Notification about predator control in Arthur's Pass National Park and Lake Sumner Forest Park

To protect native species, the Department of Conservation (DOC) is going to reduce rat and mustelid numbers in the area.

Why we are controlling introduced predators

Across New Zealand, native species are under constant threat from introduced predators such as rats, stoats, and possums. Arthur's Pass National Park and Lake Sumner Forest Park are home to some of our most endangered wildlife, including the orange-fronted parakeet/kākāriki karaka, great spotted kiwi/roroa, rock wren/pīwauwau, and yellowhead/mohua. Without sustained protection, we face the loss of these precious and the unique native species.

One of the most at-risk species is the orange-fronted parakeet—an iconic bird of North Canterbury. Once numbering in the millions, it is now one of New Zealand's rarest forest birds, with only 488 individuals remaining in the wild. The species survives in just five known locations, including two within Arthur's Pass and Lake Sumner Forest Parks. Approximately 50 birds live in the Hawdon Valley and another 48 in the South Branch of the Hurunui Valley.

Kākāriki karaka nest in tree hollows, and their small size (around 40g or the weight of a wooden pencil) makes them extremely vulnerable to predation. They are particularly at risk during rat and stoat plagues triggered by native forests mass seeding.

In areas where 1080 has not been used to control these predator plagues, local parakeet populations have been wiped out. Without predator control, no viable wild populations would remain outside island or fenced mainland sanctuaries.

For example, a rat plague in 2001 resulted in the loss of 85% of one valley's orange-fronted parakeet population. By contrast, during a 1080 operation in the Maruia Valley, nine parakeet nests were monitored—only one was lost to predation.

In 2026, we predict beech forests in the area will drop trillions of seeds, fuelling surge in rat and stoat populations. If we did nothing, predator numbers would likely overwhelm existing trapping networks and put parakeet and other native wildlife at significant risk. To protect native species, we're planning predator control operations in the area.

Kākāriki karaka or orange-fronted parakeet are precious and vulnerable native birds that live in this area. DOC is working to protect them with predator control. Photo: Sabine Bernert

How are we going to achieve this

The safest and most effective method to control introduced predators over large areas is to use biodegradable bait pellets containing 1080. This bait targets rodents and possums. Stoats are also controlled through secondary poisoning as they feed on the carcasses of the dead rodents.

Helicopters will accurately distribute bait across 70,199ha of the forest along pre-determined and monitored flight paths. This is the safest and most effective way to control predators in Arthur's Pass National Park and Lake Sumner Forest Park due to the vast and rugged terrain.

On-going ground operations including bait stations, and trapping programmes support this work. We will monitor rats after the operation to quantify its success.

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Consultation and consent outcome

DOC and contractors engaged by DOC have consulted with hapū, iwi and key stakeholders including landowners adjacent to the treatment area, recreational groups and concessionaires who have permitted activities within the treatment area. This involved discussing the operational plan, listening to any concerns and considering ways to mitigate them.

DOC is delegated authority by the Environmental Protection Agency to decide applications for permission to use 1080 on land administered or managed by DOC. Permission from the Ministry of Health and DOC will be approved before applying toxic bait

Next steps

Adjoining landowners and other stakeholders are being notified and there will be a public notice in the local newspaper/s. There will also be warning signs placed at entrances to the treatment area immediately prior to the operation.

After the operation, DOC will contact iwi, hapū, and stakeholders about the results of the operation. We also aim to share insights about the outcomes for native species overtime.

Managing risk

1080 is poisonous to humans, domestic and game animals. In areas where the toxin has been applied, dogs are highly at risk until poisoned carcasses have disintegrated. This takes four-to-eight months or longer.

Risks can be eliminated by following these rules:

DO NOT touch bait

WATCH children at all times

DO NOT EAT animals from this area or within the buffer zone outside the treatment boundary. The standard buffer zone is 2 km for deer and pigs, 200 m for rabbits, and 1 km for hares, tahr, wallabies and possums.

Poison baits or carcasses are DEADLY to DOGS

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. These signs indicate pesticide residues may be still present in baits and poisoned carcasses. When signs are removed this means you can resume normal activities in the area. Always report suspected vandalism or unauthorised removal of signs.

If you suspect poisoning, please contact:

- Your local doctor or hospital
- The National Poisons Centre: 0800 764 766 (urgent calls) or 03 479 7248 or dial 111
- Seek veterinary advice for suspected poisoning of domestic animals

Timeframe

The operation is planned for the first clear weather window between October 20th and December 18th.

This operation begins with the distribution of non-toxic pre-feed bait pellets to prepare possums and rodents to eat the toxic bait (dyed green) that is applied afterwards. Both baits are about 16 mm in diameter and cylindrical shaped.

