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## COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER – Mahi tahi!!

### Rangers' Report - June - October 2022

#### Operational Summary

Tena koutou katoa,

There has been a lot going on at Te Whara the past few months which meant the ranger reports skipped a couple months. This report will bring you up to speed and we will be back to our regular bi-monthly updates going forward.

Key points:

- The Number of pests being caught in traps has decreased steadily since June (refer to trapping results and appendix). This might be because pest numbers are low and/or they are more trap shy at the moment
- Uptake of toxin across the reserve and through the 1080 operation has been quite low. The grassy eastern end of the reserve is the exception
- Possum catches and camera detections have dropped a lot since May 2022
- Detections of stoats by the camera network have fluctuated through the year
- A handful of pōpokotea/whitehead individuals were spotted during the September survey. Learnings from this survey will soon be shared
- A set of new rangers were added to the mix: Myself (Tom FP), Nate and Wauku
- 12 healthy GFP chicks inside burrows were confirmed at the nesting site during the September check. A stoat has been spotted snooping around the nesting area which is being chased down
- The nursery is ticking along with the leadership of Tom G and the help of the wider volunteer and BHCT team



Image: Female pōpokotea photographed by Zoe Stone during the September pōpokotea/whitehead survey

## Trapping results

The following trapping result tables represent what has been caught in the most recent two months. If you are interested in catching up on the three months prior, refer to the appendix at the end of this document.

### Monthly predator control results: September 2022

Pest/ Predator	BHSR							LTR & Buffer	
	Total # caught this month BHSR.	# caught this month previous year in BHSR.	# of total rats caught this month Norway or Ship rats?	Total # caught inside res. this month (i.e. not on LTR/buffer).	Total # caught inside res. this month previous yr (i.e. not on LTR/buffer).	# caught 2022 YTD	# caught 2021 YTD.	Total # caught this month LTR.	Total # caught this month BUFFER.
Rat	3	9	1 Ship/2 Norway	1 of 3	6 of 9	101	68	2	0
Possum	0	1	-	0	1 of 1	11	12	0	0
Stoat	0	0	-	0	0	12	9	0	0
Weasel	0	4	-	0	0 of 2	8	24	0	0
Ferret	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feral cat	0	0	-	0	0	2	0	0	0
Mouse	5	8	-	0 of 5	5 of 8	119	83	5	0
Hedgehog	0	2	-	0	2 of 2	8	16	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>1 of 8</b>	<b>14 of 22</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>

#### Analysis:

- Number of pests being caught has decreased slightly. It is possible the 1080 operation has made an impact on what we catch in our kill traps.
- LTR was dominant in catches for this month.

**KEY:** **BHSR** – Bream Head/Te Whara Scenic Reserve.

**LTR** – Load the Road (All Ocean Beach Road).

**BUFFER** – Private land b/t BHSR and Ocean Beach Road.

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Rat	5	8	2 Ship/3 Norway	0 of 5	0 of 4	106	76	2	2
Possum	0	1	-	0	0 of 1	11	13	0	0
Stoat	0	0	-	0	0	12	9	0	0
Weasel	1	6	-	1 of 1	4 of 6	9	30	0	0
Ferret	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feral cat	0	0	-	0	0	2	0	0	0
Mouse	4	9	-	4 of 9	7 of 15	123	91	4	0
Hedgehog	0	0	-	0	0	8	16	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>1 of 6</b>	<b>11 of 26</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>

#### Analysis:

- Catch totals for 2022 remain higher than in 2021. The addition of LTR followed by the increase in check frequency have made a probable impact on our year to date total
- Toxin uptake by rats and mice has been low for the majority of the reserve. This suggests low rodent numbers inside the reserve and could be why trap catch is low. Stay tuned for the next run of rodent monitoring to see if this is the case.

