

## Waitutu Field Trip May 2016 24<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May

This was a quarterly monitoring trip with the usual tracking tunnel monitoring lines run, and seedfall collected. Traps had also been open since May 2015 given predictions of a substantial rimu mast event for the wider region and the associated potential for resurgent numbers of rodents and stoats.

This trip took place after a protracted period of heavy rain making for very wet conditions under foot. Winds during the trip ranged about the compass from NW to SW and around to the E making for generally overcast skies, periods of light rain with a few fine periods thrown in providing at least one morning of frosty conditions.

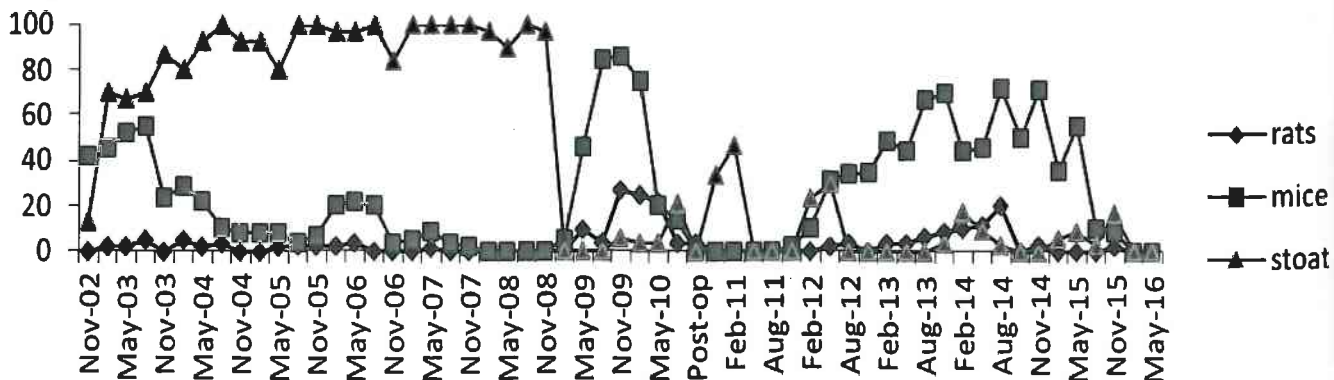
### Personal:

- Poteriteri Hut – Terry Greene, Neil Gatland.
- Slaughter Burn Hut – Peter Dilks, Dean Cole
- Waitutu Hut – Richard Earl, Nelson Chant
- Crombie Bivy – Amber McRae
- Grant Burn – Sanjay Thakur

