

Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust Volunteer Newsletter



Welcome to the first newsletter of 2016!

Firstly the Trust would like to offer their congratulations to DOC, AirNZ and Manawhenua ki Mohua who have recently launched another new biodiversity partnership to target pests in the northern Abel Tasman National Park. This collaboration is the fifth 'Great Walks' project undertaken by DOC and the airline. The project is another feather in the cap for the restoration of the Abel Tasman and will make a major difference in efforts to restore the native bird population in the northern part of the Park. About 3,000 hectares of stoat traps will be added to the 16,000 ha of trapping already installed in the national park. Once the stoat programme is well underway, the reintroduction of native bird species like kaka, kakariki and kea can begin.

Congratulations also to the NZ public who recently contributed to "Buying a Beach" in Awaroa (see <http://www.stuff.co.nz/travel/themes/beaches/77204688/abel-tasman-beach-offer-accepted> for more details). At the very least, this campaign showed the depth of feeling locals, NZ'ers and visitors alike have for the beautiful Abel Tasman!

As always we readily acknowledge the support given by our commercial operators and DOC in ferrying volunteers in and out of the Park and the support we receive from businesses such as Adama NZ Ltd who have generously provided chemical for our weed and pine programs.

Birdsong Trust plan S.I Robin release from Adele Island back to the coastal track!

Written by Pete Gaze, Project Janszoon ornithologist

The Birdsong Trust will lead the first transfer of robins from Motuarero-nui (Adele Island) back to

the coastal track of the Abel Tasman on the afternoon of the 30th April.

If you would like to attend the release event, please contact Kim McGlashen on gerkim@xtra.co.nz before the event.

We are planning to move 20-40 birds, ensuring that this does not affect the viability of the island population. With a predator-free island such as Motuarero-nui the robin numbers have rapidly built up to carrying capacity and regular cropping removes birds which would otherwise be lost due to resource competition.

Not very long ago robins were widespread and common throughout the Abel Tasman national park. They have gone from coastal forests in the last 30 years and now they are mostly confined to the higher altitude forests.

It seems reasonable to explain this gradual attrition to predation by rats with the current population still declining but at a slower rate in forests where rats are less abundant. It is a long-term goal of Project Janszoon to reduce rat abundance to a level that provides security for this population and which allows dispersing birds to establish in the lower altitude forests again.



Rats on bird nest—courtesy of Nga Manu Images

Controlling rats and maintaining them at low densities is the holy grail of conservation in mainland forests. Rats live at high densities and quickly re-invade from any area that may have been missed by trapping or toxins and, of course, they also re-invade from outside the treatment area. The ability to reproduce quickly adds to the problem.

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While Project Janszoon is focused on periodic and extensive aerial application of 1080 to achieve this goal it has supported Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust in a trial of the gas-powered re-setting rat traps. Allan Barker has led this work in an area of 130ha from Pitt Head to Watering Cove. After several teething problems with the technology Allan and his team are now holding rat numbers at very low densities. Now is the time to capitalise on this work and see if we can establish a 'beach head' of robins in this safe habitat and, over time, this population may provide a nucleus for that widespread recovery we hope for. Some more background to this concept was described in an earlier posting.



None of this is an exact science. Birds may disperse into ratty areas where they cannot breed safely, others may try to make the flight back to the island. A beech mast may increase rodent numbers beyond what the traps can handle. Nevertheless this may also be an important step towards restoring a robust robin population in the park.

Remember to **please submit any sightings of rare birds** to www.osnz.org.nz and let me know if you spot anything unusual out there on your travels and I can include in the newsletter!! 😊

Restoration planting volunteer opportunities in ATNP and beyond!

The projects below are mainly in the Abel Tasman, but some are further afield: please contact Helen Lindsay at helenlindsay3@gmail.com if you are interested or would like further info.

- Releasing trees at Tinline camp, Abel Tasman National Park.
- Weed control and planting at Anchorage Bay, Abel Tasman National Park.
- Releasing trees and planting at Hadfields Clearing. Awaroa, northern Abel Tasman National Park.
- Planting at Medlands Beach and weed control at Bark Bay, Abel Tasman National Park.
- Planting at Apple Tree Bay and Coquille Bay, Abel Tasman National Park.
- Planting at Kokorua Sandspit and wetland, Whangamoia Valley, north of Nelson
- Nursery work - sowing seeds, potting plants, and weeding pots for local restoration projects (the nursery is situated at the DOC office on the corner of King Edward Street and High Street in Motueka).
- Releasing trees and planting at Otuwhero wetland, Marahau.
- Weed control and planting at Tapu Bay.

Notes:

1. For Abel Tasman activities (except for Awaroa) volunteers usually take the DOC boat from Marahau or sometimes a ferry from Kaiteriteri if there is a large group. There are options to walk out in the afternoon from the sites closer to Marahau.

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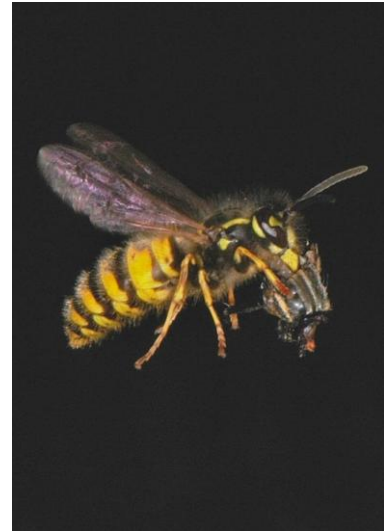


2. For both Awaroa and Kokorua activities it is a two-hour drive to get there. For all trips Helen can offer transport to three people from Motueka - first three in are first served! Helen can also arrange car pooling for others.
3. Most activities will be day trips although volunteers may occasionally need to stay overnight at Awaroa. Activities generally take place on weekdays except for Otuwhero and Kokorua which can have weekend dates too. Later on we may hold nursery days on weekend days too if this will help more people to participate.