For more information

Please contact:
Operation Controller – Arthur's Pass East
Rentokil Rural & Environmental Services
PO Box 5171, Springlands, Blenheim 7241
Free Phone: 0508 548 008
E-mail: vfm.communication-nz@rentokil-initial.com

Visit the DOC website:

See more information about DOC's National Predator Control Programme

www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/national-predator-control-programme

See operational updates and detailed maps of predator control on public conservation land

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/pesticide-summaries

See updates about track access and safety

www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/know-before-you-go/alerts

Learn more about why we use 1080 to control introduced predators

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/methods-of-control/1080

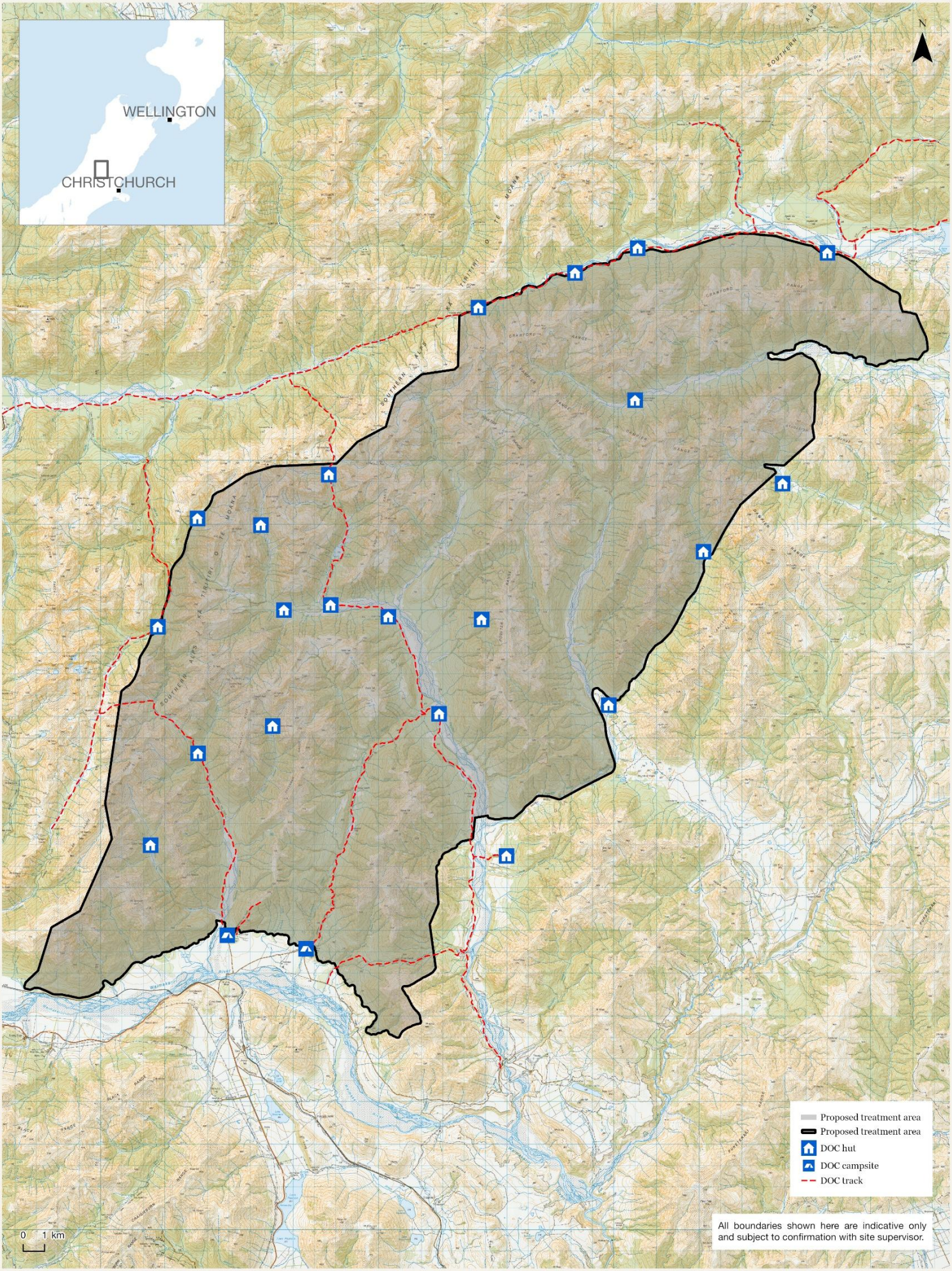
Learn more about Predator Free 2050

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/predator-free-2050

Map of predator control area

The map on the next page shows the confirmed area of 70,199ha for predator control.

The Hawdon Valley.
Photo by Hayley Wadmore.



Arthurs Pass East

Aerial Predator Control 2025

Proposed treatment area: *70,199 ha*

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawbai

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

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