

## Waitutu Field Trip May 2015 14<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> May

This was a quarterly monitoring trip with the usual tracking tunnel monitoring lines run, and seedfall collected. Predictions of a substantial rimu mast event for the wider region this coming season and the reappearance of stoats hastened the opening of the trap network at Poteriteri and east of the Waitutu River.

The weather for the whole trip was pretty much best summed up as wet, windy (for some), cold and dark.

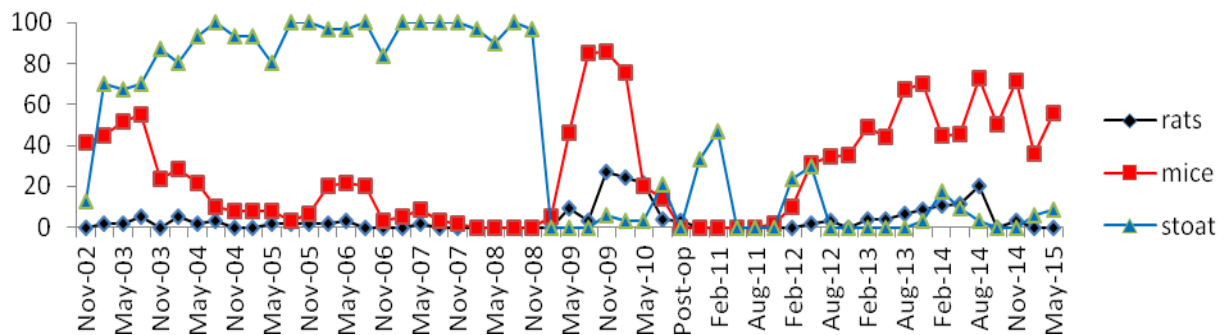
### Personal:

- Poteriteri Hut – Terry Greene, James Mortimer.
- Slaughter Burn Hut – Colin Bishop
- Waitutu Hut – Rose Collen, Benno Kappers & Stephen MacDonald
- Crombie Bivy – Peter Dilks
- Grant Burn – John Garratt

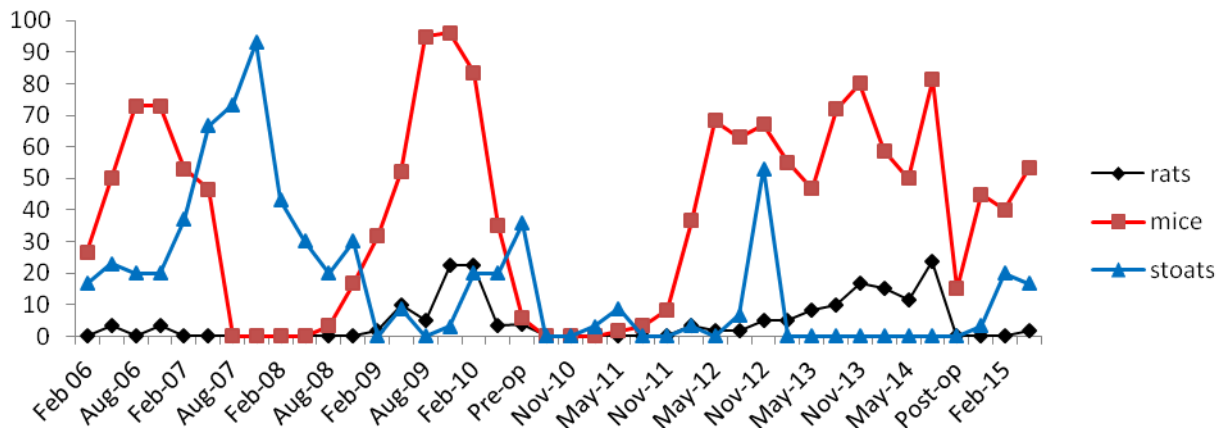
### Tracking Tunnels

Following the 1080 operation in August mouse numbers have bounced back somewhat (they were much in evidence at the less than rodent proof Poteriteri Hut) with only the Waitutu and Crombie lines recording tracking rates of less than 50%. Interestingly mouse numbers never reached the zero detection rates following the initial 1080 operation in 2010. Although stoat numbers were knocked down to very low levels after the 2014 1080 operation numbers are slowly starting to creep up again. Rats remain at very low levels and at three sites remain undetectable. Given the cold and miserable winter conditions and the opening of significant numbers of traps we remain optimistic that winter survival for all of these pests will be low.

