

Predator-Free Pukerua Bay: March and April 2017 Update

Hello all

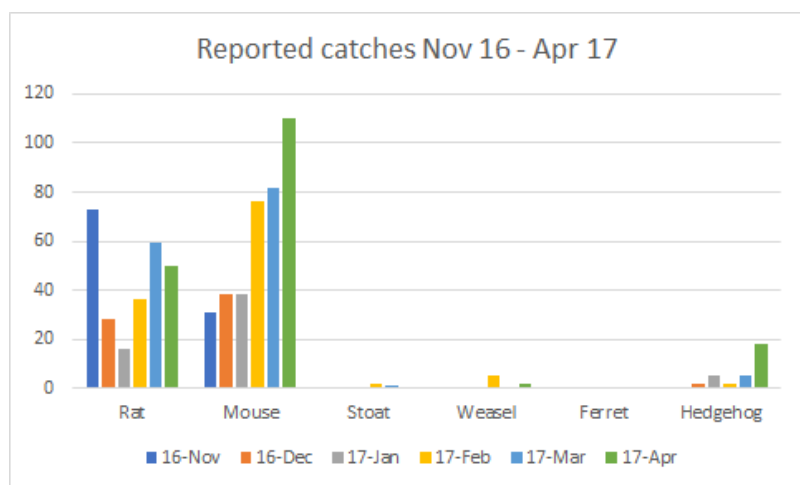
Autumn is definitely with us now - longer, cooler nights means that rats and mice are looking for warmer lodgings. It's a great time to check your roof cavities and out-buildings for signs of rats and mice and place traps accordingly. We had great success at our house just by moving our trap into the garden shed (previously, it was just outside by the shed door): we caught a mouse and a rat that very night! We have also heard of others putting a little bit of bait at the tunnel entrance as a lure, which has been successful.

March and April's 2017's reported catches

March and April's catch numbers continue to increase.

Total reported catches since 12 November 2016: 262 rats; 375 mice; 10 mustelids (all in the Scientific Reserve); and 32 hedgehogs.

Welcome on board to our newest trappers! At the end of April, we have 102 properties involved in Predator-free Pukerua Bay (about 14



percent of all Pukerua Bay properties). All of the original 90 traps/tunnels provided by the Department of Conservation have now been sponsored - what a great effort from the community!

Pukerua Bay's Next Top Ratter and Top Mouser: March and April

Congratulations!

April's Top Ratter is Matt Wilson (9 rats). Honourable mentions to Jane Abdee and Nikky & Chris Winchester. Our top ratter for March was Julie Kilpatrick (26 rats).

Lots of mousing over the last two months: April's Top Mouser is Matt Wilson. March's champion mouser was Peter Roach.

Keep up the great work everyone! Hopefully, you and your neighbours are noticing more bird and wildlife in your areas!

Your baited, set trap is an important strategic part of our community network whether or not you catch anything. Good trap coverage ensures that we catch what is around and provides some insurance against re-invasion. If you have not yet caught anything, don't worry or feel like you are not making a difference: just keep the bait fresh, check the trap regularly, and report any catches.

A few very important thank yous!

We made an application for funding support to Porirua City Council. It has very generously agreed to fund a further 75 rat traps and tunnels for sponsorship in and around the village. Thank you very much Porirua City Council! These extra traps/tunnels mean that we can continue our efforts to get sufficient coverage for effective predator control. These traps and tunnels are available for sponsorship NOW and we are keen to get these out ASAP. Get your friends and neighbours to contact us on predatorfreepkb@gmail.com if they are interested.

We are also very lucky to have a talented builder of tunnels on the team. Kerry's work is well supported by his employer, Placemakers Paraparaumu. So a big shout out to both for their effort and support of our community trapping initiative!

Finally, thanks to all of you who stopped by at the school gala - it was great to catch up!

Lizard monitoring in the scientific reserve

Volunteers monitored lizards in the Pukerua Bay Scientific Reserve for 51 days during summer, led by herpetologist Don Newman. No Whitaker's skinks were found. About a quarter of the lizards found were raukawa geckos (also known as common geckos), three quarters were skinks. Most of the skinks found were identified as northern grass skinks (also known as common skinks). The two other skink species found were glossy brown skinks and copper skinks. Generally fewer lizards were found this summer than last, however that is probably due to the cooler, wetter summer that we have experienced. But we are concerned that the number of glossy brown skinks appears to be declining over time. Despite this concern, the number of lizards found here was good enough for DOC to also use the site for training volunteers in lizard handling and identification. Lizard monitoring has now finished for the year. Predator trapping (a DOC/Friends of Mana Island volunteer project) will continue all year around the reserve, along with the Regional Council doing some weed control. Thanks to Gillian for this update!

Five-minute bird counts and the NZ Garden Bird Survey

All of our trapping activity is designed to support safer backyard habitats. Understanding our success is about knowing our bird and wildlife. We have a few people in Pukerua Bay who are trained in doing five minute bird counts. We will doing these in a few locations throughout the Bay and can use this data to monitor impact.

LandCare New Zealand also do the NZ Garden Bird Survey in late June/early July. This is a great opportunity for all of us to spend some time with a cup of tea watching the birds in the garden. No training is necessary! We will post a reminder and link closer to the date.

What are we spending the sponsorship money on?

Pukerua Bay is surrounded by farmland, including a pine block. We have decided to use some of the funds raised through community sponsorship to support expansion of a trapping programme into these areas. We are looking to install DOC 200 traps, which are effective for rats and mustelids. We are currently talking to land-owners to get this underway!

Mapping

Helli has been busy developing maps of predator control activities in Pukerua Bay. These maps will help us decide what activities to prioritise and where (including the village perimeter and the Scientific Reserve). We expect to keep developing our map. At the moment, it only shows what we *know*. Let us know if there is activity you know about that we can add!

To protect your privacy, we have placed a trap location marker near participating properties rather than exactly on it. Check out what's going on near you.



Predator Free Pukerua Bay trap coverage as of 1 April 2017.

How to report your catches

For our newest trappers: please do report your catches. This helps us to monitor our overall success in catching predators. When you catch something, please tell us by:

- Emailing this address (predatorfreepkb@gmail.com), or
- Posting to the Predator-free Pukerua Bay Facebook page.

Finally, and as always, a big thank you to you all for being a part of Predator-free Pukerua Bay. It is awesome to have great community support and involvement for this initiative: we couldn't do it without you!

The Predator-free Pukerua Bay Team