

Welcome to
**Kaharoa Kōkako
Trust's latest
newsletter**

In this newsletter we have updates on the 2021 pest op, the latest on the efforts from our trapping team, and changes to the KKT Trustees.

Changes in the Trust.

After 7 years at the helm of KKT Sue Williams stood down from her role as Chair at our AGM. We have come an amazing distance under her management with new areas of forest now included under our care, big improvements to our bait station network, improvements in our roads, and continual expansion of our trapping coverage. Plenty to be proud of Sue, and thank you for all of this and for your annual battle with the pest operation paper war.

Graeme Young agreed to fill in as Chair for a year; Laurence Kirk continues as our Treasurer (thank goodness), and Carmel Richardson was a temporary Secretary now replaced by Gemma Bell.

We also have two new Trustees. Anežka Pospíšilová you will have seen regularly at our workdays. She might be quiet but she is passionate about environmental concerns and is currently on the BCA cadet course. She is keen to get involved with our upgrading of our GIS data, mapping systems and the use of phone apps in the bush to collect data.

Gemma Bell is currently busy at the National Kiwi Hatchery, working alongside Carmel Richardson, hatching and rearing North Island brown kiwi to be returned to the forest when big enough to survive. Gemma is a real organiser and we hope to have her help with a range of data, compliance and secretarial issues. She is also involved as a track adoptee and was one of a number of the hatchery staff who helped with our kiwi survey back in May.

Pest Control Operation

Well, our pest control operation is over for 2021 and a great effort was shared among many of you regular volunteers. We also had help from the Bay Conservation Alliance cadets and Te Arawa lakes Trust on pre-feed days. A big thank you to both of those groups and to all of you volunteers for your help.

There are a few ways to identify whether a pest control operation goes well.

One is observation. How often do you see pest animals? Another way is from our monthly trapping records (see below).

But more reliable is assessing target animal numbers before and after by measurement and that is how most do it.



We had planned to assess possums this year before, and after, the bait application using wax tags. Basically, a simple calculation of the percentage of tags that the possums bite. But the manufacturers changed ownership, and location, and lost stock management and could only supply a small number. We ended up with a combination of wax tags in the Kapukapu Road reserve and chew cards for the rest. Not ideal

Warning: don't talk to me about chew cards. I hate them. They are too readily destroyed by rats and so don't accurately represent possum numbers and they leave PLASTIC littering our forest.

But our pre-operation monitoring gave us an estimated 17% possums across the Conservation area. Post-operation was entirely wax tags and was 4%. This is an excellent result. Equal to at least 2 celebratory beers.

Rat tracking is done by putting out inked cards into permanent tunnels overnight and recording the percentage with rat paw prints. Pre-operation was 60%. Post-operation was 10%. Most of the post-op records were from Aislabie block where we ended up with 25%. Not flash but better than normal thanks to the addition of over 50 more bait stations in that block. Worth another beer.

So, the final way you can check on how well we did is to see my happy face and growing waistline.

Again. Thank you all. A truly successful effort and the best result we have had for 5 years!!

