

Consulting on the protection of native taonga species in Rangataua Conservation Area

The Department of Conservation plans to protect kiwi, pekapeka / bats and threatened plants from local extinction in the forests of Rangataua by reducing rat, stoat and possum numbers.

Native species in Rangataua Conservation Area

The forests of Rangataua are a unique and large area within the central plateau, that is home to many endangered native plant, bat and bird species.

It has a localised population of Western Brown kiwi and the largest known population of short-tailed bats (about 8000). Its rivers also have a localised population of whio. Other native species living in the forest include karearea/New Zealand falcon, kākārīki, kākā, mātāta/fernbird, kererū, koekoeā/long-tailed cuckoo and pekapeka-tou-roa/long-tailed bats.

Rangataua forests are home to endangered plant species such as Pua o te Rēinga (*Dactylanthus*) and native red, yellow and scarlet mistletoe.

Threats to native species

Animal pests are one of the biggest threats to native species within Rangataua forests. Mustelids (stoats and ferrets) are the main predators of kiwi and whio. Rats also prey on smaller forest birds, while possums are a significant threat to our threatened plants. Predation by stoats, rats and possums can lead to species facing local extinction.

Why we are controlling rats and stoats

The forests of Rangataua have been under an aerial pest control regime using biodegradable sodium fluoroacetate



North Island brown kiwi. Photo: DOC

(Pronature, known as 1080) for a number of years, and it's important this control continues to protect the native species found here. Periodic mast years where seeding increases pest animal populations significantly also occur. The Department of Conservation (DOC) will contract a pest control company to carry out predator control over 16,454 ha (see attached map). This will give



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bats, kiwi, whio and other forest birds a chance to breed and for chicks to reach adulthood.

Predator control works

In nearby Tongariro Forest, DOC's monitoring of kiwi chicks shows that in years when there is no aerial 1080, the majority of kiwi chicks do not survive, mostly due to stoat predation. For example, only one out of 20 monitored kiwi chicks survived. In a year when there was aerial control, just over 80% of chicks survived.

Whio breeding success also increases dramatically when aerial control occurs. On Tongariro Forest rivers, the number of whio juveniles doubled after aerial control.

Monitoring of the endangered red and scarlet mistletoe species in Rangataua has been carried out since 2009 has consistently kept possum browse low, compared to previous methods of possum control such as trapping.

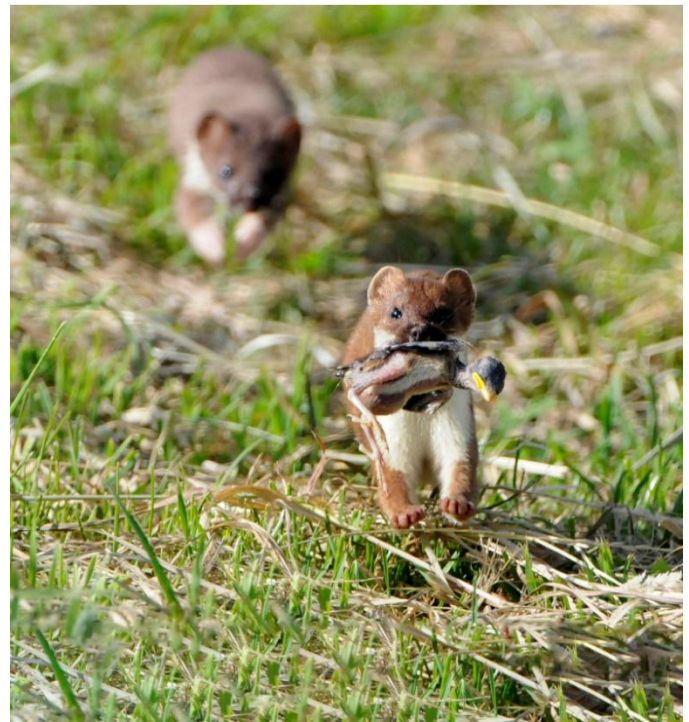
Consultation

DOC will work closely with iwi and hapū as is standard for all predator control operations. Local DOC staff will be working closely with iwi of the Southern Ruapehu area on this operation. The Department will contract a pest control company to manage the operation and consult other stakeholders, affected landowners and the community.

This company will contact you at a convenient time to discuss the proposed operation; how it affects you, and what we can do to mitigate any effects of the operation (refer to map).

Use of a range of predator control methods to protect species.

Aerial application of cereal pellets containing 1080 is the most effective control method over large areas. It is the only viable method in remote, often rugged terrain such as the forests in Rangataua Conservation Area. Aerial Pronature operations target possums and rodents. Stoats are also reduced effectively as they eat the carcasses of poisoned rodents and possum. Ground-based trapping and bait stations are effective in smaller more accessible areas, however, are often overwhelmed with the density of pests present. To ensure successfully control, aerial control is essential.



Stoat with dead chick. Photo: DOC

Time frame

The operation is planned for late winter / spring 2026 however is always weather dependent.

Planning

Following feedback from this consultation, there will be decisions on what changes can be made to the operational plan to address any issues raised.

A notification fact sheet will be distributed closer to the time to provide feedback on the consultation and confirm any changes to the boundary plan and the timeframe.

The Department's contractor will contact all neighbours, place a notice in the local newspaper, and put up warning signs at entrances to public conservation land immediately prior to the operation starting.

The Department will inform iwi, landowners and stakeholders after the operation to inform that the operation has been completed successfully and provide details of reduction of predator numbers. When possible, DOC will also share information about increases in native species in the managed area.

Use of Pronature requires permission from the local Public Health Protection office of the Ministry of Health.

DOC assesses vertebrate predator control operations that use a toxin on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). DOC staff follow procedures approved by the EPA. These regulations ensure that the toxin is applied safely to safeguard the public and the environment.

Key Facts: What you need to know.

- 1080 is a manufactured, biodegradable toxin. Its active ingredient, fluoroacetate is salt that occurs naturally in poisonous plants in Australia, Africa, and Brazil.
- It does not accumulate. It is broken down naturally by micro-organisms, fungi and plants into harmless compounds and does not leave permanent residues in soil, water, plants or animals.
- The Department of Conservation complies with all relevant regulations and takes a precautionary approach to the aerial application of biodegradable 1080.
- All operations begin with an aerial pre-feed of non-toxic bait to prime possums and rodents to eat the toxic bait that will be applied afterwards.
- The toxic cereal bait pellets contain 0.15% of 1080. They are about 2cm long, cylindrical and dyed green. Non-toxic pre-feed cereal pellets are about 2cm long, cylindrical and sandy coloured (not-dyed).

Managing risk

1080 is poisonous to humans, domestic and game animals. Dogs are highly susceptible. In areas where the toxin has been applied, the risk to dogs will remain until poisoned carcasses have disintegrated, which can be more than six months.

These risks can be eliminated by following these rules:

DO NOT touch bait

WATCH children at all times

DO NOT EAT animals from this area

Toxic baits and carcasses are **DEADLY to DOGS**

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. These warning signs indicate pesticide residues may be still present in baits and animals. When signs are removed this means you can resume normal activities in the area.

For more information

The Department of Conservation Tongariro Office is responsible for this operation. For more information about the operation, please contact us during normal business hours here:

Phone: +64 7 892 3729

Email: tongarirovc@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz



Whio family in Tongariro Forest. Photo: DOC

Rangataua: Proposed application area

This map shows the proposed application area for predator control. It is indicative: the boundaries may change subject to consultation and other operation planning requirements.

