

## **Restoring the Dawn Chorus mid-year Report 2005**

Intensive possum control continues around the area adjacent to the Catchpool Stream and within the firebreak boundary (westernmost part of Park) up to the Jackson / Park boundary. Thanks to Keith Dyett and Gary Bak tallies of hares, rabbits, feral cats and possums are also being taken from the roadside, campground and grassy flats where trapping is not practical.

Leg traps along the Nature Trail and Catchpool Loop have recorded relatively low catches. Much of this can be attributed to the intensive trapping carried out prior to and during the Christmas holidays. Rat numbers too are relatively low. Timms traps are proving invaluable in ongoing possum control. Stoats though seen by Park-goers are proving difficult to catch in our traps, numbers being well down on previous years. Whether the public are just more aware of the stoat menace is resulting in more reports of sightings I do not know.

Native bird numbers have included sightings of up to 40 Welcome swallow, numerous white eyes, pleasing numbers of Bell Bird, a few early Kereru arrivals, higher than ever piwakawaka, daily sightings of Karearea (bush falcon) sometimes in conflict with Harrier Hawks. Tree lucerne is flourishing and pretty much in full flower providing Kereru with stable food supplies through to Christmas. High numbers of tawa, rewarewa, pigeonwood varieties, and many other species are flourishing throughout the understorey in the controlled areas of indigenous forest.

Interference has lately occurred on Victra rat traps. This has taken form in the removal of the arm which locks the trap onto the bait platform making the trap useless. One can understand some sympathy for possums held in leg traps for a portion of the night but rats? Hence it does behove considerable head scratching to fathom the objective of such actions. There again there are worthy people who keep rats, cats and fitches as pets..

To know that in a few year's time, if control continues, increasing levels of hinau, miro, kanono, kaikomako, nikau, tawa, karaka, karamu drupes / berries will provide quantities of food not seen since European settlement resulted in burning-off, felling, stock grazing and release deliberately or otherwise of innumerable predators is something of which the Trust can be proud. Let's hope that the ten years we have committed ourselves to the kiwi Project will be duplicated for Restoring the Dawn Chorus.

Expenditure over the coming year could include more use of poisons to control both inside and outside the operational zone. Perhaps too Restoring the Dawn Chorus should take a leaf out of the Kiwi Group and hold the odd get-together to promote both the project and to say thanks to the helpers.

Sometime after September, Doc's Andrew Morrison may include a portion of the operational zone to fully control rats in an on-going effort to free as much of the area as possible altogether of rats allowing for the possible re-introduction of North Island Robin.

John A. Rush 9/06/05.

## **Update on Kiwi Project Operations**

### **1. Stoat trapping**

The trapping team are continuing to terrorize stoats and rats in and around the Turere catchment! We'd like to acknowledge the contribution of Melody and Colin McLaughlin for looking after the egg supply, Bill McCabe for adjusting traps, and Paul King for valiantly moving stoat tunnels around on the top ridges. Andrew Morrison has taken over the spreadsheet and is doing an excellent job of keeping our tally up to date, and Kate Zwartz is helping out with volunteer communication. As well as these die-hards, we'd also like to say a big thank-you to the Kiwi Committee and to all of our regular trappers for their efforts!

The plots below show the variation in stoat kill by month since the first traps of the network were installed in November 2003. A total of 146 stoats have been killed. The rise and fall in stoat catch follows a typical yearly pattern with highest catch-rates in late mid-late summer. The second plot shows catch normalised by number of traps. The catch per trap has diminished as we have expanded our network and increased trap density.

A new line is being developed to widen our coverage at the northern end of the Turere stream, which is an area being discussed as a possible release site for the North Island brown kiwi.

Andrew Morrison and Rob Stone from DoC have also been planning a monitoring network for rats and stoats to check our trapping effectiveness.

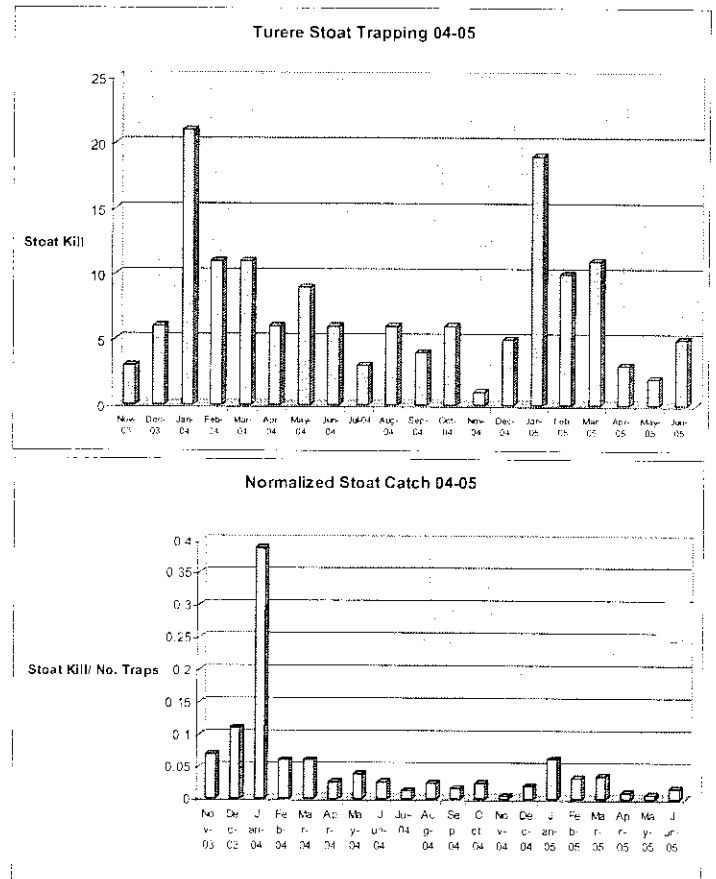
2. New Kiwi Operations Group- Friends of Rimutaka Apteryx (FORA)

Although we have yet to get the "official" word from DoC re: releasing kiwi in the Park, signs are sufficiently encouraging that we have formed a new group of volunteers to plan and form the core of a group to manage kiwi release and monitoring. This group (FORA) is convened by Annette Harvey and consists of a keen group of ornithologists. We are also planning to train some of the stoat trappers - and any one else who is interested - to help with remote tracking of kiwi this coming spring and summer. Do let us know if you would like to be involved with this effort.

3. Volunteers needed!

We welcome new volunteers to help out with operations in the Kiwi project, and to help us out with project and volunteer organisation. If you can help out, let us know! There is a task for every fitness level.

Susan Ellis, July 2005



**Interested Kindred Member Group Activities**

**Lower Hutt Forest & Bird**

Planting on Matiu/Somes Island is now confined to filling in cleared patches of Karo trees with canopy species Rata, Rimu, Matai, Kohekohe, Rewarewa, Tawa, etc. The volunteer groups are still very active and work parties on the island are held on the second and fourth Monday of each month. Also, work parties are active at the Pauatahanui Wetlands Project on the first and third Monday of each month. Also of interest are the proposed activities in the east Harbour Regional Park at the Lakes Block, Lake Kohangatera and Lake Kohangapiripiri since stock have been removed!!

**Friends of Belmont Regional Park**

The main thrust over recent months has been the lobbying of the public and MPs to retain the Waitangirua Farm as part of the