

Waitutu Field Trip Summary

Feb 2020



Jenny Rickett

May 2020

Summary:

This report summarises the latest (February 2020) in a long-term series of quarterly monitoring trips at five sites (Poteriteri, Crombie, Waitutu, Slaughter Burn and Grant Burn) within Waitutu Forest. Rodent and mustelid monitoring was carried out, seed fall collected, and traps checked, cleared if necessary and rebaited.

Due to an unexpected weather bomb the trip was cut short by one day which meant that the mustelid monitoring was undertaken over 2 nights rather than 3. The shortened trip also meant that some traps did not get completed.

This trip we began collecting data for the NZ Bird Atlas project and also collected mustelid ear/tail samples for Landcare Research.

Weather:

The weather was warm and mostly dry, with some rain on the second day.

Personnel:

Poteriteri Hut: Jenny Rickett (DOC TA) & Lindsay Chan (DOC GIS, Chch)

Slaughter Burn Hut: Caitlyn Thomas (DOC Invers) & Theo Thompson (Contractor)

Grant Burn Biv: Louise McLaughlin (DOC TA)

Waitutu Hut: Rose Collen (DOC TA) & Micaela Kirby-Crowe (DOC Invers)

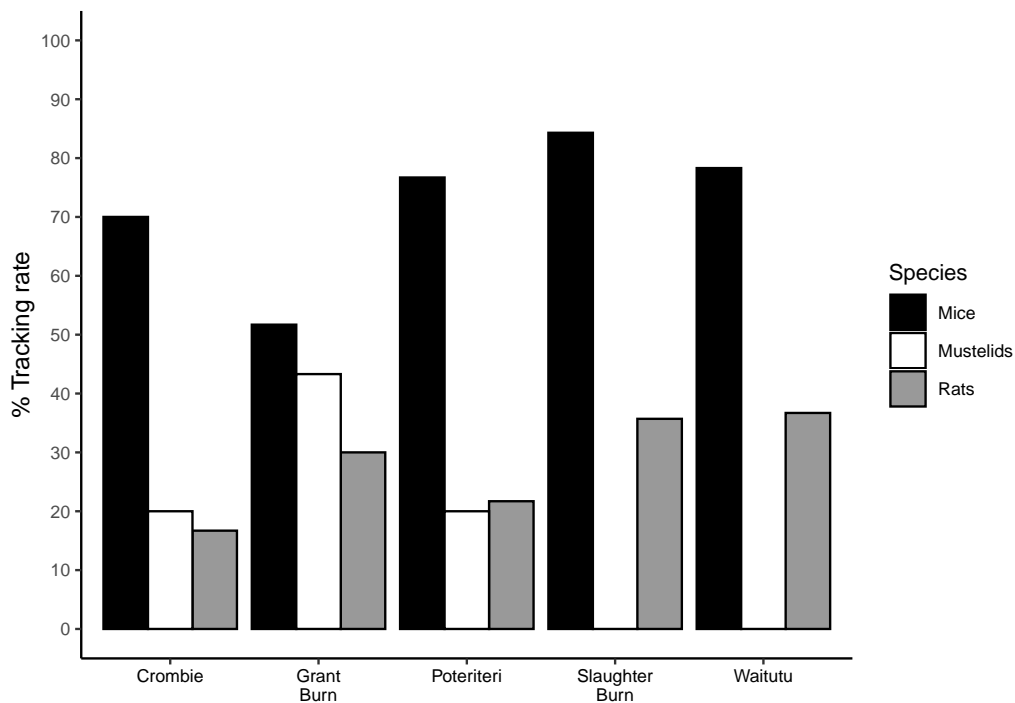
Crombie Biv: Paul Jacques (DOC Invers)

Tracking Tunnels:

Due to an unexpected weather bomb being forecast late into the trip the decision was made to cut the trip short by a day to ensure everyone was out before the bad weather hit. This meant that the mustelid tracking tunnels were only run for two nights rather than three.