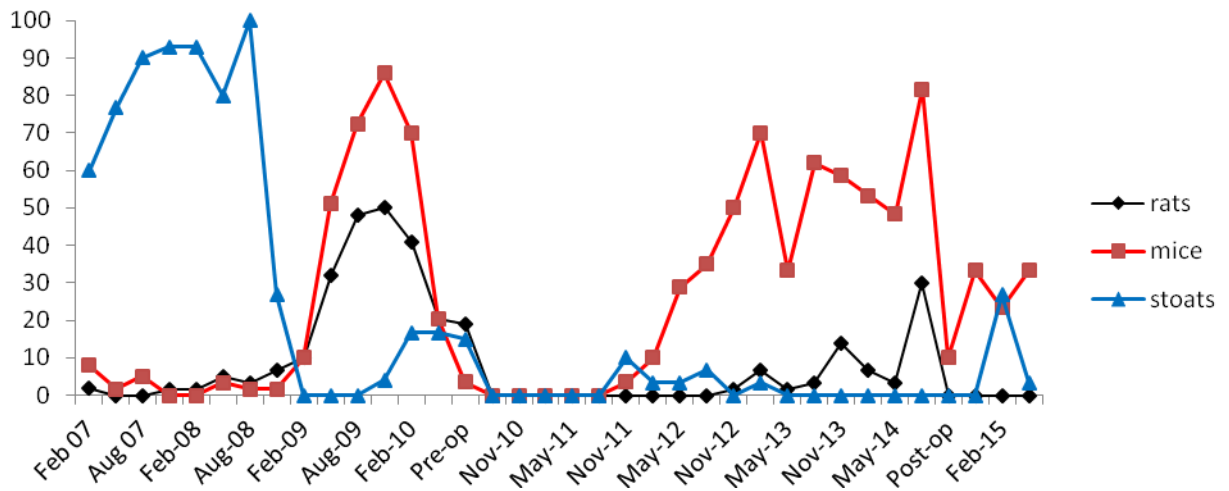
Slaughter Burn - % of tunnels tracked



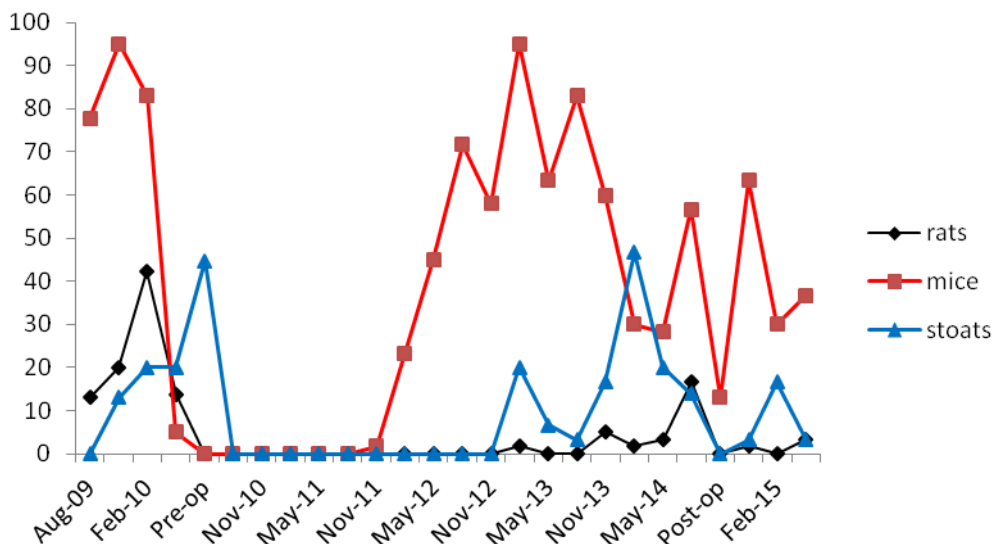
Poteriteri - % of tunnels tracked



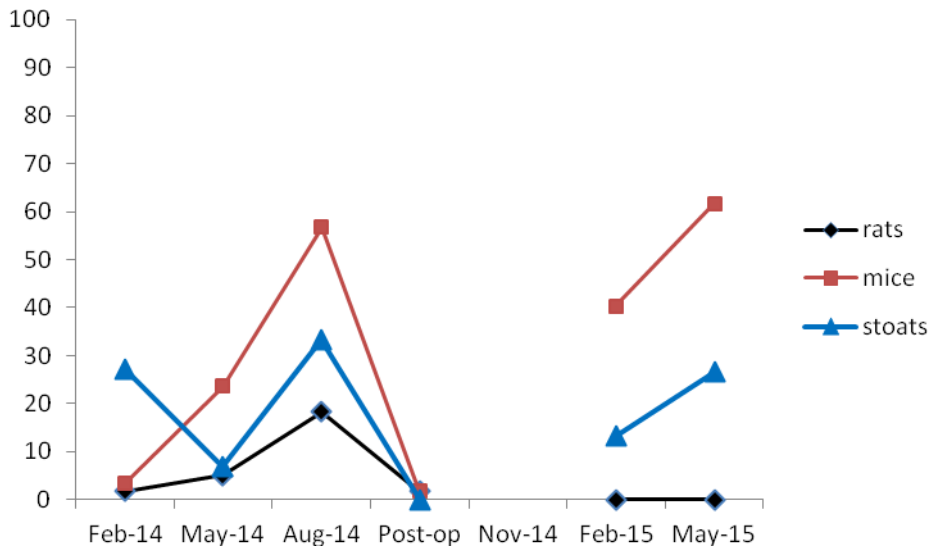
Waitutu - % of tunnels tracked



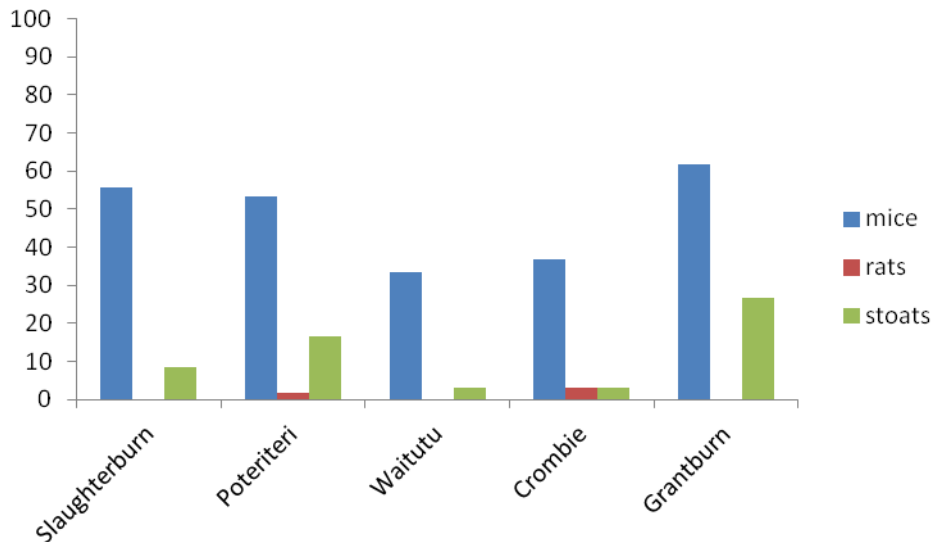
Crombie - % of tunnels tracked



## Grant Burn - % of tunnels tracked



## May 2015 - all areas - % of tunnels tracked



### Stoat traps

All stoat traps in the Poteriteri block and those east of the Waitutu River further south were serviced, baited (salted rabbit meat) and reopened. Most traps were in good condition with minimal work required to bring them to an operational state. Trigger pressures for all opened traps were altered to spring at approximately 50 g. It is hoped that the reduced trigger pressure will allow more efficient capture of weasels which seem to be increasing in the area. Stoats were captured in several traps in both the Poteriteri and Waitutu blocks immediately after they were set.

## **Other stuff....**

### **Slaughter Burn**

- Large boar shot on the 'toll road' east of the Waitutu River.
- Fern bird heard and seen near trap WTL 21 on flood plain east of the Waitutu River.
- Other birdlife – 3-4 kaka, bellbirds, lots of fantails, grey warbler, kereru, tomtit, one kea, robins, chaffinch, robins, paradise shelduck.
- Fresh possum sign seen on line 6
- White fibreglass poles required for seedfall trays at SBA grid to make it easier to find them.
- Track clearing carried out between hut and bridge and on TT line 6.

### **Crombie**

- More pink and yellow markers required, some lines are a bit light.
- Route needs slashing and clearing with handsaw.

### **Poteriteri**

- A somewhat cold, wet and windy trip not helped by very short daylight hours and a fairly full work programme.
