

## Pukenui Forest Ranger Report for 2022 AGM

What a year! We had another successful year of trapping thanks to our amazing predator control team whom continue to help keep predator numbers low year round, rain, hail or shine! We switched to a new toxin, completed our toxin operation and continued our toxin network expansion into the Whau valley catchment. And we did the last of our planned kiwi translocations which was largely successful but a little bittersweet knowing its all coming to an end. Read on more more detail on the years highlights!



The last of the kiwi coming off Motuora Island.



Jeanette poses for a pic after her health check.



Vollies gearing up to install the AT220's.

### Trapping:

We've had another amazing year on the predator control front with a few new faces joining the team which is great. Collectively the team has done amazing work yet again as they continue to control predator numbers in and around the forest which of course is great news for the forest and its inhabitants, good work team! Other notable achievements in predator control this year include the addition of 45 AT220's along the taraire ridge track and a trap workshop we had earlier in the year. The AT220's have gone on to kill many a possum and rat and while there have been a few issues with them the benefits have definitely outweighed these. The trap workshop earlier in the year was great also, it got our team on the same page and some of us may have even learnt a new trick or two!

As usual the bulk of the catch for the year was rats with a total of 489 caught. There was a total of 19 mustelids caught 4 weasels and 15 stoats. This is quite a dramatic decrease from the previous year in which we caught a total of 42 (4 weasels and 38 stoats) which is rather interesting. Also of note was a spike in cats caught with a total of 14 caught in 2021 which is up from 0 caught during the previous year. Perhaps there's some correlation between the lower stoat numbers and high cat numbers? I couldn't say for sure but within the realm of possibility I would imagine!

## Trap data summary 2021:

Table 1: Trap data totals 2021.

MONTH	WEASEL	STOAT	RAT	CAT	HEDGEHOG	POSSUM	FERRET
JANUARY	0	3	34	4	7	5	0
FEBRUARY	0	1	20	0	3	1	0
MARCH	1	3	29	1	0	0	0
APRIL	1	2	32	0	1	0	0
MAY	1	0	65	2	3	1	0
JUNE	1	1	55	1	3	0	0
JULY	0	2	57	2	1	0	0
AUGUST	0	0	25	0	0	0	0
SEPTEMBER	0	1	76	1	2	0	0
OCTOBER	0	2	43	0	4	0	0
NOVEMBER	0	0	28	2	0	0	0
DECEMBER	0	0	25	1	2	2	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>

Table 2: Data showing which trap lines caught which pests.

LINE	WEASEL	STOAT	RAT	CAT	HEDGEHOG	POSSUM	FERRET
RED	0	3	49	9	3	5	0
GREEN	1	1	101	0	0	3	0
PURPLE	0	1	36	2	0	0	0
BLUE	0	0	54	1	0	0	0
YELLOW	0	2	28	0	4	0	0
ORANGE	1	1	61	0	0	0	0
WHITE	0	0	32	0	0	1	0
BUFFER (COUNTRY)	2	4	94	2	13	0	0
BUFFER (CITY)	0	1	22	0	6	0	0
CORONATION	0	2	12	0	0	0	0

Table 3: Data comparison from 2019-2021.

PEST	2021 TOTALS	2020 TOTALS	2019 TOTALS
WEASEL	4	4	7
STOAT	15	38	30
RAT	489	350	457
CAT	14	0	2
HEDGEHOG	26	27	52
POSSUM	9	19	3
FERRET	0	0	2
<b>TOTAL PESTS</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>553</b>

### Toxin/bait stations:

A huge amount of effort/work went into the toxin blocks over 2021, more so than usual due to a change of toxin and the addition of more blocks in the Whau valley catchment. The change of toxin from Ratabate/Feratox to Double Tap meant we had to lower every toxin station in the forest down from 700mm to 200mm to make it as accessible as possible for the targeted pests. This was a huge task but hopefully come April when we will conduct our first pest monitoring since the switch, we'll see a good drop in both rat and possum numbers. We are quietly thinking that we may see a greater drop in rat numbers with this toxin. We say this as with the bait stations at their current height they should in theory be much more accessible to Norway rats which are not great climbers and had to climb to get to the bait stations before the height reduction. Yet to be seen but hopefully this is the case!

We also managed to add four new toxin blocks in the Whau valley catchment with the help of Glen Coulson and his team which the trust contracted to cut and tag two of the blocks. All went well definitely some fun terrain to navigate and some not so fun gorse to cut through, but we got there in the end! These of course will be filled with toxin going forward further reducing pest numbers in the area. Another five of these blocks will be added over 2022 completing our current expansion plans.

### Kiwi:

The last of Pukenui's kiwi translocations was completed in February with 14 further birds being released into the forest. These translocations of course take a colossal team effort, I always find it amazing to see everyone pull together and tough out what can be a challenging few days' work. Once released in Pukenui we continued to monitor the kiwi over the following months with a few birds giving us the run around and refusing to settle but the majority settling in quite nicely. Upon their first health check-ups all were gaining weight and condition, the forest obviously providing them with more than enough nourishment!

During the health checks we began to remove transmitters on birds that we were confident had settled deep in the forest and were unlikely to go on any crazy expeditions any time soon. Additionally, a few birds (I'm looking at you Forsyth and Ataahua!) decided to remove their transmitters of their own accord! This of course reduced the amount of time needed to monitor the kiwi and saved us the job of having to catch them again to remove the

transmitter later, which as anyone who's dealt with kiwi before will know can be a challenging task in itself!

All was going smoothly up until the first covid lockdown was announced. Very shortly after this a dead kiwi was discovered at Clements quarry in Maunu which was gutting to say the least. To add insult to injury a second was found dead near the quarry gardens a few weeks later when the lockdown ended. These both appear to have died around the same time and were likely the victims of dog attacks, which is very disheartening and very preventable, if only people adhered to being responsible dog owners...

Following this we had a bit of news on the breeding front, both Barr and Morrie were discovered to be nesting! Barr's nest hatched later in the year, and we assume the chicks got away safely. We have no evidence for this however as we had a trail camera error which meant we missed out on any footage and the burrow was much too deep for us to see anything ourselves. Morrie's nest however came to an unfortunate end as he eventually abandoned the nest in which he had three very rotten eggs, we're not sure what exactly would have caused this, but it is what it is and we're sure Morrie will go on to have many chicks in the future.

The realisation that our kiwi translocations have come to an end is a little sad I must admit, I've thoroughly enjoyed the journey and all its trials and tribulations and am thankful for all the help and support we have had from everyone involved. While this part of the story is over there's still much to do regarding both the kiwi and the greater forest, so we have that to look forward to. 2022 should be a good time to catch up on jobs gathering dust and to refocus and plan for the forest's future whatever that may look like. I can't wait to see where we go from here, and I look forward to all the adventures to come!