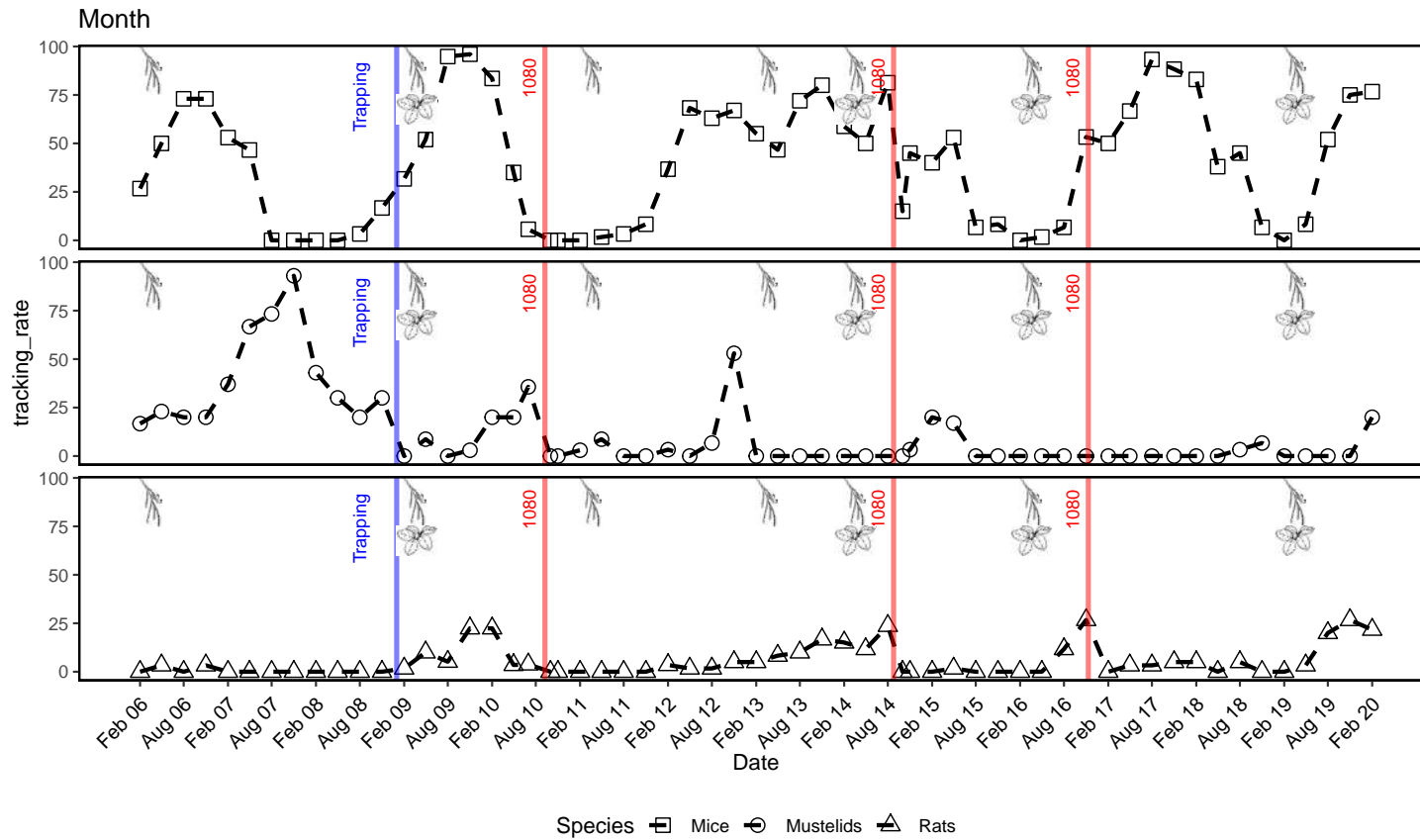
Rat tracking remained fairly high but at all sites had declined from tracking rates seen in November. Mouse tracking increased at all sites except Waitutu where there had been a small decline. Mustelid tracking increased at Crombie and Poteriteri, but decreased at Slaughterburn Waitutu and Grant Burn. Hopefully observed increases in mouse and mustelid tracking rates will have halted and be declining by the time the monitoring is repeated in May 2020.