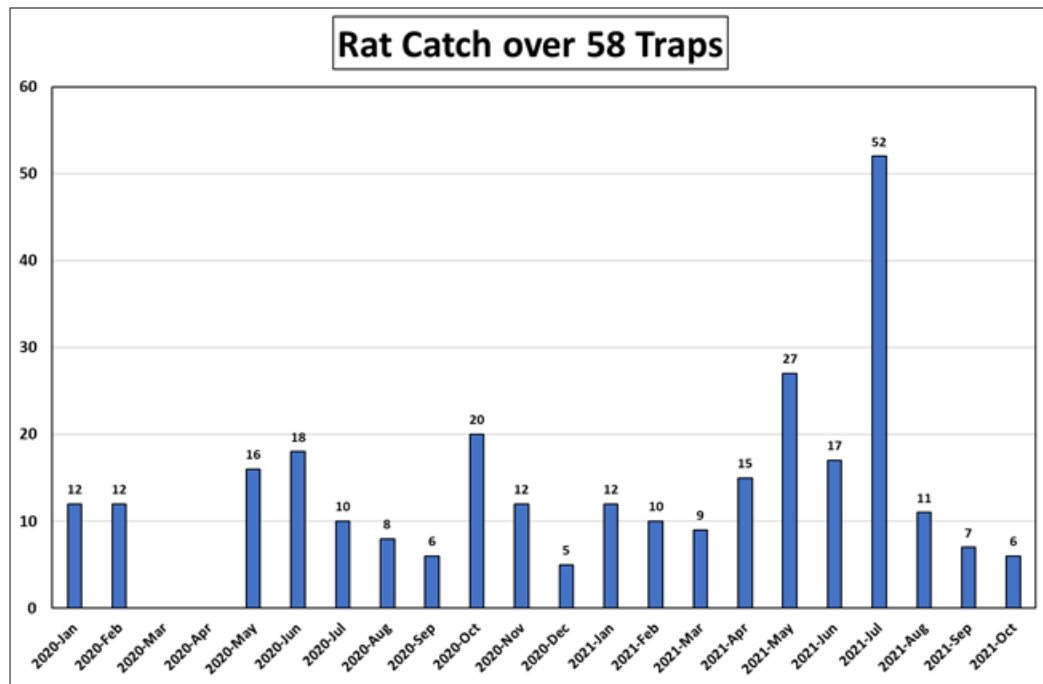
Graemeo

Trapping

Our trapping team has been extremely busy and productive as you can see from these data covering the last 4 years. Note 2020 numbers included 2 months where Covid-19 kept us out of the bush and there are still 2 months of trapping yet to go in 2021.

Year	Rats	Hedgehogs	Stoats	Weasels	Ferrets	Feral Cats
2018	212	15	12	3	4	2
2019	213	26	12	4	0	5
2020	119	11	8	6	0	0
2021	166	26	21	4	2	5

In the graph here, which shows the last two years of data, you can see how rat numbers increase and the effects of our pest control operations.



In 2020 it is hard to identify our Pindone operation which was carried out in September, but you can clearly see the effect of 1080 used this year in August. The huge numbers of rats caught in July was also evident in the number of day time sightings we had that month when working in the bush.

The prime target for these traps is stoats and you can see 2021 catch numbers were higher in the table above. But we are pretty happy with the by-kill numbers as well.

The only 'good' weasel?

