

PUKENUI RANGER REPORT 10/09/2020

Winter is over but the colds still here which is quite welcome for a change as we forge ahead with the hot work involved during our toxin operation. The last month we have been firmly focused on this which has included pest monitoring, finishing up the packing of toxin and of course completing the operation itself which is now near finished. We have also as per usual kept up with our trap work and been keeping a close eye on our two kiwi nests, read on for more details on the past months' events.



A tangled mess of supplejack along a toxin line, not much fun to contend with!



A friendly ruru near the nowhere tree, this one had a particularly nice red hue to its feathers.



Phoenix in the thick of it during a toxin block.

Predator Control:

Trapping:

All trap lines within the forest have now been reviewed and I'm happy to say the vast majority of the traps were in perfect working order with only the odd trap not quite passing the weight test or having baffles that were not quite right. One thing we did note on some lines however were the age of a handful of traps. While these were still functioning, they are on borrowed time after a decade or thereabouts in the forest and will need replacement in the near future, thankfully this is easily remedied.

Once again, the catch rate has been low on all the trap lines which can likely be attributed to the colder winter months. During August we only caught 14 pests in total with 13 rats and 1 weasel which is about as low as I have ever seen our catch numbers. There is however more data still to come in for this month so these numbers could very well be higher than it looks currently.

This year to date we have caught a total of 75 pests less than this time last year with 1 less weasel, 2 less cats, 1 less ferret, 17 less hedgehogs and significantly less rats at 56 less than this time last year. We have however caught more stoats with 2 more than this time last year. Please note we are yet to receive some data from some of our trappers, so these numbers are likely to change in the coming months.

Trap data summary 2020:

Table 1: Trap data 2020 (some data missing).

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	0	13	0	0	0
SEPTEMBER	0	0	11	0	0	0
TOTAL	4	27	277	0	26	1

Comparison to 2019:

Table 2: 2020-2019 year to date data comparison.

PEST	2020 TOTAL	2019 TOTAL
WEASEL	4	5
STOAT	27	25
RAT	277	333
CAT	0	2
HEDGEHOG	26	43
FERRET	1	2
YTD	335	410

Toxin:

September's toxin operation is all but complete with only a couple of volunteer blocks and the NRC blocks yet to be completed. A big thank you to DOC, NRC and all our other regular vollies for your valuable contribution, it certainly makes our jobs easier. This time around we were fortunate enough to have a new pair of hands to help us out also in the form of Michael Ramsbottom whom is the new Pest Operations tutor at Northtec. He along with his students put their hands up to do a handful of blocks which was a huge help. This was also beneficial for the students involved as they gained field experience in the process. So, a huge thank you to them and hopefully we can keep Michael and any keen students around for future operations.

Kiwi:

We have yet to catch up with any other kiwi over this month as our focus has been firmly on the toxin operation. We have however continued to monitor both Sayyad and Waimarie's nests from a distance with the telemetry gear. I am sad to say Sayyad seems to have

abandoned his nest for unknown reasons. Regrettably, we had not located his nest before this happened so we could not investigate to try and determine the cause. The abandonment could be for any number of reasons ranging from inexperience to flooding to nest predation, unfortunately this time around we will never know for certain. There is still plenty of time left in the breeding season yet so hopefully he gets another go at it.

We have better news for Waimarie's nest however, our telemetry gear has detected a hatch around 12 days ago which is great! We have not been in to check the nest out just yet but will do shortly. Hopefully, we are greeted by a happy chick or two upon our arrival! Fingers crossed everything is well.

Monitoring:

Before we began the toxin operation, we carried out our pre operation pest monitoring which includes tracking tunnels and chew cards which we use to estimate of the density of pest populations within the forest. I'm yet to have a look at the chew cards but have had a quick look at the tracking tunnel cards and of our 10 lines we have tracked at 26% for rats and 4% for mice with the highest density being along Taraire ridge. We will do this monitoring again in a month or so to see how much the toxin operation has reduced these numbers.

Other:

Evan and Phoenix have continued to work along side us as they gain work experience. This month they have been learning how to track kiwi using telemetry gear and have also been helping us during the toxin operation as carriers. All is going well and they are taking it all in their stride. They reckon it's always the highlight of their week to come into Pukenui which is awesome, we're glad to know they're enjoying it and that we're not working them too hard!

The great Kereru count begins on the 18th of September and runs until the 27th September. It's always good to see if the population of these birds is increasing as they are the only species left capable of dispersing large seeds from trees such as taraire, tawa and matai hence play a vital role in the regeneration of native forests. With that said we will aim to get some counts done somewhere in between those dates with the help of vollies and see how the Pukenui population is faring. It will be interesting to see if we see more than we did a few years back, there definitely seem to be more around!