Nov 2019 - All areas - % of tunnels tracked

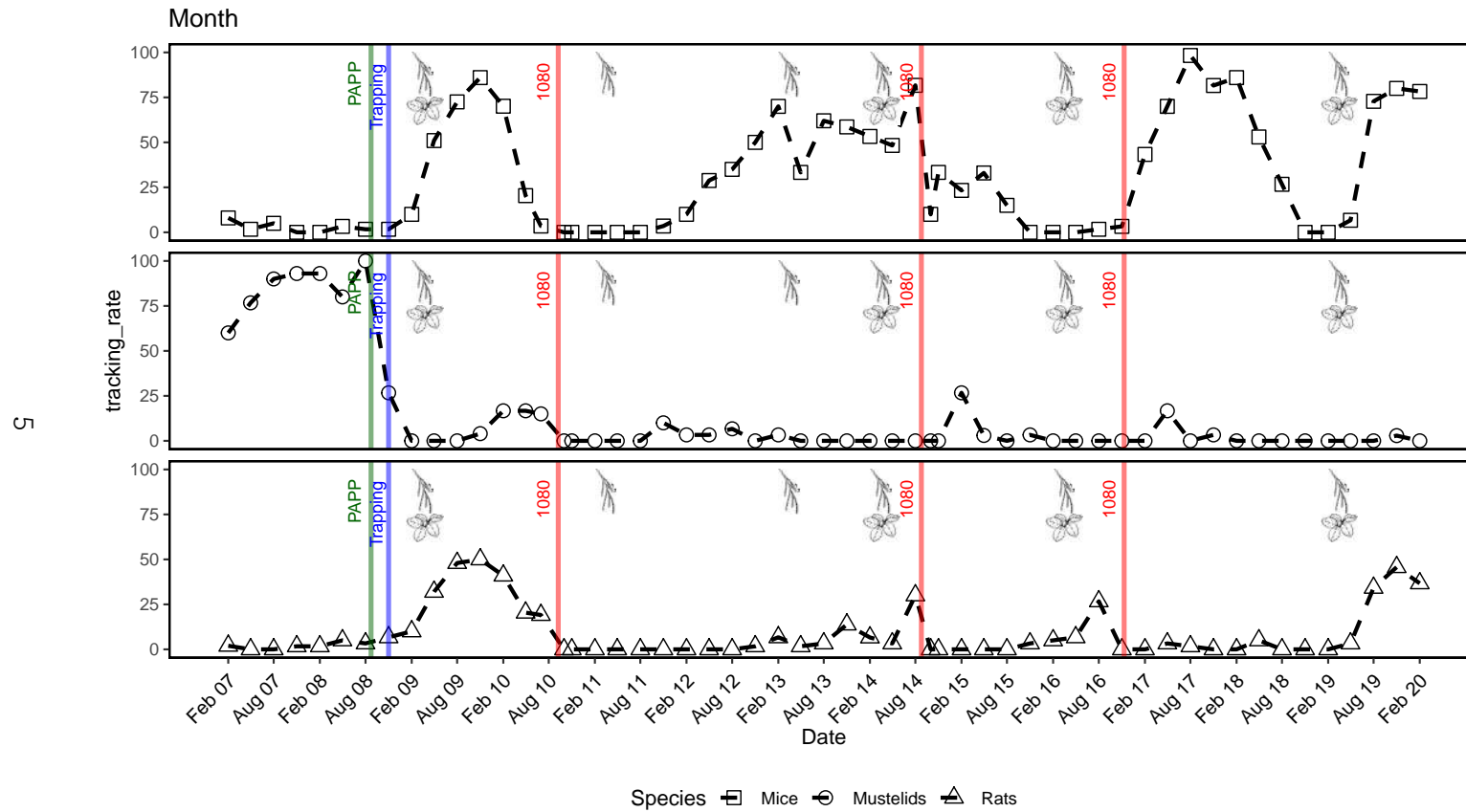


Poteriteri - % of tunnels tracked