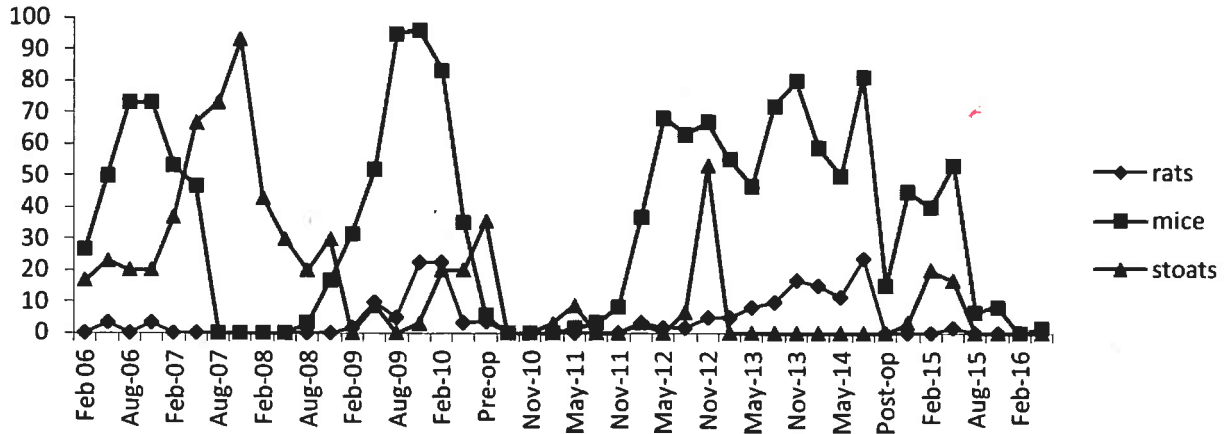
### Tracking Tunnels

Contrary to expectations rodent tracking indices at all monitored sites remain very low despite an apparent double mast event for both silver beech and podocarps (particularly rimu, kahikatea and miro). This lack of rodent activity was particularly pronounced at the usually mouse infested Poteriteri Hut where not a single mouse was seen or heard. Although the situation was similar at most sites for rats the tracking index on the Waitutu grid has continued to slowly increase since November 2015 but remains <10%. Interestingly, this result seems to be somewhat contradicted by the results from the trapping grids (see below) and the noise these rodents were making within the wall cavities of the Poteriteri Hut. Similarly, stoats went largely undetected at all sites with the exception of the Crombie where the tracking rate has continued its decline from August 2015 to around 10%. Although the drivers for low tracking rates are uncertain, recent exceptionally wet weather in the area (~300 mm rain for month of May measured at NIWA weather station at Slaughter Burn) along with a sudden drop in temperature may have played a role. Results for the August monitoring trip will be awaited with interest.