- The lake level was extremely high with the track to the toilet flooded for the duration of our stay. Both the Brown Burn and the Black Water Creek were also very high and wide which necessitated some interesting wading at times. Negotiating the lake edge to the north was difficult.
- Short day lengths are a significant safety issue at this time of year particularly when having to set and/or deal with traps on the back ridge. A torch and good map of the trap network and bird count grid must be carried. A GPS with the main public track marked on it is also recommended.
- More triangles are required on parts of the above ridge trap lines
- Mouse traps should be part of the standard equipment taken in to Poteriteri Hut
- At least one trap box was missing from the grid and another appeared to be nailed shut
- Birds were very quiet but robins were seen throughout the grid in good numbers
- Several deer were seen or heard and there was plenty of pig sign at the southern end of the grid

### **Waitutu**

- A group of six kaka seen between traps WTL 13 and WTL 14
- Groups of brown creeper, plenty of tomtits and grey warbler. The most commonly encountered bird was fantails – heaps of them!
- More yellow markers required on 54 line between traps 5 & 7, Trap 56L11 needs two new baffles.
- The AB lines need clearing and more yellow markers put up.
- Hut clearing could do with a scub-bar cut
- More blue markers required on TT line 6

- More yellow markers required on 55 Line between traps one to seven.

### **Grant Burn**

- Plenty of fantails, kaka heard on line 5, morepork at the Biv
- Fresh possum sign on line 5
- No fresh pig sign, one stag seen
- Cut route between line 5 & 6, route between line 4 & 3 could do with a trim.
- There is an old wreck of a hut on the foreshore at Knife and Steel Harbour. This will end up in the sea before too much longer due to erosion. It would be good to pull it down, put it into a net and fly it out before it gets spread around the coast.