

## REPORT

Meeting Date: 19 June 2018

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

Subject: **Operations Report**

---

### Biodiversity

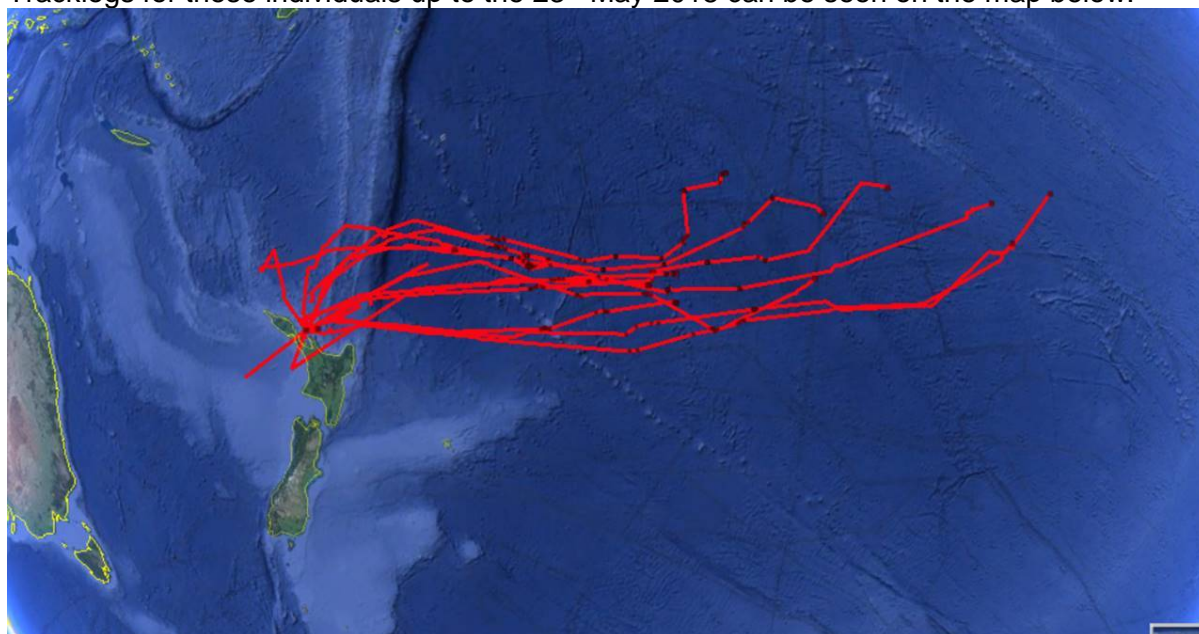
1. Pateke Protection: Cat trapping around the margins of the Whangapoua Estuary and Okiwi station for the season has been extended for a 9-month season between January and September using contractors from the Glenfern Sanctuary. Steady numbers of cats have been caught to date with a cat dog in training working well. Pukeko control has come to an end for this financial year. The annual contract for Rabbit control has commenced and will be active throughout the month of June.
2. Myrtle Rust: The single infested site near Colville (initially with 5 x 1m wilding pohutukawa on a driveway) was found on 17 April. Seven (7) infected plants were removed on 1 May – 2 additional plants were found to be infested on the day of removal.

This site sits only 35 km's from Aotea with the strong southerlies over the last few weeks the possibility of the rust reaching the Barrier is high. Myrtle Rust is not yet confirmed to be present on Aotea. If it is confirmed to be present, MPI is the lead agency for response with support from DOC.

3. Takoketai/Black Petrel Protection and Monitoring: Cat trapping continues around the summit area of Hirakimata. No cats were caught during the December run. 1 cat has been trapped since April and 1 cat caught using the cat dog to bail. Unfortunately, some traps were subject to vandalism recently. 1 cage trap and 5 chimneys from the belisle traps were removed from their site and thrown downhill of their location.

Further support has also been provided for the Wildlife Management International contractors who have stayed on the summit for several weeks monitoring during January-May to determine which birds have returned, what pairs have formed, and the nesting success of those with eggs laid. 14 Juvenile black petrels were fitted with transmitters this season.

Tracklogs for these individuals up to the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018 can be seen on the map below.