Wasp Control program deemed a major success!

Visitors and users of the ATNP will be happy to hear that the wasp control programme carried out over the last month or so was extremely successful! The project was carried out by the Department of Conservation, aided by Allan Barker and other volunteers, and was funded by Project Janszoon and the Abel Tasman Foreshore Scenic Reserve Fund, which is funded from foreshore concession fees.

According to DOC monitoring, results from the Falls River block showed traffic in the nest before the control programme at 92.4 wasps per minute - this was down to 0.8 after the control programme! Monitored nests on the Abel Tasman Coast Track were at 37.3 per minute pre-control, and down to 0.3 after. Awesome work to all those who were involved and working hard to achieve this great outcome!!



You can watch videos of nests before and after control, and get further information on this project on the Project Janszoon facebook page, at:

<https://www.facebook.com/574058262615734/videos/1087552754599613/>

Trapping Report August - October 2015

We have started using a new online system developed by DOC and Whio Forever for trap catch data entry. This allows us to produce "hot-spot" maps (see Figure 2) so that we can visualise which traps are catching consistently and perhaps target those areas more intensively. Over time, this will allow us to focus our resources on high-catch areas and perhaps remove traps that are not doing much! In addition, we can compare our results with other groups across New Zealand and ensure we are keeping up with best practice.

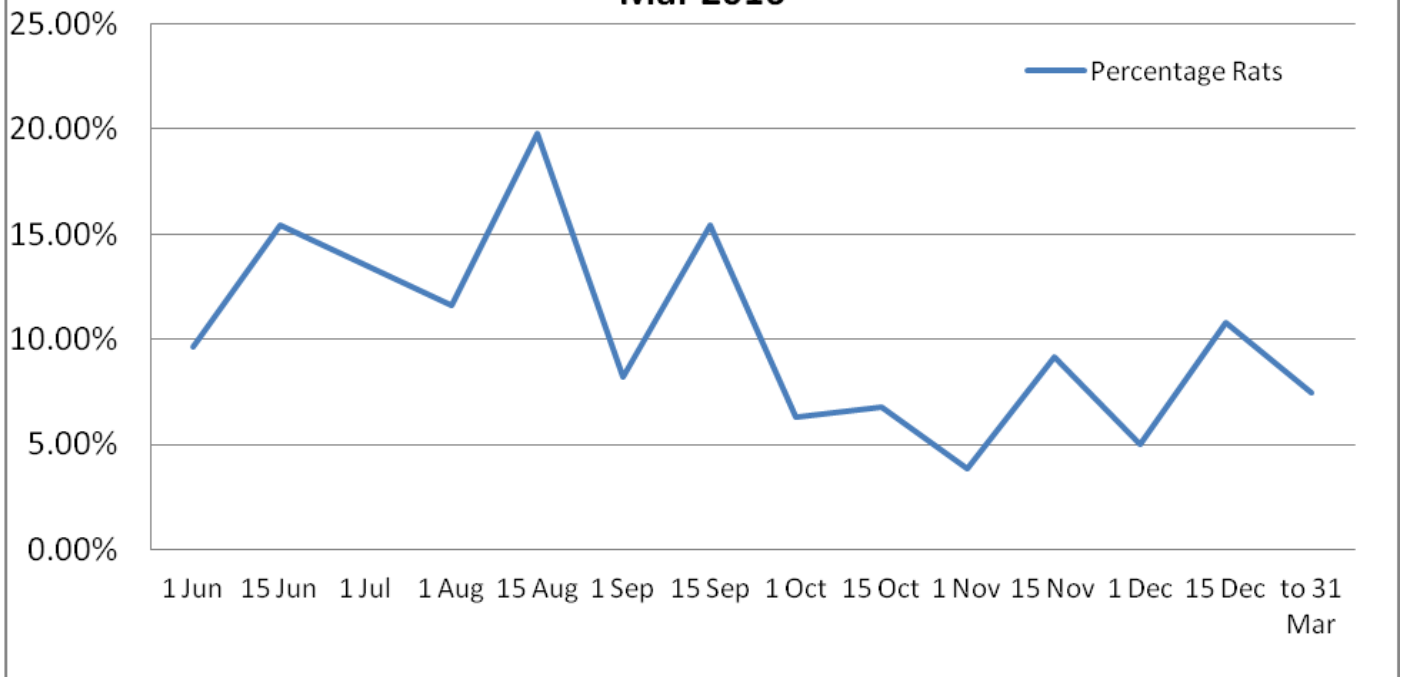
Our running totals to date are: **2222 rats, 164 stoats, 104 possums, 28 mice, 14 weasels, and 6 hedgehogs!**

Catch rates are remaining below 10%, which is great news! The following graph outlines some of the key results for the last few months.

March 2016



Figure 1: Average percentage of rats per trapline, Jun 2015 to Mar 2016



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Figure 2: Birdsong Trust trap-catch results from December 2015 to March 2016 in the Abel Tasman National Park



The larger and darker the coloured circles, the higher the pest numbers (stoats and rats) caught in that area, so you can see we are already noticing some major hot-spots!! The green triangles are single catches only.

Thanks to all of you for giving so much of your time, as always! 😊

Many thanks are also due to Kate Edge and Richard & Jeanette Allison for their private donations, and to Michelle Lang of Gardiner Road, who has donated over 1000 tree guards for any of our upcoming planting and restoration projects.

March 2016