**KEY:** **BHSR** – Bream Head/Te Whara Scenic Reserve.

**LTR** – Load the Road (All Ocean Beach Road).

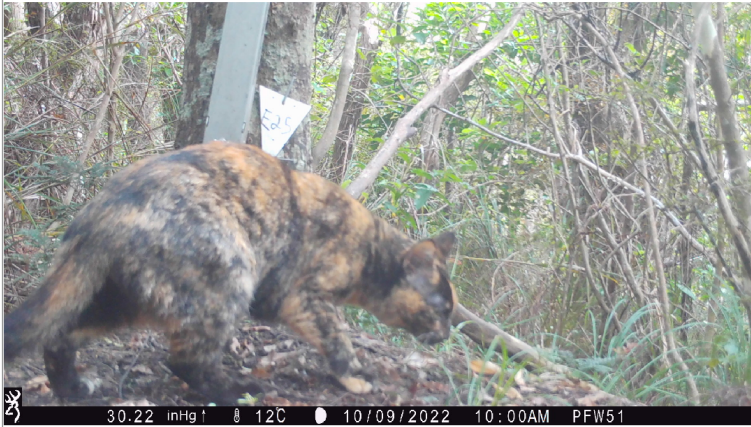
**BUFFER** – Private land b/t BHSR and Ocean Beach Road.

## Advanced camera detection results

The cameras have been consistent in snapping great shots of kiwi. Unfortunately the cameras are increasingly detecting stoats and cats. On a positive note, possum detections have steadily dropped as we only get a few stragglers show up from time to time. PFW and BHCT rangers are doing a great job of catching the majority of these individuals in traps. It's been a huge help knowing when and where possums are moving through the reserve.

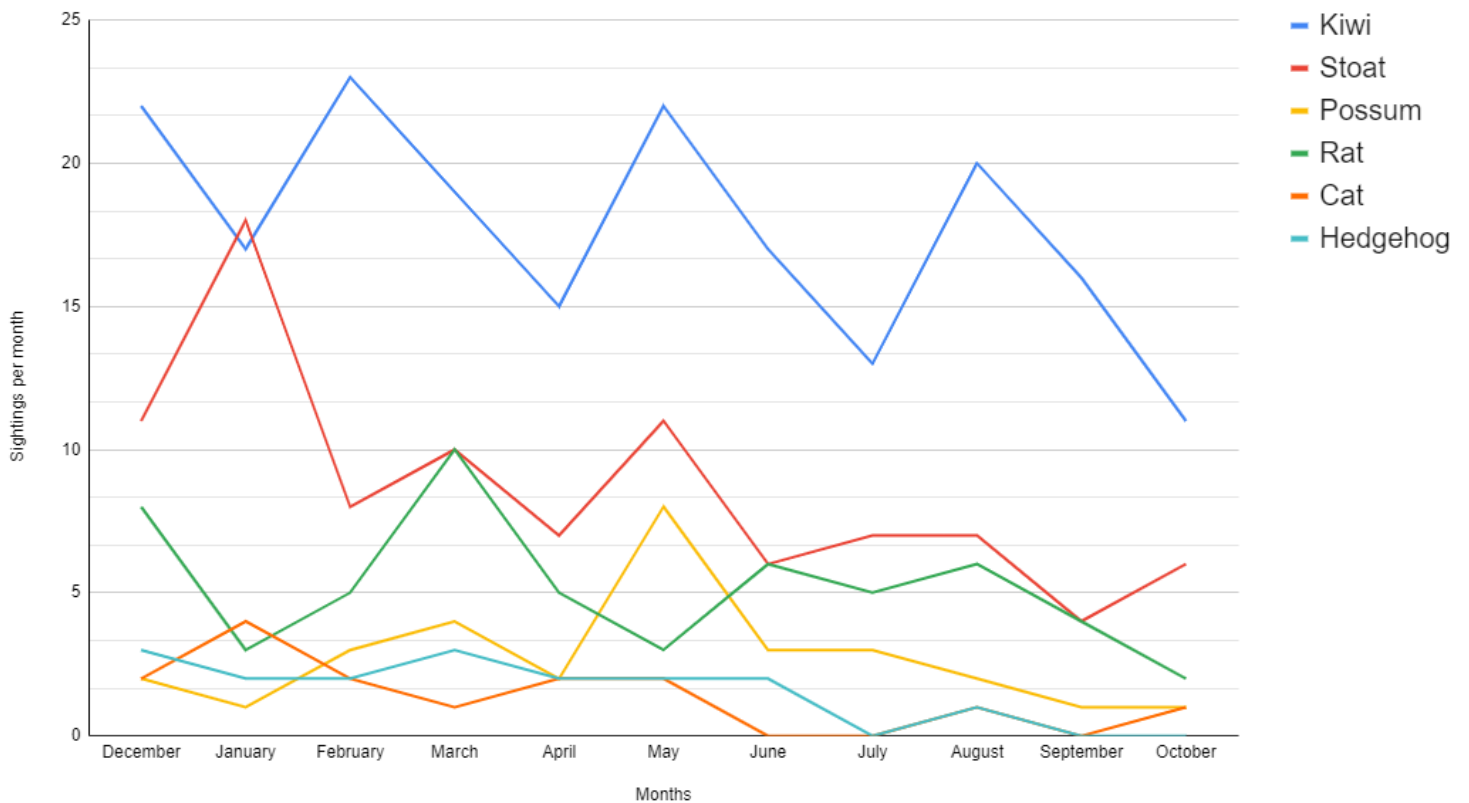
Below are some recent images of the different species caught on camera: Top left = Kiwi, top right = soon to be caught possum, bottom left = cat, bottom right = very cheeky stoat.





