

PUKENUI RANGER REPORT 12/11/2020

Yet another month has passed in the forest it has been wet but is certainly getting warmer. We have been busy preparing for our next kiwi translocation, preparing for our December toxin operation, and working on our trap line network. Read on for more detail.



Mufasa caught after a day of crawling through the kauri grass.



Kieikie flower found along the Blue trap line.



Pretty flower but a nasty pest. Banana passionfruit found near the edge of the forest.

Predator Control:

Trapping:

This month we have seen a rather low catch rate with only 1 stoat and 10 rats caught which is a huge difference from the same time last year in which we caught 1 stoat 1 weasel and a whopping 67 rats! The September toxin operation would have contributed to the lower numbers, but I would imagine there is more to it than that. I say this as these operations are carried out every year and we don't usually see a drop this dramatic, a natural population fluctuation perhaps? Whatever the cause we are just happy the numbers are so low.

This year to date we have caught a total of 97 pests less than this time last year. This includes 85 less rats, 2 less weasels, 2 less cats, 17 less hedgehogs and 1 less ferret. We have however caught 10 more stoats than this time last year.

Trap data summary 2020:

Table 1: Trap data to date. (some data still coming)

MONTH	WEASEL	STOAT	RAT	CAT	HEDGEHOG	FERRET
JANUARY	0	9	55	0	3	0
FEBRUARY	2	3	43	0	10	0
MARCH	0	1	37	0	1	0
APRIL	0	0	0	0	0	0
MAY	0	11	52	0	8	0
JUNE	1	1	31	0	4	0
JULY	0	2	35	0	0	1
AUGUST	1	7	20	0	1	0
SEPTEMBER	0	0	10	0	0	0
OCTOBER	0	1	10	0	0	0
YTD	4	35	315	0	27	1

Comparison to this time last year:

Table 2: 2020-2019 data comparison.

PEST	THIS YTD	LAST YEAR
WEASEL	4	6
STOAT	36	26
RAT	315	400
CAT	0	2
HEDGEHOG	27	44
FERRET	1	2
TOTAL PESTS	383	480

Toxin:

The toxin for the December operation has been ordered and should arrive in the next week or so ready to be packed, this will be the last toxin operation of 2020.

Kiwi:

We have been on the hunt for all our transmitted birds this month in hopes of getting all the transmitters off before our upcoming release which takes place in February 2021. We have had limited success as three birds Harikoa, Gunter and Dorry have become rather tricky to locate. We have however managed to catch up with Jasper and Mufasa.

After walking up and down a few big hills around one of Ben's trap lines we detected a signal for Jasper near Clements Quarry in Maunu. Upon investigation we found him in a nice deep gully full of gorse and pampas very nearby one of the quarry roads. While the aim of the day was to remove his transmitter, we decided not to due to his close proximity to the city and the threats that come with that. We will keep a close on him over the next few weeks and see what he does and decide on our next move from there.

Mufasa took a bit of work to find but we eventually picked him up near a toxin line in a central area of the forest. Here he was huddled up amongst large swathes of kauri grass which is an absolute mission to catch kiwi in! After spending the entire day creeping through the thick of it unsuccessfully sneaking up on him, we decided to forget about stealth and push through the kauri grass for one last attempt. Half an hour later we had him in hand as well as a few scratches for our efforts, well worth it! He looked to be in good health and had gained 400g since we last saw him. After taking weight and condition we removed his transmitter and set him free, best of luck to him.

In other news Sayyad who had abandoned his first nest this season in now sitting on a second nest! Good news for sure but unfortunately, he lost his transmitter soon after. This makes monitoring his nest a little trickier but not impossible! Fortunately, his nest was located before the transmitter was lost so the plan is to put a trail camera at the nest site and check this when the eggs should be near hatching. Once we see chicks on camera, we can then whip them out microchip them and hopefully whack a transmitter back on Sayyads leg for future monitoring.

Other:

Evan and Phoenix have finished their time with us, and it was a pleasure having them in the forest. During this time, they assisted in the tracking of kiwi, cutting in a new toxin block, the arduous job of packing Ratabate and prefeed as well as assisting with the toxin operation. Although some of these jobs may not be the most exciting jobs in the forest they took to their tasks with gusto. We also had an extra two students (Phoebe and Isabella) who needed extra hours to finish their practicum requirements and did so by helping us with the preparation of rabbit for stoat traps and assisting with pest monitoring. The students have all expressed interest in continuing to volunteer for the trust which is fantastic!