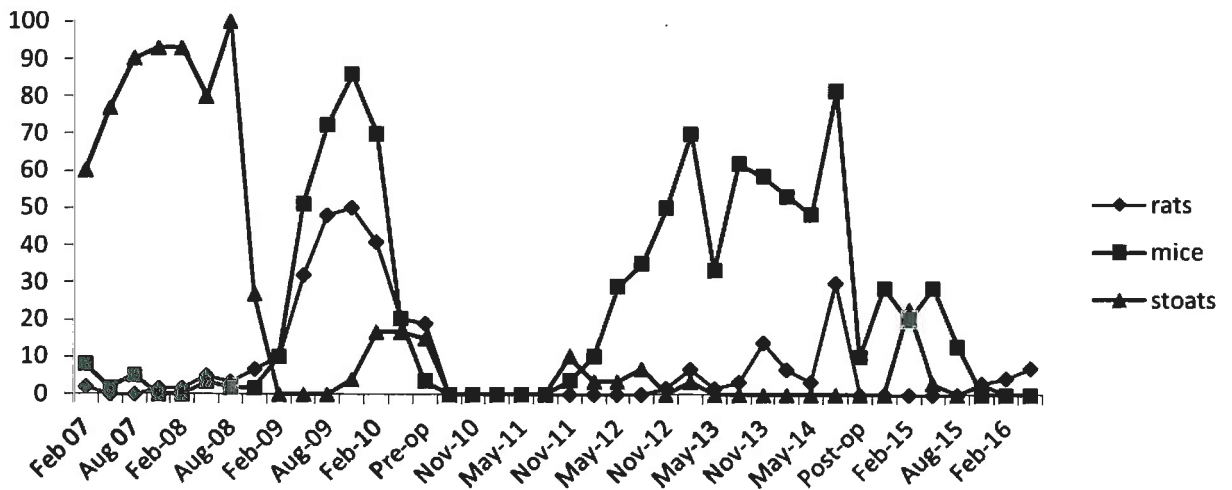
Slaughter Burn - % of tunnels tracked



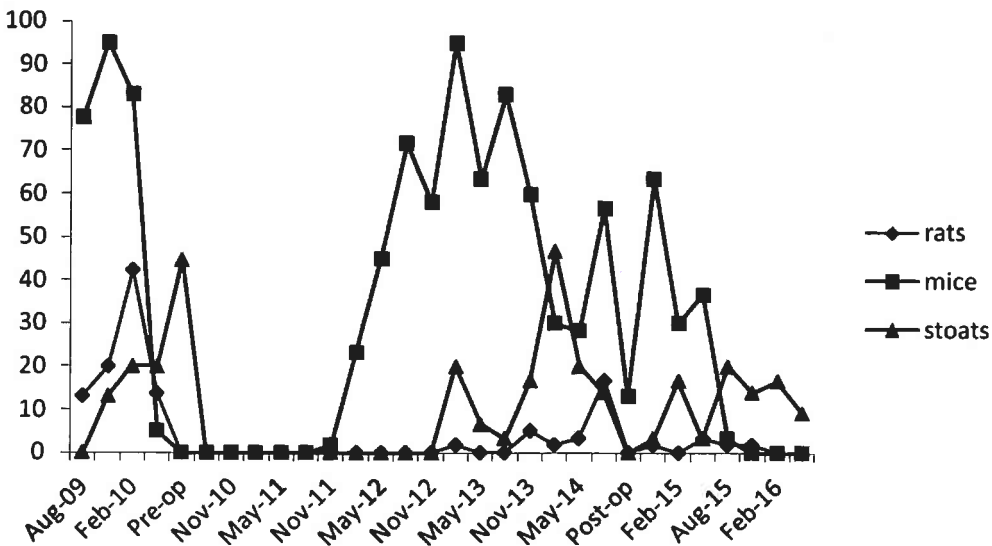
Poteriteri - % of tunnels tracked



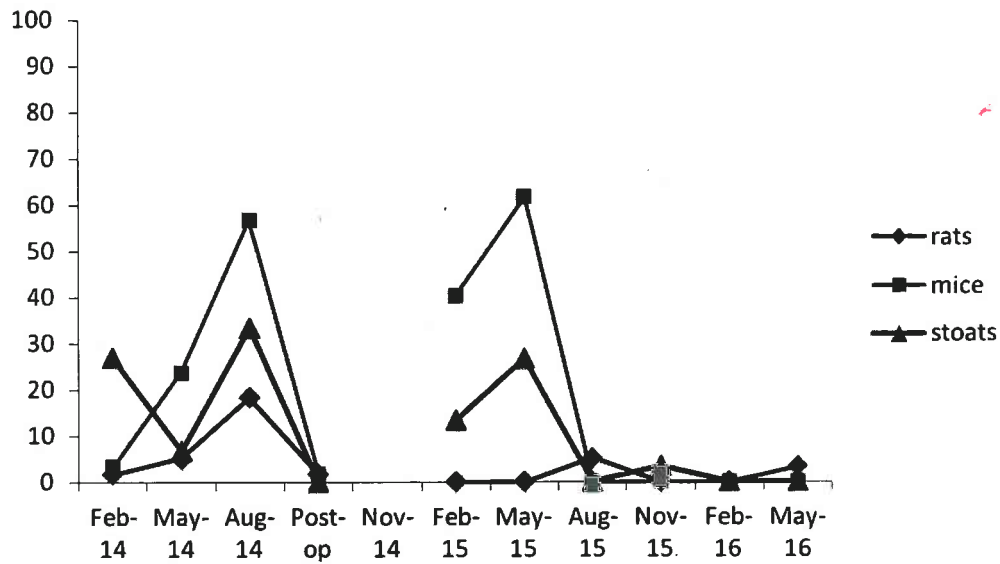
Waitutu - % of tunnels tracked



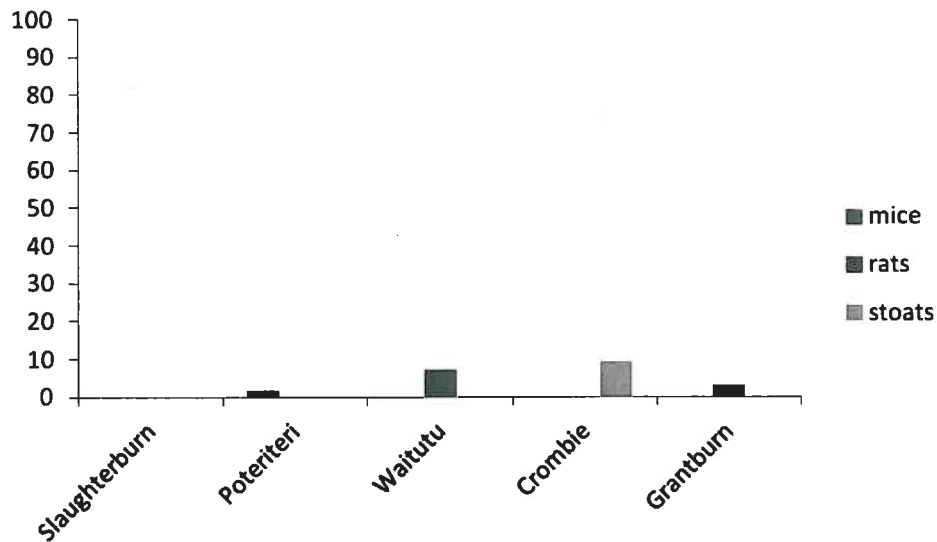
Crombie - % of tunnels tracked



Grant Burn - % of tunnels tracked



May 2016 - all areas - % of tunnels tracked



**Stoat traps**

All stoat traps in the Poteriteri block and those east of the Waitutu River further south were sprung, cleaned, rebaited with fresh salted rabbit meat and reset. Most traps were in good condition with only a couple in the Poteriteri block suffering the effects of water, silt or sand ingress. Results are summarised in the table below.

Despite the relative lack of rodent and mustelid sign within the tracking tunnels the trap data suggests that there may well be higher numbers of animals – particularly rats – within the trapped areas. A reasonable proportion of these animals were relatively fresh. Of the 4 fresh rats captured at Poteriteri all were quite small and may have been kiore. Efforts should be made to accurately identify the species of rats captured in subsequent trips.

Trap catch summary for Waitutu and Poteriteri grids (February and May 2016)

	February 2016			May 2016		
	Waitutu Grid	Poteriteri Grid	Total	Waitutu Grid	Poteriteri Grid	Total
Mouse	0	0	0	3	0	3
Rat	1	2	3	31	10	41
Stoat	4	3	7	9	3	12