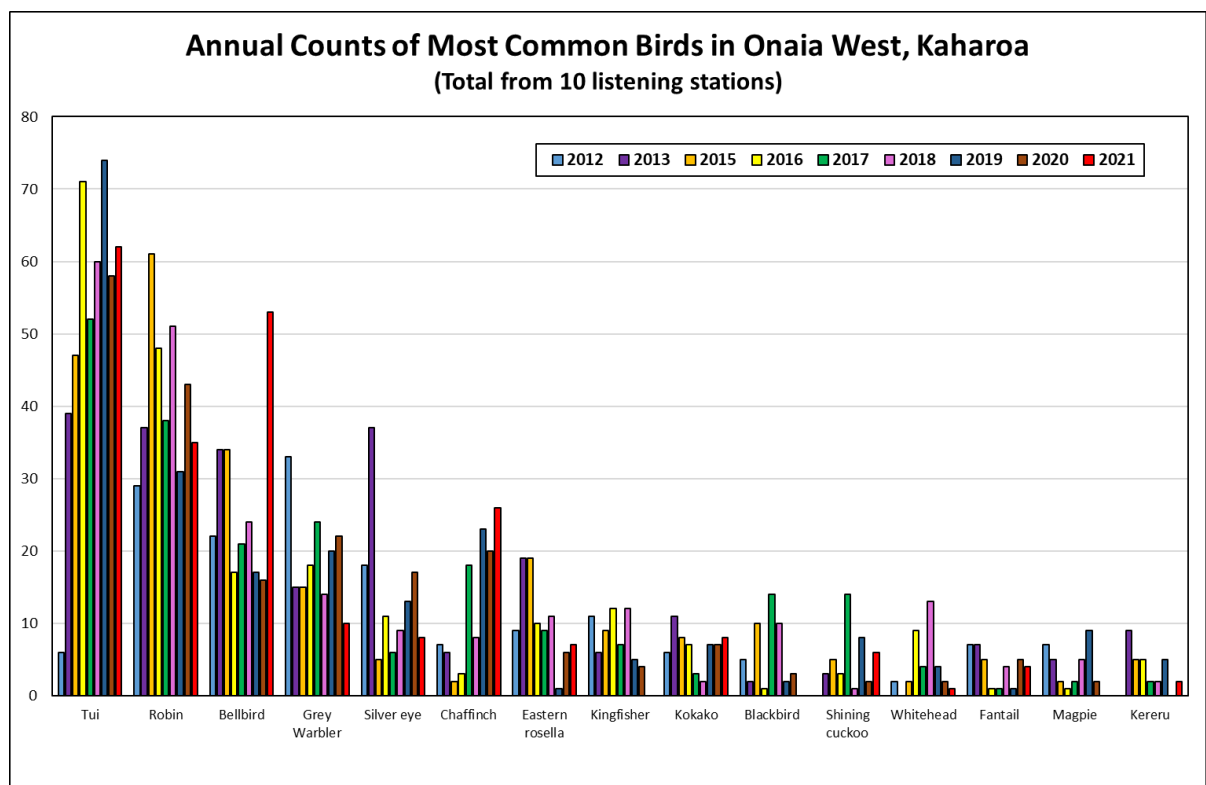


Outcome Monitoring

5mbc

One way to identify how well our environmental efforts at Kaharoa are succeeding is to carry out 5-minute-bird-counts. This simple technique requires identifying birds heard and seen at specific points on a regular basis for 5 minutes.

As a part of a Forest & Bird initiative to determine bird distribution and numbers across the Kaimai-Mamaku area we have been carrying out 5mbc's in October since 2012. This year we noticed a few differences from normal that may or may not be significant in the longer term. A LOT more Korimako (bellbirds). Less blackbirds. Less kotare (kingfishers).



So as casual visitors to Kaharoa Conservation Area you are pretty well guaranteed to hear or see the first 7 species featured on this graph and highly likely to see or hear the last 8. Yep. If you know your birds you will probably hear kokako on any given morning, weather permitted.

Kiwi

Over 3 nights last May we also carried out a kiwi survey with the help of the team at the National Kiwi Hatchery. This involved walking our vehicle roads and playing kiwi recordings at 15-minute intervals. As expected, we heard no responses but we needed this base data to confirm the loss of this precious taonga. The last sightings or sign recorded were in 2004/2006. We plan to carry out these surveys at 5-yearly intervals. Plenty of glow worms though.

Thank you to all those who helped.

Wilding Pines

As is clear to anyone who goes out into Aislabie block at Kaharoa Conservation Area, we have a problem with wilding pines. These are in a 20-odd hectare portion of the ex-lease block, which we have called 'Tombleson Block' after the lessees. The lease has kindly been relinquished to DOC by the Tombleson family, and it is officially now part of the Ruato Stream Reserve.

These regenerating radiata pine trees, in places, present an almost impenetrable wall and are severely hindering the regeneration of indigenous cover that we wish to see.

Back in July the Minister for Biosecurity, Damien O'Connor, announced the twelve community projects across New Zealand which would receive a share of \$2 million to carry out wilding pine control. And Kaharoa Kōkako Trust was one of them! This was no doubt due to the quality of the application by Trustee Brian Richardson, but also due to his knowledge of wilding pine management.

That was pretty exciting, but is more so now that the work is completed. PF Olsen have engaged a crew that has worked the last 2-3 weeks in the block and the difference is remarkable as seen in this photo. This is a partially completed area adjacent to the planting we carried out on the Tombleson Track/Onaia road intersection.



This work will enable the fuchsia, wineberry, rewarewa, manuka and other native plants to take over the process of growing a new forest area.

It will also make creating an infrastructure of tracks and bait stations to enable pest control, easier for Dianne and Laurence Kirk, the two Trustees who have begun this process already.

A huge thanks to Brian, Dianne & Laurence.

Adopt-a-track

If anyone is keen to become part of our program where we allocate you a track, or tracks, to look after in your own time, then please contact Dianne Kirk at KaharoaKokako@gmail.com

The work involves keeping the regrowth in check, checking the bait stations, and ensuring track marking is clear. And you get a pleasant walk in the bush.

In the near future we will run some training days for all adopt-a-trackees and resources will be supplied.

Flora in the Kaharoa Conservation Area

There are plenty of plants and fungi to see in the KCA, and many trees and plants are flowering. While the fungi season has finished, there have been some great finds – like the pagoda fungus spotted in the Onaia West block.



'Eye-lash' fungus, *Scutellinia colensoi*



Pagoda fungus, *Podasarpula pusia*



Kotukutuku, *Fuchsia excorticata*



Rangiora, *Brachyglottis repanda*



Kaharoa Kokako Trust



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