



## Whangarei Heads Landcare Forum Predator Trapping Report 2007/08 season

This report covers the period October 2007 to September 2008.

### 1.0 Trap Coverage

206 double sets of Mark 6 Fenn traps continue to be set in mainly plastic tunnels to target mustelids. This network has been supplemented by 20 single Doc 200 sets and 7 double Doc 20 sets this season.



SA Cat traps and cages are used to target cats.

**Table 1. Traps and their locations**

	October 2008						<b>Total</b>
	Kauri Mt	Eastern Manaia	Western Manaia	Taurikura	The Nook	Kerr Rd	
Fenns	53	39	42	26	37	9	<b>206</b>
SA's	9	11	2	0	2	0	<b>24</b>
Cages	8	2	0	0	0	0	<b>10</b>
Doc 200s	3	13	8	1	1	1	<b>27</b>

The Department of Conservation Whangarei Area Office, operate traps in the Nook, Taurikura Ridge, South Manaia Walkway, and Mount Aurbrey areas on behalf of the WHLF. These traps are in addition to the Department of Conservation trapping program that the trappers carry out at the Bream Head Reserve and in the buffer area to the north of the Whangarei Heads peninsular.

### 2.0 Predators trapped

**Table 2. Summary of captures by Whangarei Heads Landcare Forum Kiwi Recovery programme.**

	Total captures (October to September each year)						
	Ferret	Stoat	Weasel	Cat	Hedgehog	Rat	Possum
2002/2003	1	55	46	18	65	391	Not recorded
2003/2004	4	22	21	22	52	319	24
2004/ 2005	1	30	17	38	95	403	285
2005/2006	0	26	13	29	82	357	191+
2006/2007	0	26	8	17	68	304	147
2007/2008	0	19	22	18	84	346	75+
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>2120</b>	<b>722+</b>

#### 2.1 Comments on 2007/2008 programme by species.

##### Ferrets

No ferrets have been caught in the WHLF area since 2005.

It appears that all the resident ferrets have been trapped out by the programme, and the Department of Conservation 'buffer' area has greatly reduced the chances of ferrets accessing the WHLF project area.

### Stoats

19 stoats have been caught in the 07/08 season, the lowest number for the 6 years of trapping operation and well down from the peak of 55 in the first season. Catch rates peaked in January at 7 stoats. The highest number of kills per sector this year was Eastern Manaia with 7 stoats. The new Doc 200 traps caught 1 stoat.

**Table 3. Monthly capture stoats**

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Kauri Mt	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	5
E. Manaia	0	3	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
W. Manaia	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Taurikura	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Nook	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Kerr Rd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19</b>

### Weasels

Weasel captures jumped to 22 from last season's 8 returning to a level similar to the previous 3 seasons but still well below the first season catch of 46. The new Doc 200 traps accounted for 3 weasels.

**Table 4. Monthly capture weasels**

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Kauri Mt	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	5
E. Manaia	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	1	0	0	0	7
W. Manaia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	3
Taurikura	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	4
The Nook	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Kerr Rd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22</b>

### Cats

Cat captures were 18 this season down from the peak of 38 for the 2004/05 season and similar to last season's 17. As with last season the very wet winter may have affected cat numbers through lowering of the rabbit population.

**Table 5. Monthly capture cats**

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Kauri Mt	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	6
E. Manaia	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
W. Manaia	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Taurikura	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	4
The Nook	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	3
Kerr Rd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>

### Rats

Recorded rat catches totaled 346, up from last season's low of 304.

26 Norway rats were identified out of the total (approximately 7.5%) although many of the trappers do not distinguish between rat species on their records.

More extensive rat control is now being undertaken by individual Landcare groups within the WHLF than in previous seasons. Notably the Papakarahi Landcare group at the Nook and Taurikura Ridge Landcare group in the Taurikura Ridge.

### **Possums**

Major possum control projects have continued by individual Landcare projects within the Whangarei Heads Landcare Forum with significant catch results. The results of these projects are not included in this report.

### **Hedgehogs**

Significant numbers of hedgehogs continue to be caught – 84 for this season.

## **3.0 Bait**

Salted rabbit remains the main bait used because of its attractiveness to stoats, lasting properties, ease of distribution and storage in freezers. Salted possum is also used, particularly over the winter period when rabbit supply is low.

Chicken eggs were also used over the winter months this season with no success on most target species but notably 8 weasels we caught on eggs.

## **4.0 Community operated traps**

The standard and frequency of setting of traps by community trappers continues to vary considerably. Many of these trappers are experienced and enthusiastic trappers, while some others trap sporadically as time is available. The continued perseverance and dedication of these trappers is important to the effectiveness of the project.

Co-ordination of the community trappers by the WHLF trapper was carried out by telephone contacts and site visits to supply bait, carry out trap maintenance, collect records and audit trap setting.

A 'refresher' trappers' day was held for community trappers in September. The session involved honing trapping skills, the exchange of rusty traps for freshly maintained ones, bulk bait supply and a trapline walk. The timing of the training was to coincide with the start of the main kiwi chick season to ensure that the trapping network was in full readiness.

Details of ongoing captures were communicated through the local newsletter, email and WHLF meetings.

## **5.0 Funding**

The Whangarei Heads Landcare Forum kiwi recovery project is very grateful for funding from Doc Biodiversity Funds, Northland Regional Council, ASB Community Trust, MWH and Bank of New Zealand Save the Kiwi Trust.

## **6.0 The Program's Future**

This season's capture rates for mustelids are still well down from our first season and hopefully reflect a seriously reduced mustelid population in the area.

The WHLF trapped area continues to benefit from being a peninsula, minimizing avenues for stoat reinvasion. None the less, work carried out by the Department on the sensitivity of kiwi and other threatened biota reinforces the need for ongoing predator control to prevent rapid reinvasion of mustelids and subsequent impacts on the kiwi population.

Ongoing trap maintenance and fine tuning of trap positions will continue to be carried out along with the logistical and motivational support of community trappers to maintain the trapping regime and low mustelid numbers.

Kiwi call count monitoring in the trapping area will continue to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the trapping.



Unfortunately 3 kiwi were killed by cars this year, the silver lining to these deaths was that they are further evidence of the success of the predator trapping programme as they were wild hatched chicks that had survived to near or above stoat proof age.

Some other species (e.g. blue penguin, bittern and kaka) will benefit from this program and are being monitored informally.

An expansion of more integrated ecological restoration via intensive possum and rat control regimes (building on the current predator control) is currently being undertaken by several of the Landcare groups that are a part of the WHLF.

**Todd Hamilton,  
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