The contradictory nature of the results derived from tracking tunnels and traps is something of a concern particularly where management decisions are reliant on the results from such monitoring programmes. It seems likely that the extremely wet weather experienced prior to the May visit, perhaps in combination with an abundance of natural food, may have reduced the attractiveness and therefore the detectability of rats and stoats within tracking tunnels over the short (4 night) monitoring period.

**Bird Lists for each site**

As conditions continue to improve for native fauna in Waitutu it might be useful to keep a running tally of species richness during the quarterly monitoring trips in addition to the more formal bird counts conducted in November.

Species	Pot.	Crom.	SB	Y22	GB	Comment
Black Swan						
Grey Duck	✓					Pot: Base of Blackwater Ck.
Paradise Shelduck			✓		✓	GB: thought one flew over
Black Shag	✓		✓			Pot: Twice at mouth of Brown Burn
White-faced Heron	✓					Pot: Seen at mouth of Brown Burn
NZ Falcon	✓			✓		Pot: Birds heard everyday all over Y22: 'vociferous'
Kereru	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Pot: Present not abundant Crom: Lots Y22: Lots flying about in groups 4-5; display diving, calling GB: Few SB: Lots of birds flying about
Kea	✓		✓	✓	✓	Pot: Small groups flying over and 2 at hut Y22: Seen, close encounters SB: Group of 8 at hut
Kaka	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Pot: All over in good numbers Crom: Common