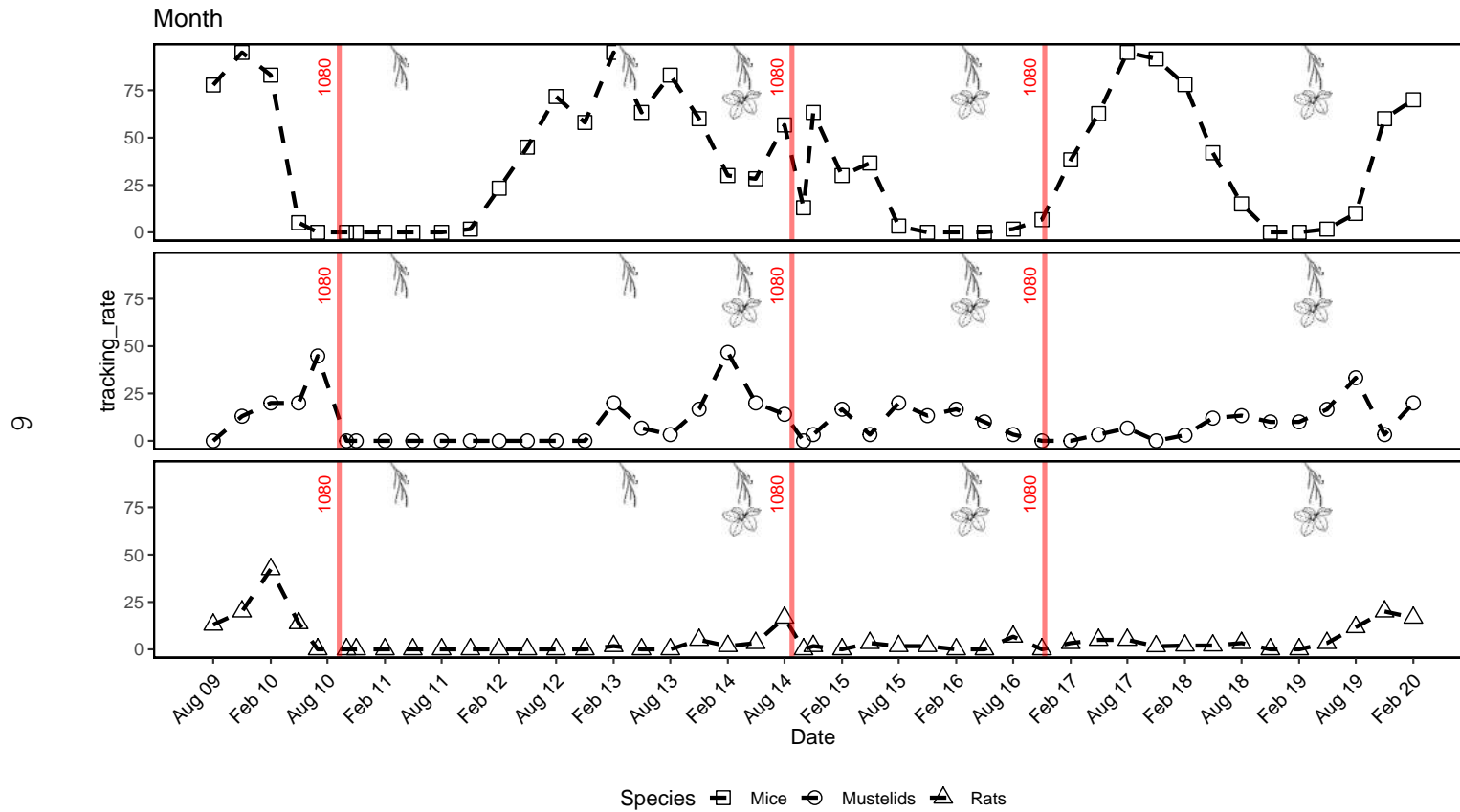
4



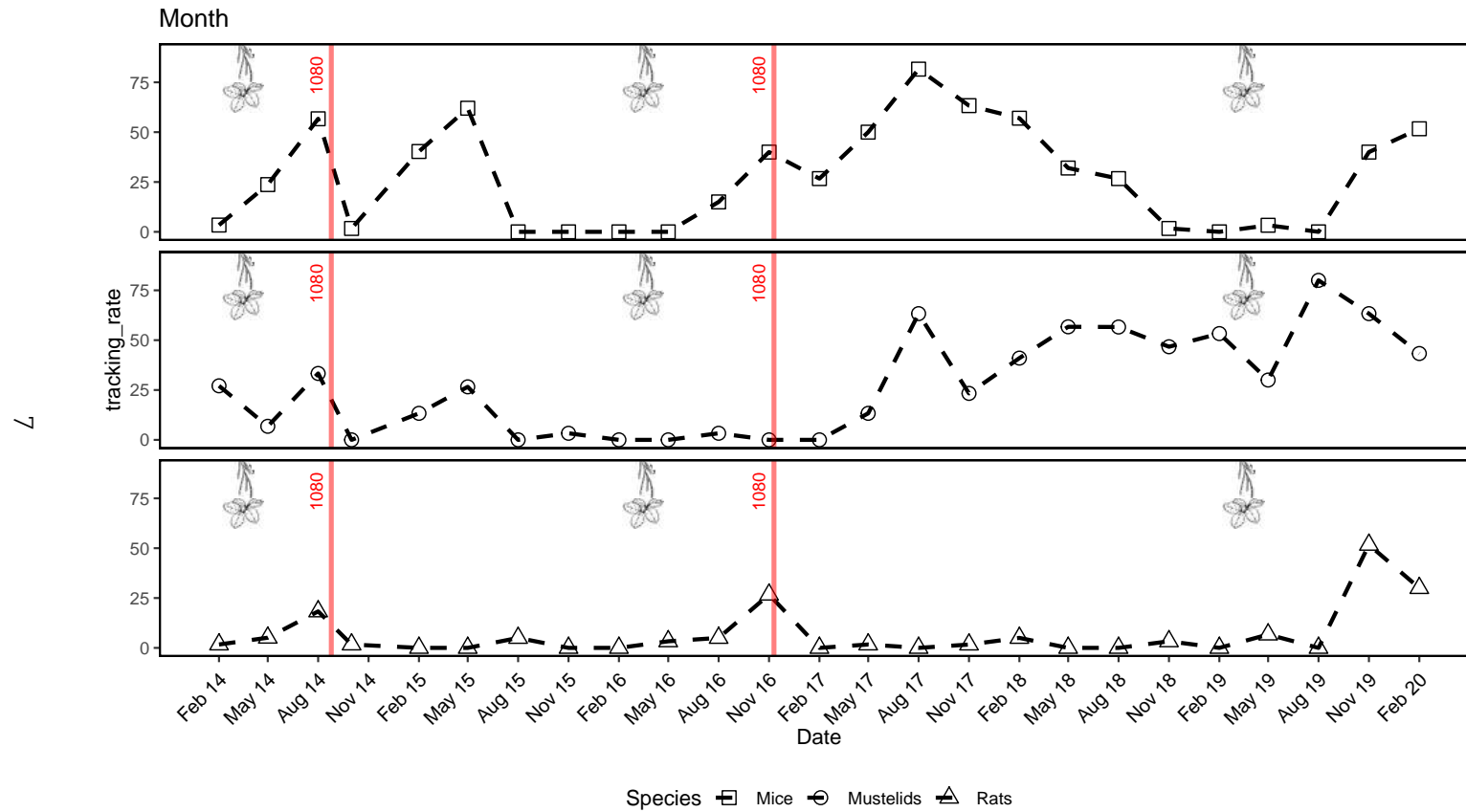
Waitutu - % of tunnels tracked



Crombie - % of tunnels tracked



Grant Burn - % of tunnels tracked



Stoat traps:

Table 1: Animals trapped in this and previous quarterly check.

