

## Pukenui Forest Ranger Report 10/06/2021

Winter has arrived and the fungus is amongus! Jeez is it wet and we have certainly felt the temperature drop! In all honesty though this has been quite welcome with the amount of hard yakka we've been doing! Of course fungi love these conditions so we have been spoilt with a huge variety of different species to distract us throughout the day (see photos). This month we have been firmly focused on predator control work. This as usual includes trapping but has mainly consisted of toxin line maintenance and chipping away at the installation of some new toxin blocks in the Whau valley catchment. Kiwi listening is also in full swing and so far we've heard plenty of birds which is brilliant to hear as the kiwi begin their breeding season. Read on for more detail on the months events.



Dark velvet bolette (*Tylopilus formosus*). Found on Pukenui loop track.



*Ascocoryne* sp. Found in a dark wet gully.



*Hericium novae-zealandiae* Found on a rotting tree near the Pukenui loop junction.

### Trapping:

Pest numbers have had a spike this month with rats as per usual being the main culprit. The odd mustelid is still about with one weasel and one stoat caught both of which were on the buffer. Also, a couple of cats have turned up on the northern and north western edges of the forest which is the area we have historically seen cats most frequently. The baited trail cameras have all been brought back in with nothing detected yet again. We plan to give these a break from detecting pests now winter has arrived and instead will place them where we have had kiwi nesting previously and see if we can detect any new nesting activity now the breeding season is in full swing.

This year to date we have caught a total of 214 pests, 21 less than this time last year. This includes 7 less rats, 14 less stoats and 8 less hedgehogs. We have however caught 1 more weasel and 7 more cats than this time last year.

### 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
YTD	3	10	180	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	2
STOAT	10	24
RAT	180	187
CAT	7	0
HEDGEHOG	14	22
FERRET	0	0
<b>TOTAL PESTS</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>235</b>

### **Toxin/bait stations:**

We have continued to chip away at our toxin expansion this month but have had another small setback that has slowed our progress. While cutting in block 41 we stumbled across yet another tagged line that should not have been there! After second guessing our GPS and a bit of head scratching trying to work out what exactly its purpose was, we discovered it was part of another block! For some reason unknown to Ben and I whomever put it in place decided to put it 100m from where it should have been. Very strange considering it would have been easier to put it in where it was supposed to be! Perhaps the installers GPS was playing up the day it was installed? Who knows, nonetheless the problem has been remedied and we can now continue with our mission.

As you will all remember we are planning to switch to a new toxin Double Tap for our next toxin operation in September. This is progressing well, but we have had another spanner thrown into the works. DOC has advised us from their recent experience at Tangihua Forest that to get good results from this toxin we will need to lower every bait station in the forest to 200mm down from 700m. At first, we thought this would be easy to do and thought perhaps it could probably be done in tandem with the toxin operation. We decided to give this a go and discovered that doing it in tandem is not only really going to slow the toxin operation down, but we wouldn't have the pack space for all the additional tools!

With that said we have decided it will be best to get as much of this done as we can before the toxin operation which also gives us the opportunity to do some track maintenance on the toxin lines. As we are doing this, we are removing all the old diphacinone and cyanide also as lowering the bait stations means we are no longer acting in accordance with our VTA permissions. The plus side of this is come September volunteers will be able to help us with the toxin operation as a toxin handlers license is not required to use Double Tap and the cyanide will be gone. So hopefully we'll regain a bit of time back this way!

### **Kiwi monitoring:**

This month marked the beginning of the kiwi listening period for the year and so far, all is going smoothly. We've had a good number of vollies put their hands up to help out this year and have had Wendy from Kiwi Coast come and get them started with a couple of workshops which was great! We have six sites throughout the forest each of which will be

listened at four times for a two-hour period. Thus far we have completed roughly half of hours we need completed and have heard more kiwi calls than ever before which is amazing! We hope to finish all of this by the 18<sup>th</sup> of June so hopefully this bad weather will subside soon so we can get back out there.

We now only have five kiwi fitted with transmitters Morrie, Jeanette, Barr, Ataahua and #69 with the rest being cut free during their health checks. We have also dropped down to monthly check-ups on these birds meaning we're doing far less kiwi work than we were previously, good as this has freed us up to focus on more pressing matters. At last check they were all still plotting away in the forest, however they are still moving around an awful lot! We are yet to check up on them this month but will do so as soon as the weather calms down.

The monitored kiwi have been active for an collective average of 10.56 hours per night during the last month. Jeanette was once again the most active bird this month with an average of 11.66 hours of activity per night up slightly from 11.16 hours last time around. On the opposite end of the spectrum Morrie was the least active this month with an average of 9.5 hours of activity per night down from 10.42 previously.

*Table 3: Average activity of each monitored kiwi between 7/04/2021 and 10/06/2021.*

<b>KIWI</b>	<b>AVERAGE ACTIVITY (hrs)</b>
Jeanette	11.66
Barr	11
Morrie	9.5
Ataahua	10.08
#69	MIA