The graph below shows totals for each species detected by cameras. These totals build a trend over time. The detections started in November 2021. The camera's focus is on automatic lure dispensers (ALD's) using mayonnaise as the attractant.

PFW/BHCT camera detection data



## Board of trustees updates

*Written by Geoff Pike, Trustee and Chair of the operations committee:*

This is the first report written by our new head ranger. I do hope you find it interesting and informative. He has delegated a few jobs to us oldies and mine is to thank our long serving chair, Greg Innes who is taking a bit of time off to re-energise after a very full on role as deputy mayor.

In his place we are very pleased and lucky to gain the skills of Nicola Hartwell who is standing in while Greg is away.

Nicola has been a long time volunteer for BHCT, working regularly servicing bait stations on the hill.

She was invited onto the trust as a trustee to fill the vacancy left by our old friend Rod Gates who previously looked over, so competently, the legal portfolio for our organisation. In her day job, Nicola is a lawyer employed by the Northland Regional Council.



## Environmental education

*Written by Lil Craig, Chair of the BHCT education committee:*

It's great to see schools back visiting the reserve after a couple of unsettled years due to Covid 19. We love having the opportunity to inspire our young people to engage in conservation and restoration activities.

We held a successful information evening in September to inform schools about our education programme and it's great to see some of those schools going on to plan visits to the Reserve. Our new rangers are keen to be involved in our programme and have some great ideas to include in our presentations. We are looking to expand our programme to include students working in our nursery; we also see authentic opportunities for schools to use the Reserve as a resource when working on the new Histories Curriculum.

We will shortly be working on our next 5 Year Education Plan, prioritising and setting goals for the future. We are grateful for the support we have from local community volunteers, schools and our rangers. If you'd like to find out more visit the BHCT website or contact Lil on [education@breamheadtrust.nz](mailto:education@breamheadtrust.nz) Nga mihi nui!

## Update from the Predator Free Whangarei project

*Written by: Joanne Kim- Communications and Engagement Coordinator Predator Free Northland Regional Council » Te Kaunihera ā rohe o Te Taitokerau*

## Predator Free Whangārei

*Tiaki te whenua, tiaki te tangata*

We wish the Bream Head Conservation Trust a safe and happy summer holiday! A BIG thank you to the landowners, community groups, Aki Tai Here, schools, and all our supporters this past year.

