

Pukenui Forest Ranger Report 08/07/2021

The wet and cold continue to persist into the winter months with a couple of absolutely freezing days and some crazy wind over the last month or so. With the strong winds more than a few trees have come down leaving quite the mess to navigate through! This month we have again been firmly focused on predator control work. This of course includes the usual trapping but has again mainly consisted of toxin line maintenance and the lowering of bait stations in preparation of September's toxin operation. Our kiwi listening has also come to a close with an outstanding result! And our monitored kiwi have given us a bit of grief as they refuse to settle in one place very long. Read on for more detail on the months events.



A huge rimu that has come down taking out many other trees with it, absolute carnage!



A tree trapdoor spider (*Migas sp.*). Quite a beautiful purple colour up close.



Armillaria limonea one of the three species of honey mushrooms found here in New Zealand.

Trapping:

I forgot to mention last month but now we are into the winter months our bait has changed from salted rabbit to eggs and our trap check frequency has been reduced to once every six weeks. Pest numbers have remained fairly consistent this month and there still seems to be plenty of rats about! While not shown here as the data is yet to be received, I have been told a couple of mustelids were caught on the buffer this month as well, as they continue to persist in low numbers during the winter months.

This year to date we have caught a total of 256 pests, 16 less than this time last year. This includes 15 less stoats and 12 less hedgehogs and the same number of weasels as last year. We have caught 4 more rats and 7 more cats than this time last year however and thankfully still have no ferrets to speak of.

Also of note, we are currently planning a volunteer day for early August in which we will install 45 AT220 auto traps along Taraire ridge track. The aim of this is to combat possum reinvasion after toxin operations from the yet to be poisoned eastern portion of the forest into the intensively managed western portion of the forest. We absolutely can't wait to get these in place and lay waste to hopefully many a possum!

Trap data summary 2021:

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

MONTH	WEASEL	STOAT	RAT	CAT	HEDGEHOG	FERRET
JANUARY	0	3	34	4	7	0
FEBRUARY	0	1	20	0	3	0
MARCH	1	3	29	1	0	0
APRIL	1	2	32	0	1	0
MAY	1	1	65	2	3	0
JUNE	0	0	42	0	0	0
YTD	3	10	222	7	14	0

Comparison to this time last year:

Table 2: 2021-2020 data comparison (some data still coming!).

PEST	THIS YEAR TO DATE	THIS TIME LAST YEAR
WEASEL	3	3
STOAT	10	25
RAT	222	218
CAT	7	0
HEDGEHOG	14	26
FERRET	0	0
TOTAL PESTS	256	272

Toxin/bait stations:

We haven't managed to do any work cutting in this year's new blocks over the last month as we've been hard at work lowering the bait stations on the existing blocks in preparation of our Double Tap operation. We have made good progress on this though and have been giving the lines a good tidy up as we go. At this rate should get them all lowered before the toxin operation kicks off in September which is great. As a result of all this additional work unfortunately the new toxin blocks will likely have to wait until October/ November to be completed.

Kiwi monitoring:

The kiwi listening went off without a hitch with a grand total of 95 calls (76 male and 19 female) being heard over the three-week period! This is a huge jump when compared to last year when we heard a total of 31 birds in the same period. Remember however that the Covid response last year affected our kiwi listening period quite significantly which certainly would have influenced last year's results. An amazing result nonetheless and a huge thank you to all the volunteers involved!

The monthly monitoring of our 5 transmitted birds was a little frustrating this month with four out of five birds on the move once again and only three being found after the day's work. Ataahua was in his usual spot behind Smithville Rd, Barr has moved back down near the Mangere stream where he was released, and Morrie has moved quite a distance and is now somewhere near the western edge of the forest. Unfortunately, we were unable to record Morrie's data stream this month as the signal was too faint hopefully next month! #69 is still nowhere to be found and Jeanette has disappeared from her normal spot also. We plan to go hunting for them again next week and with a little luck hopefully we'll pick up the missing two and get a bit closer to Morrie.

The monitored kiwi have been active for an collective average of 10.99 hours per night during the last month. Barr was the most active bird found this month with an average of 12.66 hours of activity per night up from 11 hours last month. Ataahua was the least active bird found this month with an average of 9.33 hours of activity per night down from 10.08 hours a night last time around.

Table 3: Average activity of each monitored kiwi between 10/06/2021 and 07/07/2021.

KIWI	AVERAGE ACTIVITY (hrs)
Jeanette	MIA
Barr	12.66
Morrie	No timer recorded.
Ataahua	9.33
#69	MIA