

Trapping Report March 2015

March was a difficult month for predator control, and has affected groups like Friends of Flora and Rotoiti similarly. Mice have swept through our trapping lines, taking a third and more of the bait and quite likely causing a drop in our catch rates.

Adele Island was re invaded by mice to a point where we have to give up controlling mice by traps. Dept of Conservation decided two weeks ago to apply toxins at some point to restore the zero level status for predators on the Island.

The end of summer did bring along some challenging weather and some of our crews were hit quite badly. About 50 hrs of volunteer time hasn't wasted. The brief rat incursion on Adele Is has been controlled quickly. All traps will stay active and be checked every two weeks.

The Pitt Head Project has not escaped the mouse invasion either and while the A24 good nature traps working more reliably than ever, the tunnel track rat and mouse count is too high to release South Island Robins as yet.

Great News Despite the Mouse Plaque.

Birdsong Trust volunteer, Georgina, reports from Adele Island during one of the trap checks:

I definitely saw a juvenile saddleback with no bands not far from the creek in the southern inner side of the island (around B9). We "communed" for several minutes at close quarters (about 8 feet) It was totally chocolatey colour but for the upper tail coverts which were rusty. It was feeding on coprosma berries, then used the beak to prise Hakea? seeds further open by placing the beak in the split and opening the beak to stretch the opening. An interesting technique. After a bit of preening it they then ripped bark off a rotting branch looking for insects. Fantastic news!

We all saw a pair of Moreporks that had flown down to watch Eric and Esther as if they were TV. They sat around for a number of minutes too.

Back to the 'plague of mice ', shifting the stoat bait towards the roof of the stoat box did not have the desired effect. The trial of protecting the bait with little wire cages in Tinline and A17/18 has been inconclusive. In hindsight we should have switched to eggs at the beginning of the crisis.

So here is a big thank you to all volunteers involved on the lines, on the island and at Pitt Head. We did reach the limit of our volunteer force. With mouse numbers dropping and less effort required on Adele we will 'tack back into calmer waters'. Speaking of which we must extend a big thank you to Aquataxi, Wilsons Abel Tasman, Seashuttle and Kahu Kayaks. Without their support our work would not be possible.

Trap check March 8th

M line 1-11 catch rate 9%, 1 rat

T line 1-8, nil

A line 1 - 83 catch rate 8 %, 6 rats , 1 stoat

A line 84 – 127, catch rate 7 %, 3 rats

B line 1 -28 catch rate 4%, 1 rat

C line 1- 23 catch rate 17 %, 4 rats

Total catch rate across all lines 8%: 15 rats 1 stoat.

Observations: bait gone from 83 traps which is 42%. Nibbled in about another 30 traps.

Trap check March 23rd.

M 1-11, nil

T line 1-8, catch rate 13%, 1 rat,

A 1 - A 83 catch rate 14 %, 8 rats

(A21 to A 50 not checked),

A 83 - A127 catch rate 9%, 4 rats (84, 85, 86 not checked)

C 1-23 catch rate 26%, 5 rats, 1 stoat

B 1-28: nil

Total catch rate combined (less traps not checked) 11 %:18 rats, 1 stoat

Observations : bait gone from 62 traps which is 38% of all traps checked. Bait nibbled in about 20 others,

Running totals since october 2010 : 1828 rats, 147 stoats, 104 possums, 20 mice, 6 hedgehogs, 1 quail