

## REPORT

Meeting Date: 21<sup>st</sup> August 2018

Prepared By: George Taylor, DOC Operations Manager Aotea Great Barrier Island

Subject: **Operations Report**

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### Biodiversity

- Pateke Protection:** Cat trapping around the margins of the Whangapoua estuary has continued with a moderate number of cats being caught.
- Rabbit Control:** Rabbit control around the Okiwi Basin area, Whangapoua Campground around the DOC station, rabbits culled this trip 1448 out of 19 shoot nights the contractor's advice is to keep ripping up burrows this will cut down next year's cull. Bio Ranger is also doing rabbit control around the DOC station his cull numbers are 946 out of 9 shooting nights.
- Myrtle Rust Surveillance:** Myrtle Rust has not been confirmed to be present on Aotea/GBI. 3 sites that have ramarama (*Iophomyrtus Bullata*) have been identified. 2 were found in the southern end of Aotea and 1 site up in the northern end. Ongoing surveillance of these sites has been occurring with the intention to harvest seed when present.
- Rakitū Rodent Eradication Project:** Still waiting for a suitable window for the bait application to happen which is between the 22nd of June and 31st of October. All readiness tasks have been completed.

### Marine monitoring:

As prompted by interaction with the Aotea Poison Free Group - DOC are doing marine monitoring around Rakitū before the drop. This is not a requirement but a decision to provide more data for the operation.

10 sampling bait holders with 14 live mussels inside have been anchored out around Rakitū before the aerial drop and 2 on the east coast of Aotea

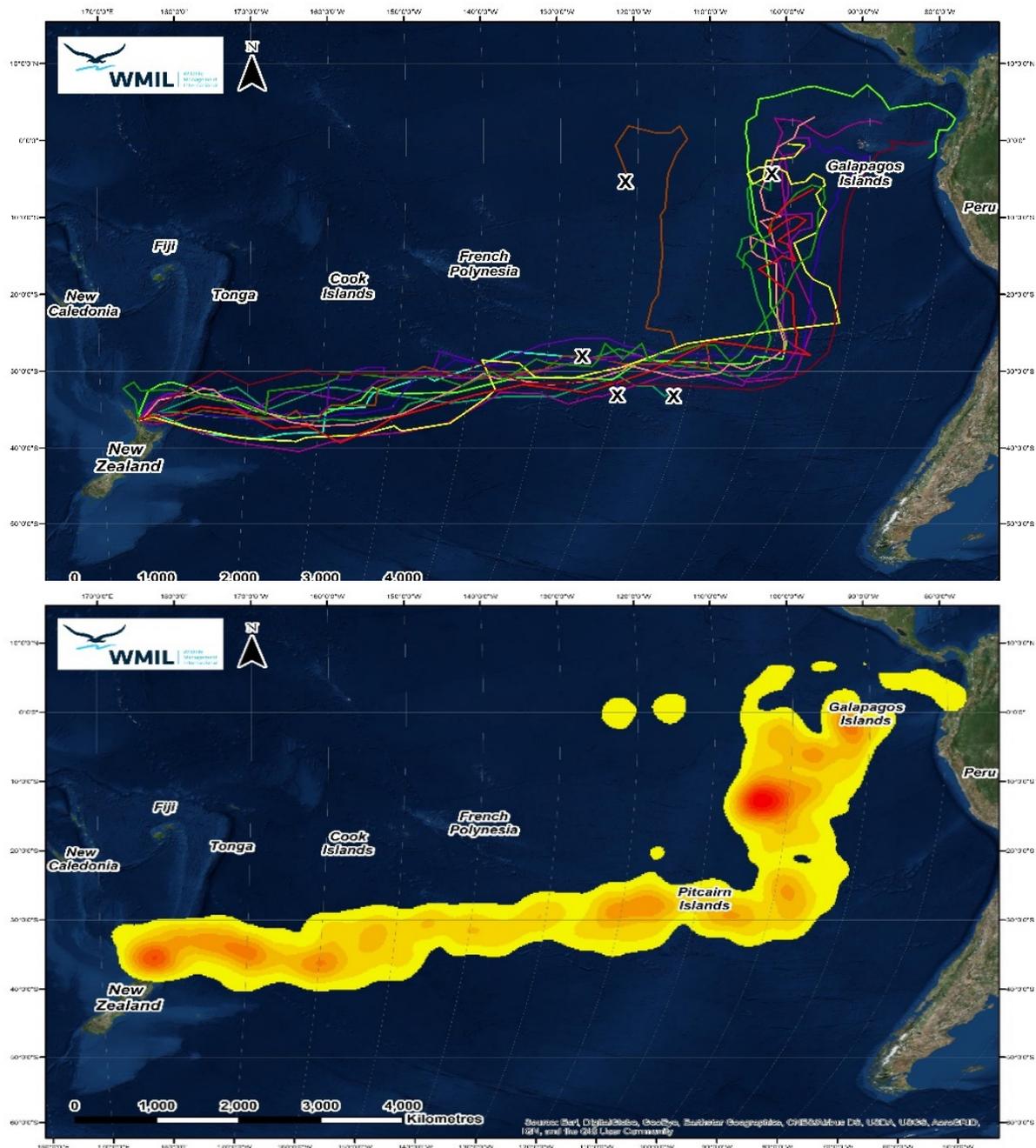
This marine monitoring system was designed by Andrew Jeffs, from Auckland University, to test any brodifacoum residues in live mussels.

