we decided to check out the area Fanton was hiding in and surprise, surprise she too was in a long tunnel under a huge stump! She posed an even trickier challenge than the two before so was left for another day, they certainly aren't making it easy for us!

The kiwi's collective average activity for December-January was 9.18 hours per night up from 8.31 in November. Chuckles (Green) was the most active bird yet again with an average of 10 hours of activity per night down slightly from 10.99 hours per night in November. Matarau (Red) was the least active with 8.16 hours of activity per night which is ever so slightly less than her activity in November which was at 8.33 hours per night.

Table 2: Average activity of each kiwi between 01/12/2018 and 30/01/2019.

1/12/2018- 30/01/2019	
KIWI	AVERAGE ACTIVITY (HRS)
CHUCKLES	10
FANTON	8.91
LOVIE	9.41
MATARAU	8.16
TE KAMO	9.75
WAIMARIE	9.58
WRACKY	8.49

Volunteers:

Peter who has volunteered several times for us recently has put up his hand to take on some trap lines and has already taken over Tanyas line around the Quarry Gardens. Ben has been hard at work getting our two new volunteers Sam and Danielle into the forest on fresh new projects. He and Sam conquered the steep hill at Coronation Reserve as they lugged trap boxes up into the forest. Here they have created a new trap line that Sam will continue to service. And Danielle has begun her weeding project along the walking track between Amalin Drive carpark and Karanui estate where she is battling the thick blanket of blackberry that has formed over the last few years, when this is under control it can be then planted in natives. Thanks for all your help guys, and here's hoping you continue to enjoy it and stay with us long term!