

*COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER - Mahi tahi!!*

## Rangers Report – September 2017

### Ongoing Operations:

Nga mihi wera (warm greetings)

I hope you are all well and enjoying the longer daylight hours, I certainly love to utilise the longer days to get out in the garden or enjoy the setting sun and a nice cold beer on the deck after a hard slog up the hill! Well I am happy to report that things are still going very well with our projects throughout the reserve, the rangers and volunteer teams have continued to service the intensive network of bait stations and traps and it appears the recent 1080 operation has really

knocked the stuffing out of the rodents. As you can see from the predator control numbers below it has been an exceptionally low capture period in September with only five mice and one rat caught! As I wrote in the last report our residual tracking index (RTI) for August was 0% for rats, and a lower than average 23.85% for mice and this has been supported by an almost zero uptake of any of the Pindone bait we put back into bait stations after the 1080 pulse in August. On the stoat side of the business we have had no stoats caught since the 1080 pulse in any of our traps but we did have quite a scare when one of the 10 trail



*A young, fluffy GFP chick in its burrow*

cameras at the GFP site revealed a fast moving, large male stoat cruising through the area. The stoat was only seen once by one camera on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September and has not been seen since in any of the two rounds of full camera footage checked since that time. Interesting too is that this particular fella left all 11, normally irresistible, GFP chicks in the burrows without harming any of them and has not been seen since. It is well documented that male stoats cover large territory at this time of year in the pursuit of females to mate with and there is potential that this is what has happened in this instance.

So, things are extremely quiet all through the reserve at present, except for the birds of course, and this is an early but strong indication that the switch to a pulse of 1080 toxin has a very positive effect on reducing predator populations, particularly that low number of potentially residual and toxin/trap wary population. However, we still have a stoat breeding season ahead of us and in this game – anything can happen.

## Monthly Predator control results: September 2017

Pest	# caught this month	# caught this month prev. yr.	# caught this YTD	# caught previous YTD.
Rat	1	4	62	32
Possum	0	0	10	10
Stoat	0	0	7	3
Weasel	0	2	10	17
Ferret	0	0	0	0
Feral Cat	0	0	0	2
Mouse	5	6	12	11
Hedgehog	0	1	13	18
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>93</b>

## Monthly Species monitoring results/updates: September 2017

Species	Method	#	ID	sex	location	Status/comment
Grey Faced Petrel	Burrow survey	11 chicks	-	n/a	GFP site	11 GFP chicks confirmed in burrows.
n/a						



*The group of supporters enjoying a chance to chill out*

## Celebrating our friends and Supporters...

With everyone so incredibly busy these days it's always nice to take a moment, take a breath, grab a drink and sit down with those we share our time with and have a good old catch-up, pat each other on the back, have a laugh or three and just chill out. That was exactly the theme for a recent celebration thrown by the Trust to thank and acknowledge all its supporters including friends and volunteers who make this awesome community project happen. On a reasonably nice September afternoon approximately 30 supporters, Trustees and volunteers gathered at the operational headquarters at the start of Peach Cove Track and

enjoyed a nice cold beer, wine or juice and some delicious BBQ snacks prepared again by our chefs Geoff Pike, Sally Prince and Claire Pearson. The event was also used to thank our amazing volunteers who slogged it out applying the 1080 into bait stations recently, all of them carried some large loads in some not so nice weather so these people can be proud of the recent results we are seeing on the hill.

## Popokatea/Whitehead survey going well...

The search for our recently released Popokatea/Whitehead birds has been running for a bit over a month and the two young students from Northtec (Brianna Wilkes and Jessica Jones) have done an amazing job helping me plan the project as well as getting out to survey. Our translocation document suggested that we try to monitor at least 10 Whitehead pairs if possible, to attempt to gather breeding behaviour and outcome data to determine if the translocation was a success. The students have extended themselves and developed a great map detailing the most recent known locations of the birds so our team can return and monitor the birds more closely during the breeding season that is now upon us. Our expert translocation expert Kevin Parker will return at the end of October to carry out some of the finer monitoring required, training us in the process. Unlike the North Island Robins, the Whiteheads are quite hard to monitor for breeding as we do not have the luxury of being able to draw them in with invertebrates and they are quite timid of us, spending more time higher in the canopy.



## Shelves, new traps and long tailed cuckoo...

Trust volunteers Geoff Pike and Bill Mallett have been hard at it again, this time they have hand built some very practical and much needed wooden shelves in the operational HQ. These shelves have been fantastic already, accommodating the ever-increasing equipment required for a project of this size. Thanks guys, now I can keep my compulsive disorder in neatness under check lol!



The Trust is stoked that the excellent feral cat trap, known as the Steve Allen Cat Trap after its designer Steve Allen, has now been approved by DOC for use in public conservation areas. This trap, unlike the large bulky box 'chimney cat trap' is smaller, easier to install and set, and does not require the target predator to enter a wooden box to engage with the trap, which often intimidates the more cunning cats. These traps are placed high off the ground on the side of an angled tree trunk or branch and baited with meat, the feral cat is caught and killed very quickly as it places its head into the trap and a powerful spring drives a metal bar down on the neck. The Trust has 10 of these traps thanks to funding from DOC and is looking to replace all its 'chimney' traps with these more effective traps to protect the entire boundary, Busby Head and southern side.

*Steve Allen Feral Cat Trap -Photo: Rongo Bentsen*

Those with a keen ear may have recently heard the distinctive call of the "naturally uncommon" long tailed cuckoo around Bream Head. I have heard the birds several times during late September/early October, but yet to see one. They are a beautiful bird to watch fly with their very long tail (longer than their body). These birds migrate from New Zealand during winter, flying all the way to the arc of Pacific Islands extending 11,000 km from Palau (Micronesia) in the west to Henderson Island (Pitcairn group) in the east. Like the shinning cuckoo, the long tailed cuckoo engages a parasitic breeding behavior: Laying eggs singly in nests of whitehead, brown creeper and yellowhead. More information about these birds can be found at <http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/species/long-tailed-cuckoo>



*Long tailed cuckoo. Photo Duncan Watson*

## Weed of the Month (from Jo Barr, Weed Action Whangarei Heads coordinator) ...



### Eliminate Elaeagnus!

“Eliminate what now?” I hear you say. Elaeagnus (*Elaeagnus x reflexa*) is probably one of the least well-known weeds on our Dirty Dozen, but it is one of our biggest threats. Originally brought to NZ as a hedging species, this wiry, thorny monster has long since been abandoned as a useful hedge, but it has been quietly spreading in our community and into our forests ever since. While it starts off as an unassuming shrub, it is able to spread and scramble to the size of a two-story building. It is extremely long

lived, and forms dense and impenetrable thickets, where nothing else grows (think Sleeping Beauty style ‘Thicket of Thorns’).

You don’t have to remember how to spell it or pronounce it – just learn to recognise it and take some action to eliminate elaeagnus in your backyard!

To find out more visit the Weed Action website which has the contact details also for Jo Barr.  
<http://weedaction.org.nz/weed-of-the-month/>

#### Coming up in October:

**GFP monitoring...** Grey Faced Petrel burrows will continue to be protected by intensive trapping, tracking tunnels and infra-red trail camera which will be serviced ongoing fortnightly through to the end of December.

**Forest Bird acoustic monitoring...**our three recorders will survey dawn and dusk forest bird calls as we have done for the last 5 years to gather change over time data.

Peace!!

Adam

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