						Y22: Numbers seen, close encounters
YCP	✓					Pot: Numbers feeding on kahikatea fruit Line 30 swamp
Parakeet spp.		✓	✓		✓	GB: Few heard
Ruru	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Pot: Heard about hut Y22: Seen GB: two at hut
Rifleman	✓	✓			✓	Pot: Relatively few heard/seen
Grey Warbler	✓	✓	✓		✓	Pot: Common
Bellbird	✓	✓	✓		✓	Pot: Common GB: Lots
Tui	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Pot: Common esp Line 30 swamps GB: thought there in numbers
Mohua		✓?				Crom: one heard?
Brown Creeper	✓	✓		✓		Pot: Scattered groups
Fantail	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Pot: Common Y22: Common throughout GB: Lots
Tomtit	✓	✓	✓		✓	Pot: Common
SI Robin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Pot: Common everywhere Crom: Common everywhere Y22: 'quite noticeable' GB: Some SB: Most robins Peter ever seen
Silvereye		✓	✓			
Blackbird	✓		✓			Pot: Few seen/heard
Song Thrush	✓		✓			Pot: Few seen/heard
Starling						
Chaffinch	✓					Pot: Not common – more abundant at Line 30 swamp
Greenfinch		✓?				
Redpoll						

### Other stuff....

#### Slaughter Burn

- Fresh pig rooting on WTL between lines 1 and 2
- 2 deer seen on WTR on lowest river flat before climb up to terrace
- Commented that robins most abundant that Peter has ever seen at SB. Also noted 8 kea at hut feeding on silver beech seed and were present for 3 days
- Still some issues with possums interfering with tunnels – 2 on PB night and 4 on meat night

- Has been huge floods down S B – some of the river flats have been washed away as has part of tracks above and below hut. River now hard against old heli pad which is now covered in sand. A lot of fallen trees in the river. A large slip came down into river bed during our trip, upriver from line 7

### **Crombie**

- Good numbers of birds seen throughout loop particularly kaka, kereru and possibly a mohua heard. Impressed with numbers of birds
- Some damage to three seed rain funnels – repaired
- Most track clearance required in crown fern infested South and SE corner of loop
- Deer heard near hut and one seen between TT lines 3 and 4
- Significant amounts of mountain celery pine, rimu, totara seed on ground and coprosmas laden with fruit
- Expressed concern about large standing dead tree next to dunny.

### **Poteriteri**

- A cold and wet trip. Very busy given short daylight hours.
- The lake level highest ever seen it with track to toilet flooded adjacent to north side of hut for the duration of our stay. Black Water Creek very high at mouth given level of lake. Negotiating the lake edge to the north was difficult Block to north of Brown Burn often flooded to knee depth. Trap N1 flooded (moved).
- Not enough time to trim tracks but major impediments removed on public track through centre of block. RV track between RV8 and Line 30 desperately needs a trim. Tracking tunnel Line 6 (diagonal) needs cutting and requires remarking with triangles (only old bits of tape present).
- Some old blue triangles in vicinity of junction of RV line and Line 6 need removing to prevent confusion.
- Trap at BL2 (south end line 5) still missing
- Birds very vocal for time of year and less than ideal conditions. Impressive numbers of kaka, kea and robins. Falcon heard throughout the grid. Tui and parakeets particularly common on Line 30 in swamps where kahikatea fruiting heavily. Able to catch recently fledged kaka – suggests two broods this season.
- Only one deer heard at back of grid (Line 32) and there was considerable pig sign at the southern end of the grid as per previous trips. TT25 interferred with before arrival and during trip – only one on grid.

### **Waitutu**

- Seemed to get better weather than rest of group
- Impressed by numbers of birds seen and heard with some close encounters with kea, kaka and ruru
- No urgent maintenance jobs reported.
- Hut reasonably tidy.

### **Grant Burn**

- Some track work but thought lines well marked and in good condition
- Saw three pigs by TT60 on 25/05/16 and a hind at TT30 on 26/05/16
- Hut tidy and no obvious jobs/maintenance