4. Weed Control: Progress as follows:

Location	Target Weeds	Progress
Te Paparahi Conservation Area	Pampas, Kikuyu, Mothplant, Boneseed	Complete
Whangapoua	Smilax	Complete
Kiwiriki Estuary & Wairahi Forest	Pampas, Mothplant	Complete
Kaitoke Swamp and Dunes	Pampas, Banksia, Mothplant, Royal Fern, Boneseed, Grey Willow	Complete
Wiltshire Lane	Woolly Nightshade	Complete
Port Fitzroy	Smilax	In Progress
Awana	Kahili Ginger	Complete
Okiwi	Kahili Ginger	Complete
Medlands	Woolly Nightshade	Complete
Haratoanga	Madeira Vine, Lantana, Macrocarpa (Seedlings only), Pampas	In Progress
Whangaparapara	Climbing Asparagus	Complete

Tryphena	Climbing Asparagus	Complete
Kaiaraara	Pampas	Complete
Burgess Island Mokohinau Group	Bromus, Agave, Gorse, Tree Mallow Monkey Apple, Arum Lily	Complete

#### 5. Rakitu Island Rat Eradication:

The removal of the sample population of Weka was completed in early May. The capture program was predicted to take up to 3 weeks, but we were able to capture the target number in less than 2. Pukaha/Mt Bruce has taken in 64 Weka which is their current capacity within their facilities.

The delivery part of the operation is now imminent. The first aerial application of bait is likely to start from the end of June weather permitting. This will be followed up by a second and final aerial application at least 10 days later. Peaceful protest action by Aotea Poison Free is also being planned for the aerial bait application days.

Current work in progress includes the following:

- Planning for the aerial bait application operation days
- Visiting landowners facing Rakitū
- Removal of non-target species – sheep, Pateke
- Responding to various OIA and ministerial requests
- Staff training for dealing with challenging situations and conversations



Weka in captivity in the Rakitū Aviary *Photo: Tara Swan, Pukaha/Mt Bruce*

6. Plague Skink Response: work has continued with the joint Auckland Council / DOC funded Plague Skink infestation response in the Tryphena - Shoal Bay area.

Most significantly, in April 2018, an individual plague skink was captured outside the containment fence, on a trailer of timber. Tracing back to the origins of the trailer and subsequent trapping has found what is believed to be a second breeding population of plague skink on the island. Delimitation trapping and further surveillance is being carried out to determine the extent of this second population. A report is being produced for the decision makers in both DOC and Auckland Council, so the long-term viability of the project can be assessed.

### **Recreation / Historic**

7. Further track work for Kauri Dieback mitigation has occurred over the past two months. This involved track surfacing and installation of boxed steps. The main tracks targeted were the Kaitoke Hot Springs track, Palmers track, Bushes Beach track, the Peach Tree track, the Tramline track, the Kaiaraara Dams track and the northern section of the Forest Rd. Two of the operation days were based from the Claris Sports Club. Staff were confronted by members of the public querying what we were doing. This was accompanied with strong language and reference to 1080 use. This recent activity is aligned with opposition to the Rakitū project.
8. The Great Walks new proposal list has been reduced to 7 possibilities. The Aotea track remains in contention. Further work including a high level concept plan is currently being undertaken to support the decision process.
9. Preparation for the upcoming camping season is underway. Applications for camp site hosts have been called for with likely preference given to former camp site hosts.

### **Community**

10. Most of the community focus during the last reporting period has been community engagement regarding the Rakitū Rat Eradication Project. This has included attendance at public meetings, visiting landowners facing Rakitū and finalising details for public notification.
11. KDB Programme Collateral Workshop: MPI are running a workshop in Auckland and Whangarei in late June. The workshop looks to review existing collateral against where and how it's worked, what areas need to be improved and highlight gaps/opportunities. Bespoke created items will also be shared by attendees. Audience analysis will look a building off partner expertise, building knowledge of the below forest users, their behaviours, influencers, engagement channels and thinking. We will attend this workshop to further understand the lessons learnt when dealing with Kauri Dieback. This will likely understand the impacts for the following user groups
  - Communities – Schools, Marae, Clubs
  - Hikers, runners and dog walkers
  - Private land owners
  - Hunters
  - Community predator control project

### **Staffing and Infrastructure**

12. Recruitment for the vacant position, Ranger – Recreation/Historic is in process
13. Sarah Dwyer, Supervisor is taking maternity leave from the first week of September. A replacement for Sarah is likely to be 12-month secondment for an existing DOC staff member.