### Weka capture program:

All together 64 Weka were captured. There are even numbers of each sex 32 female/32 male they were transferred to Pukaha/Mt Bruce where they reside today. There were 2 loses in captivity of one each sex. This was early on after the translocation but all weka are now healthy and thriving.

5. **Takoketai/Black Petrel**: latest report from Wildlife Management International Ltd

This is the latest map showing the tracks of our black petrel fledglings (altogether there were 14 birds with trackers). Two devices have stopped transmitting, likely due to their batteries running out, so now they have nine remaining birds “online”. The “X”s on the attached map show the last known locations of the five birds carrying devices that have stopped transmitting.

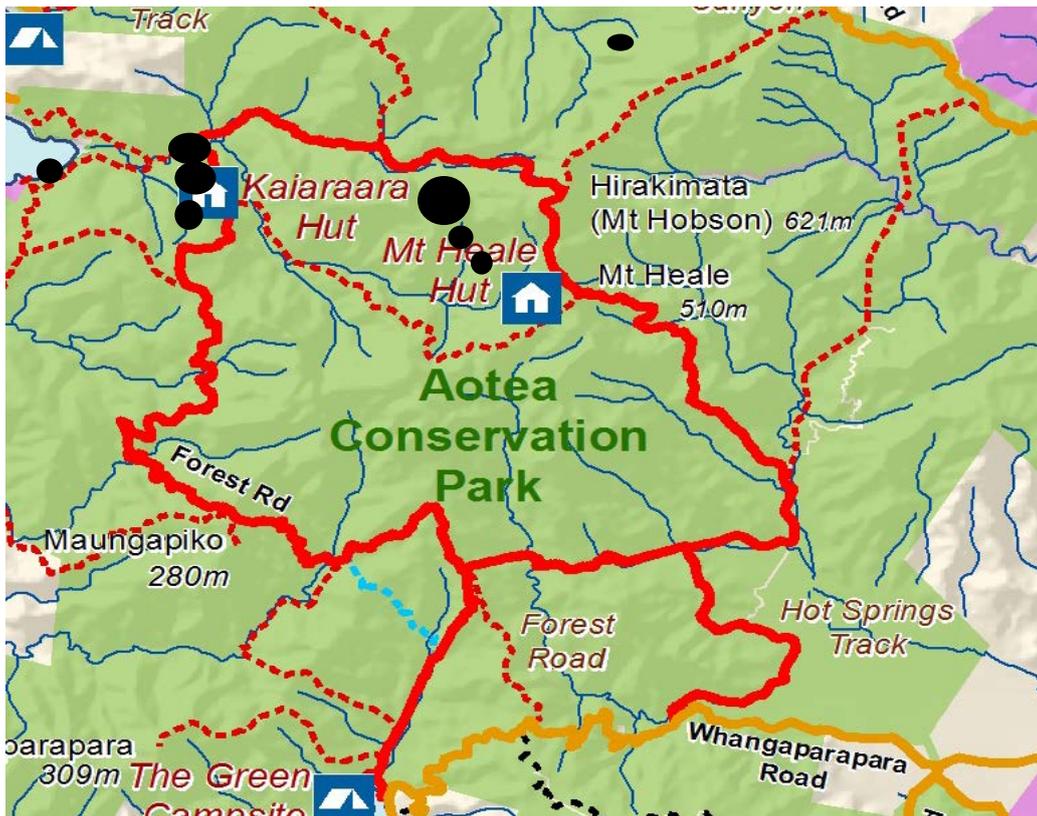


The total distance travelled by these birds is now 168,178 km, averaging out at 12,012 km per bird. Six birds have now crossed the equator into the Northern Hemisphere, although one of these has subsequently re-crossed back into the Southern Hemisphere. The second map attached to this email displays 'hotspots' in habitat use by these birds – essentially, the redder the area, the more time these birds are collectively spending in these areas. Several 'hotspots' of activity show up: one hotspot just east of Great Barrier Island is simply a reflection of the fact that all of the birds have left from the one colony. The 'cooler' yellow colours in the mid-Pacific suggest the birds are moving quickly through this part of their dispersal corridor, before slowing down a bit as they approach the Pitcairn Islands. There is one obvious hotspot of activity in a sea area approximately 1000-1500 km SW of the Galapagos Islands, with another hotspot of activity near the Galapagos Islands themselves.

6. **Plague Skink Project:** Wildlands, the principle contractor managing the work for this project have indicated that the testing phase for control and eradication methodologies went well over the past year. However, they would prefer another 12 months in the testing phase to provide eradication options possibly for Aotea and other locations in future. Despite some opinions from the wider group stating eradication may not be possible for Aotea, both