### Progress in two snapshots



Possum presence in April this year



Possum presence in October this year

Since we began activating the traps and toxin stations in April this year, our trail cameras have been detecting less possums over the months.



Thanks to the multiple conservation groups, such as Bream Head Conservation Trust, Ocean Beach Landcare, Backyard Kiwi, and other landcare groups, we've had a head start in reducing the possum numbers. We are now working hard and thinking strategically to capture that last possum, which is likely to be trap and/or bait shy.

We are ready to move beyond Taurikura and progress into new areas! We are very excited to meet and talk with the Reotahi residents.

The Ocean Beach strip is an interesting area for the project, particularly during Spring, as possums take advantage of the fresh pastoral shoots in the coastal dunes. To prevent re-incursion from happening, we have deployed self-resetting traps. Also, these automated traps can help our field team in taking a break over summer as well!



### At the Bream Head Reserve

*Live leghold traps* - We have activated 21 live leghold traps at the reserve, which is one of the best eradication tools we have, and a device that is used when possum numbers are extremely low. It exploits the possum's curious nature for new objects and is able to report to the field team live-time when the trap has been set off. It has also meant that a weekend roster has begun, as we are legally required to respond and humanely dispatch the predator caught in the leg hold!

To date, we have not caught any possums with the leg holds activated on the Bream Head/Te Whara reserve.

*Possum Presence* – it was a surprise when a camera at the bottom edge of the reserve detected a possum last month in October as the last time one was detected was in July! If you spot a possum in the reserve, or anywhere around Bream Head/Te Whara and Taurikura, please let us know!

### Meet a (few) volunteer(s)... Mhairi McCready

*Written by BHCT volunteer coordinator Jenny Lawrence:*

BHCT extends their gratitude to Mhairi McCready and her partner and part time BHCT Ranger Keith Townsend who recently donated days of hard work organizing and surveying the steep terrain of Bream Head Te Whara searching for our resident pōpokotea/whitehead. Mhairi, with her many connections in New Zealand's birding community, brought in many volunteers, both locals and from around the North Island, to support this major task.

Some of our BHCT legendary volunteers like Tony Climie, Alan Willis, Neil and Yvonne Beney, Bill Mallett and Marc Lawrence were joined by relative newcomers Patrick Holmes and Rick Tillett. Field rangers Tom Grinsted and Nate McDonald gave up their weekend and from our fantastic community - Predator Free Whangarei guru Su Sinclair gave us a hand and was joined by more folks with significant expertise who came from as far as New Plymouth, Rotorua and Auckland. Thanks to Leani, Luca, Simon Deb, Zoe and Janet we hope you return again.

BHCT's great friend and former trustee, Claire Pearson and partner Mark provided their premium accommodation for our visiting volunteers at **Bream Head Coast Walks**.

Mhairi and Keith spent countless hours planning and connecting with knowledgeable bird surveyors and our new Head Ranger, Tom Flynn Plummer as well as volunteers to act with the guiding and support. We did find a handful of

individuals and some pairs which is valuable knowledge for Tom and the trust to establish our translocation path going forward. Below are some images of Mhairi with her crew and a stunning female pōpokotea perched on a young karaka.



## Rangers' reports

*Written by BHCT ranger Tom Flynn-Plummer:*

### Pest control

Since my start in August, the hill has been ticking away nicely considering the changes with staff and volunteers. When I first got here, we were in the middle of a 1080 operation, so I enjoyed jumping straight into the reserve. The 1080 lines were done relatively quickly. Unfortunately uptake was quite low across the reserve but was high in the grassy areas toward the eastern end. Pindone uptake on the non-1080 lines has been reasonably low. This suggests that there hasn't been a lot of rat activity in the reserve. Uptake of toxin in the Placostylus/flax snail area near peach cove and the kakerakau/bream head skink at Te Whara peak has been quite high.

