

Nga Uruora trappers newsletter – July 2016



Given that we do not meet as a group much, Peter McLaughlin and Paul Callister thought it would be useful to provide an occasional update on what is going on in our patch.

Our trapping records

Here are our latest records.

Trapping record 1 January 2016-30 June 2016

	Cat	Hedgehog	Mouse	Possum	Rat	Stoat	Weasel
June	3	6	9		15		2
May	2	12	8		28		10
April		7	12		46	1	14
March		7	18	2	42	1	5
February	1	3	3		36		8
January		4	2		31		11
	6	39	52	2	198	2	50

This six month period represents a time when our record keeping via Trap.nz has improved, a time when more single kill traps were installed and when we installed a significant number of bait stations targeting rodents. The cat, mustelid and hedgehog kill recording will be reasonably accurate (although we know some hedgehogs are being killed by A24s). Given our use of bait stations and A24s, the rat, possum, and especially mouse kills, represent only part of the story of removing these pest animals.

Most of our trappers are finding that getting information into Trap.nz from a home computer is reasonably easy. However, improvements to the system could still be made. Trap.nz have also develop a smartphone app for use in the field. To test this, in June Shane Williamson from Whareroa farm and Paul Callister from Nga Uruora did a round trip up our Loop track across into Perkins then up over the ridge into Waikakariki Stream. We had an ipad with us and an iPhone, both with the app loaded. The ipad was working off line but

with, in theory, the GPS operating. While we both see the potential of the mobile app we were not impressed with our experiment. It was hard to use on the smaller screen phone and at times the GPS tracking did not work well. On the ipad the GPS wasn't working well either. It was also quite fiddly putting in the data. We came to the conclusion that a simple notebook out in the field still works better. We are sure the smartphone technology will be the way to go eventually but we were not convinced in our trial.

Getting information out of Trap.nz to create simple reports is still problematic. We are told that this is being worked on. The following information was drawn out via a time consuming downloading method.

Pest workshop

A number of our trappers attended the workshop held at St Peters hall in early June. For those who could not make it, the presentations are now on the Naturespace website.

<http://www.naturespace.org.nz/documents/presentations-2016-pest-workshop>

Tracking tunnels

In November 2015 and May and June of 2016 we carried out Tracking Tunnel Monitoring at three sites: Paekakariki North Escarpment, the Eco Site north of Pukerua Bay and Whareroa. Twelve tunnels were placed in 2 areas at Whareroa Bush Remnants, 20 on the Paekakariki North Escarpment and 12 at the Eco Site. Tracking cards were placed in the tunnels using peanut butter as a lure. These cards have a centre area of ink where the lure is placed enabling the animal tracks to be recorded on the card as it leaves the tunnel.

In the Paekakariki area, the tracking tunnels were placed overnight, both before and after bait stations were installed. The results from the tracks that we gathered showed a drop in rat numbers from around 30% down to below 8% which was a great result. We also found that mice levels had dropped, which a surprise was considering the large drop in rat numbers. However, this could have been a result of bait still being available after rat numbers had dropped off.

We are grateful for the help given by Sara Moylan from GWRC in reading the cards.

Field Cameras

The group now has 4 field cameras which have been placed in various areas of Paekakariki Escarpment. These record photos and videos in a time lapse form during a day or night period. We mainly use the video mode for a period of 3 to 4 days/night. The cameras are usually placed in view of traps or bait stations with lures placed to attract predators. While the low rat numbers show not so many rats about, they also show that not every rat and hedgehog will enter the trap. The other observation was how many cats are about and we have had some luck after recording them and then trapping them. No images of stoats or weasels have been recorded which may be the result of our success in trapping them over the last year or that fact that they may be wary of the cats.

Pukerua Bay and Raumati 'Rat Packs'

Ken Fraser and Geoff Osgood, in association with the Raumati Residents Association, have started a Raumati 'Rat Pack'. In total 130 traps have been built using MfE funding, 100 in November 2015 (Paekakariki 'Rat Pack'), 30 in March 2016 (Raumati). Some of the 100 traps are now out on the escarpment. Raumati also has built an extra 60, half with recycled MfE funds and half with sales to the community.



Following on from the pest workshop a meeting was held at Pukerua Bay in late June. This was attended by Paul Callister, Ted Coats (Chair of the Kapiti Biodiversity Governance Group), Kelvin Hastie (of Crofton Downs pest-free), Geoff Osgood (Paekakariki 'Rat Pack') as well as Heather Evans and Linda Linkmeester (Plimmerton Pest Free). It was agreed to set up a Pukerua Bay 'Rat Pack'. There was also a very preliminary discussion about creating a larger Kapiti-Mana Mainland Island. It will be good to up the level of predator control at the south end of the escarpment.

Remote sensing trial

Our remote trap sensing trial on Perkins farm will be installed in July. A short overview of this trial can be found at.

<http://www.naturespace.org.nz/sites/default/files/Remote%20sensing%20trial.pdf>

Use of Brodifacoum

At the pest workshop, Sue Boyde led a discussion about the use of Brodifacoum. Brodifacoum is an extremely effective tool in the control of rodents. However, as a result of the discussion it has been decided to use Diphacinone from time to time. Diphacinone is a first generation anticoagulant and breaks down in the food chain more quickly than Brodifacoum. But it is not as effective as Brodifacoum. We will continue to work on strategies to keep the use of Brodifacoum to the minimum we need for effective rodent and possum control.

Lizard protection trial

At the workshop Ecogecko reported on their lizard surveys. While the results at Queen Elizabeth Park and Whareroa farm have been disappointing we are more hopeful about lizard populations on the escarpment. To date our trapping has focussed on protecting birds. But we may have to change what we do to protect lizards. A big challenge is mice. This was discussed Angus Hulme-Moir from the Department of Conservation

http://www.naturespace.org.nz/sites/default/files/Angus_lizard%20conservation%20whitireia.pdf

Subsequently a meeting was held with Angus. Gay Hay (leader of the Kapiti Biodiversity lizards project) and Paul Callister attended. The aim was to begin planning for a lizard protection trial on the Paekakariki escarpment. While this trial was already planned as part of the Biodiversity Project, the additional input from DOC expertise will enhance was already planned. It is proposed the lizard protection trial will begin in winter 2017 once Ecogecko have completed summer surveys of the escarpment and can recommend the best location for it.

Wasps

To help control wasp populations, Nelson-based company Merchant have developed a wasp bait in conjunction with DOC. Vespex was piloted on five public conservation land sites in 2015, and reduced wasp activity by more than 95%. The protein bait, which contains the commonly used insecticide fipronil, is targeted at wasps and is not attractive to bees.

Wasps have always been a problem on the escarpment. To help protect walkers on the Te Araroa trail and our pest control team we have decided to begin trials of this wasp control method this coming summer.

Updating our operational plan

As a result of all the activities outlined in this newsletter, we will shortly be updating our operational plan to cover the period 2016-2019. If you have not seen a copy already it can be found at the web address below. If you have any suggestions as to how we can improve our pest control please let us know.

http://www.naturespace.org.nz/sites/default/files/Pest_control_strategy_Nga_Uruora_2015-2018_0.pdf

Peter McLaughlin and Paul Callister