	Nov 2019			Feb 2020		
	Waitutu	Poteriteri	Total	Waitutu	Poteriteri	Total
No. of trap boxes checked	114	58	172	132	58	190
Mice	22	1	23	10	0	10
Rats	82	27	109	74	41	115
Stoats	7	5	12	10	8	18
Weasels	12	2	14	1	0	1
TOTAL	123	35	158	95	49	144

279 (89%) of traps on the stoat trap network were checked, cleared and re-baited with salted rabbit. At Poteriteri the following traps were not checked: RV1, N2, S9&10, R1-10 At Waitutu the following traps were not checked: AB 22-24, SB9-29

Trap catches are indicated on the below maps via the green triangles. Trap catches at Waitutu almost doubled from Nov, however have stayed more steady at Poteriteri. Rat captures, as expected, continue to explode at both sites. Mustelid captures have also continued to increase. Many catches were unable to be accurately identified at Poteriteri due to the advanced state of decomposition.

Seven mustelid ear or tail samples were collected and stored in ethanol for a study on mustelid dispersal led by Andrew Veale at Landcare Research.

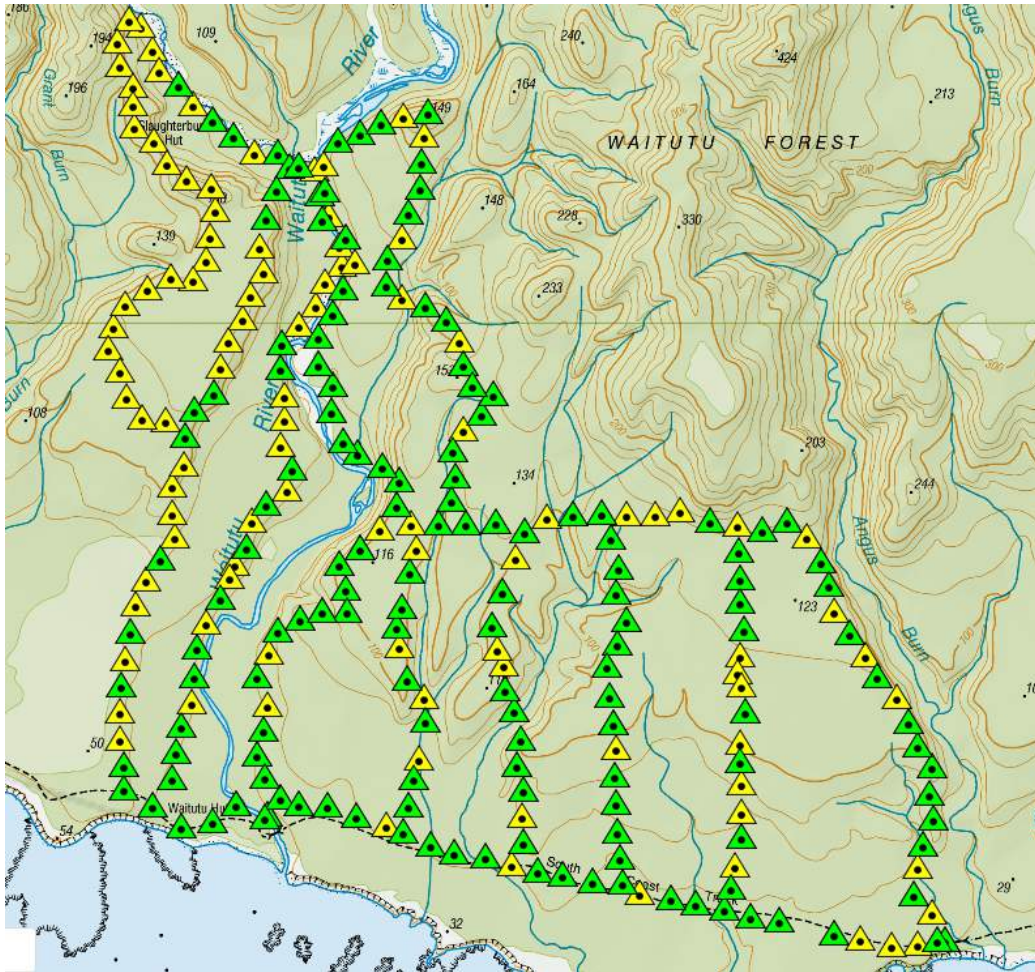