DOC and the Auckland Council would still like this to be an option. Work is currently underway to map out the program of work for the next year to do further work on the methodologies and to hopefully ensure eradication is still an option in 12 months' time. If eradication is still an option, this will likely need considerable financial investment. The project could also benefit greatly from third party support.

### **Recreation/Historic**

7. **Tracks and huts:** Approximately 14 directional track signs and 1 interpretation sign on the Aotea Track have been removed by an unknown person. An initial search of the sign locations proved fruitless. Our Rec rangers have been working to replace the signs with new ones and put temporary signs up till new signs arrive. A notice has gone out in the local newspaper/DOC website to notify all community and visitors about no signs on various tracks. Black spots on the map are the areas where the direction signs have gone missing.



8. Locations of missing signs
9. **Campgrounds:** A timely review of how we manage our campgrounds on Aotea has been undertaken with the aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our maintenance and customer services. Logistics planning for the upcoming peak season has begun as well as some planning for how we manage rubbish and the risk of tsunami. We have four host couples confirmed to manage the campgrounds from Dec 22-January 29. This review was carried out by Mayer Levy, Senior Ranger Recreation/Historic from the Maniapoto District. Mayer came to Aotea/GBI for 3 weeks to assist operations on Aotea/GBI.
10. **Kauri Dieback Work:** Doc staff with the help of local contractors have finished Kauri die back track mitigation for the 2017/18 financial year. This work is considered maintenance and funded through operating expenditure (Opex). The work was done to eliminate the wet and muddy sections and to improve on the work done previously. The next year will see a regional approach for more mitigation but also advocacy focused towards visitors and other users.

Further investigation for capital upgrade work (Capex) was undertaken in June. This will result in a contract to be tendered for the South Fork track to be done this upcoming construction season.