### Ranger team

One of our new part-time rangers Nate McDonald has recently taken on our DOC Whangarei Heads trapping contract across the wider heads area and has been doing a great job. His true passion is track maintenance so we have been harnessing that passion on the volunteer lines.

Our newest addition to the BHCT family, Wauku Mei, started as a ranger in September and has been learning the ropes (in some places quite literally). Coming from a weed control background, he was keen to learn the other aspects of pest control. He has taken on a handful of trap/toxin lines and manages to fit in the odd day controlling weeds and maintaining tracks.

Tom Grinsted (Turbo Tom), known around here for his unmatched speed in the bush, has taken on the role of coordinating our nursery project whilst finding time to do his toxin/trap lines. Keep up the good work mate.

Keith Townsend, who is now the BHCT ranger veteran among us, fills in from time to time and is enjoying working hard on his own restoration project down the road. Good on ya Keith.

Hadden Morrison, who is now on the PFW team, somehow finds time to help us with our trail camera data. We enjoy his occasional visits and hope he's enjoying his new role.

### Interesting finds

Here's an image of a velvet worm (peripatus/ngaokeoke) found deep inside the reserve. It fell out of a small burrow in an old pūriri tree when I rested my hand on it. Had to return it to its hiding place! These little critters look like a cross between a caterpillar and a worm. They have remained the same for around 500 million years. Truly a blast from the past.



Click the following link for more information from the DOC website:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/invertebrates/peripatus-ngaokeoke/>



# Oi/Grey Faced Petrel (GFP) nesting update

*Written by volunteer Cathy Mitchell:*

## Season summary to mid-November 2022

Our trapping and monitoring of the Oi/grey-faced petrel site is in full swing as usual for this time of year. Trail cameras have detected mice but no rats or cats at the site. Unfortunately, in October a stoat was detected. Some modifications have been made to the trapping programme and we are trying a range of baits and lures to entice this predator into one of our traps.

Cathy and Edin (fellow researcher) checked the study burrows with burrow scopes in August. Of the 20 burrows, 17 had an adult GFP present and 11 of the adults were confirmed to be incubating eggs. In addition two new active burrows were found; an encouraging finding as this indicates the possibility of young prospecting birds that may increase the colony size in future years. Cathy and Edin checked the burrows again in September and 12 of 20 burrows were confirmed to have young chicks present, a very good result - the highest number of chicks found at the site to date. The final burrow check of the season, to look for chicks close to fledging, will be carried out at the end of November.

Cathy and Pete have also been monitoring a couple of burrows at another site west of the Peach Cove hut. Trail cameras indicated one of the burrows was active with regular visits by two adult GFP, one of which is banded. Unfortunately a stoat was detected at this site as well and video footage showed that it predated the chick and removed it from the burrow.



## Nursery update

*Written by ranger Tom Grinsted:*

In late August we planted Smugglers' sourced Mānuka seeds at the nursery site. The emerging seedlings were not as healthy and/or plentiful as first hoped. We think the seedlings needed more sunlight and warmer temperatures than was available at the chosen location. The seed trays have been moved as has the climate for germination so better plant growth is expected soon. Contingency seed trays had also been sown and these trays are progressing well. Pricking out into root trainers is the next step, so we will be organising working bees again soon. Thanks to the nursery team for your involvement so far.

The nursery infrastructure is coming along. We completed the small water tower and promptly ran a rudimentary test of the flood and drain bed system. The system worked as designed, filling the bed up with water relatively quickly. Without waiting for the water to permeate into the root trainers we also tested draining the bed by removing the end timbers. Next steps are improving the watering system and erecting up the shade cloth prior to the pricked out root trainers entering the system.

Below are some images of the progress: Left = Mānuka seedlings in their seeding trays, Right = Flood/drain watering system.