Figure 1: Waitutu trap catches (green triangles) Feb 2020

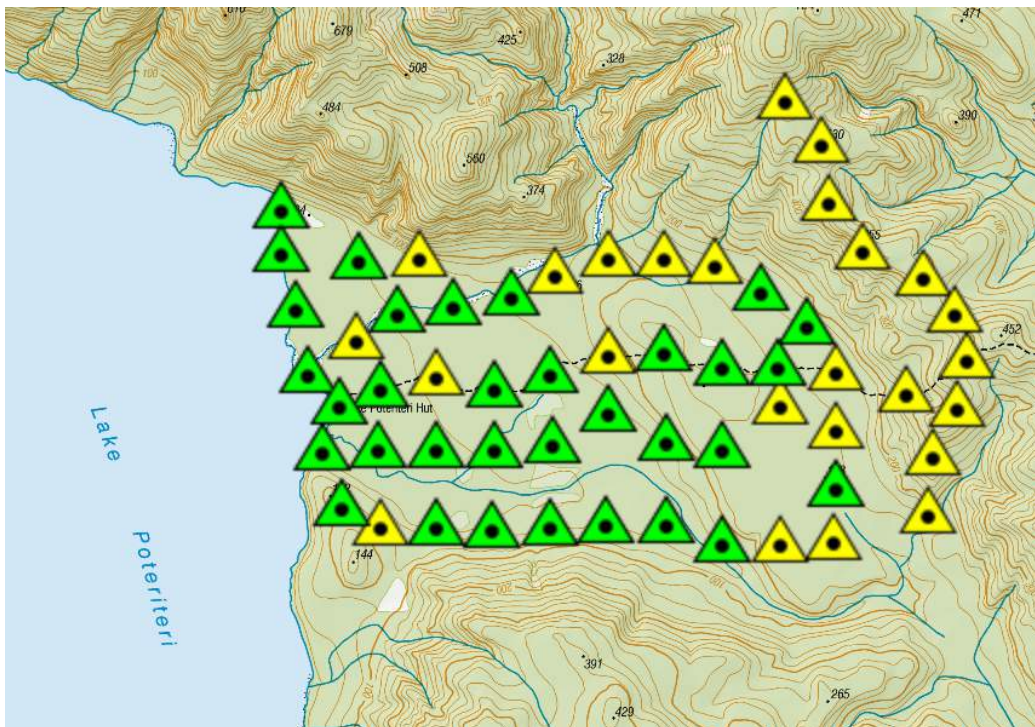


Figure 2: Poteriteri trap catches (green triangles) Feb 2020

Bird lists:

This trip we began concerted efforts to contribute to the national Bird Atlas project run by the OSNZ in conjunction with EBird. This is a citizen science project to map the distribution and abundance on NZ's birds across the entire country. Previous bird atlases were published in 1985 and 2007. This data guides and influences national and local government conservation policy planning as well as being a source of information available to anyone who may want it.

The country has been broken down into 10x10km grid squares. The aim is to get at least one complete bird checklist from each habitat within these squares; and for each season, during the next five years collection period. Daytime and nocturnal lists are also required. As we visit the Waitutu once in each season we are in a great position to contribute to the project for this area.