Back in January, the Aotea/GBI DOC team undertook a workshop focusing on which tracks should or shouldn't be mitigated. This contributed to both Capex and Opex work in the future. 3 tracks were also proposed for closure. The consultation process for the track closures and the final submission ends August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018. A task assignment was issued to the Aotea team to consult with iwi/hapu, local community, concessionaires, agencies, organizations and user groups.

### 11. Tracks proposed for closure (full/partial)

District	Area	Recommendation	Closure information	Rationale for closure
Aotea/Great Barrier Island	Old Lady Walk – Port Fitzroy	<b>Upgrade</b> the remaining section of track  <b>Close</b> track from the lookout on the loop section to the main track	Partial closure	The loop track to the lookout on the left is still retained
Aotea/Great Barrier Island	Whangaparapara Pack Track/Link Track		Full closure	High upgrade cost vs low visitor use  Track is already closed due to a slip  Track is deemed excess to requirements.  Alternative tracks are available
Aotea/Great Barrier Island	Whangaparapara Peak Track		Full Closure	Low visitor use  High upgrade cost vs low visitor use  Track traverse's kauri roots and has poor drainage  Alternative tracks available

## Community

12. **Bring Back Kokako Project:** Since the loss of Noelene Ngawaka, the project manager for the Bring Back Kokako, Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea Trust Board have not yet replaced anyone in her position. The project has been delayed until the Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea Trust Board have their AGM. The Aotea/GBI team have been supporting the 'worker' Keepa Wii by upskilling him with training.
13. **Rakitū:** Most of the community focus during the last reporting period has been community engagement regarding the Rakitū Rodent Eradication Project. This has included, since the last report, organising the logistics of a Rahui and consulting with adjacent landowners.

A Rahui and a pou were placed on Rakitū on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June by the Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea kaumatua taumata with support from the DOC operations team. The day provided perfect weather, and everything ran smoothly. The ceremony was accompanied by lovely karakia, waiata and sharing of some amazing stories from various people who had a bit of history on Rakitū. The Rope family (former owners of the island) were also acknowledged. The day was finished with a bowl of chicken soup and fresh baked bread that one of our kaumatua had made for this occasion.



Cara Fraider, Bruce Davies, Dave Smith, George Taylor, Hine Wii, Jo Ritchie, Roger Stevenson, Hope Munro, Nicola MacDonald and John Wii

The Aotea Poison Free Group staged a protest to the Rakitū Operation by camping on grounds adjacent to the DOC office for just over 2 weeks (18<sup>th</sup> June – 5<sup>th</sup> July). During this time they set up a cooking area, tents and a portable toilet. The group camped with the intention that they would not move until the Minister of Conservation, and associated Ministers, agreed to come to the island to meet them. The group were tolerated for some time but on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July, Operations Manager, George Taylor handed them a letter stating that they were essentially committing several offences against the Reserves Act 1977 by not having permission to camp, lighting a fire, erecting signs and possible disturbance of the sod. George Taylor and local police officer Roger Bright handed the protesters the letter and gave them until 12.00pm on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July to leave. The group were reluctant to leave but eventually left at about 2.30pm on the given date. This group also attended the public section of the last ACPAC (Aotea Conservation Park Advisory Committee) meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup>

of June. A letter was forwarded to the Minister of Conservation via ACPAC protesting the Rakitū Operation.

**14. Future events 2018:**

Conservation Week 15th – 23rd September

Wharf to wharf 6th October

Te Pukenga Atawhai dates late Oct

**Staffing and Infrastructure**

15. Scott Van Leeuwen has been appointed as Ranger – Recreation/Historic. This role was left vacant by Daryl Stephens who recently moved to the Auckland Inner Islands team. Scott comes to us from the South Island where he and his wife Sandi have been Island Rangers on Takapourewa – Stephens Island. Scott will start his new role on the 22nd of August
16. Ina McNickle has been appointed, by secondment to the Bio/Rec/His Supervisor role for 1 year. Ian McNickle is currently a DOC ranger supervisor Biodiversity from the Central Plateau District. Ian will be filling in for Sarah Dwyer who will be on maternity leave.