The Waitutu area encompasses 7 of the Bird Atlas squares. During the February 2020 trip 22 bird counts were undertaken for the Bird Atlas project.

Other/Maintenance required etc.....

Slaughter Burn

- Whip aerial has been chewed through by rodents and is not working. Could possibly re-join the two ends where it has been chewed or replace whole aerial. Would likely need to disassemble mast to put a new one up. Current hole in floor is very small, would need to either make larger and then fill in or fit VHF connection once threaded through floor. Could do with some rodent protection where it emerges under the hut.
- SB trap line comments: makes sense from hut to trap 7 but then yellow triangles lead off up the ridge to point 194. The GPS points for the traps and track on the printed map however jump off the ridge and follow at a different contour below. Continued up marked track but hadn't seen a trap in a while so bush-bashed down to where the GPS said trap 8 was. Wasn't there and no track found either. Continued on to where trap 9 was but got bluffed out. Had to drop straight down to the river

as couldn't get back up to the ridge with the triangle markers. Ran out of time to investigate further due to early exit. Loop might be better approached in a clockwise direction?

- LPG bottle is stashed in the meat safe - needs to be sent out on empty chopper when are dropped off!
- All TT lines need extra marking with more pink triangles and tunnels themselves with blue triangles
- Seedfall plot WWA needs a lot of work. Probably at least a half day marking a trail between the trays, adding/reinforcing tall flags at the trays. NB can't trim this area as is a veg monitoring plot. Need to mark only.
- Seedfall plot SBA also needs some re-marking however moving around is easier as the pigs have trashed this area
- Please re-track-log the SB and Afterburn trap lines so we can check they are accurate

Poteriteri

- Whip aerial is not working, presumably chewed through inside wall space. Is sealed into external piping to aerial on roof. Will seek advice from rec team on how to replace.
- Two new TT trays needed - don't recall for which lines sorry!
- Poteriteri needs a significant amount of track clearing/maintenance to avoid unfamiliar people getting lost, trips and falls due to poor trails and to improve efficiency of workload. Need to make a plan to pay for and implement this. Summary of track marking;
 - Many of the trap lines run in part along the blue bird lines, however it often isn't clear that this is the case or where it is/isn't the case. Suggest that re-marking occur where trap lines are marked in yellow and yellow and blue where they converge with the bird lines. Remove any blue markers which are not part of bird lines
 - Need more markers and re-marking of line from trap M9 to get to the start of TT line 4 plus labelling that that is the junction
 - Junction at end of TT line 4 / public track/ M10 needs to be made clearer
 - Section between M10 and BL11 VERY boggy, fairly unsuitable to use in wet weather therefore alternate route needs to be well

- marked and needs a trim
- Currently no marked trail in from the S.trap line to TT line 6. Difficult to find. Much easier to head in from BL line, however, note bird line and TT line diverge so check for junction and make junction clearer
- Section of public track between M10 & M11 through creek is overgrown and hard to follow could do with a trim and re-mark
- RV line from M10 to RV8 get's progressively worse. Needs a lot of work. Head height crown fern and old faded yellow markers. Currently incredibly hard to follow and confusing about what is bird line versus trap line
- RV 2-4 could do with a trim but currently followable
- Traps B1 & B2 couldn't be found - river has apparently moved - are the traps missing?
- Trap N1 seemingly buried under a huge windfall
- BL6-5 needs some re-marking and clearing up, get's a bit confusing in this section
- M4 needs a more obvious marker
- Some traps on S.Line need clearer markers, but S1-3 was good going

Waitutu

- Hut door handle needs another screw, has become vey loose!
- New TT tray needed for TT42
- Traps 54L1 and 54L5 need re-screwing closer to the side of the box as the trigger plate is getting jammed against the side
- Check for the hidden LPG bottle and send out on empty flight!
- Please add some triangles at the entry/exits points of TT line 1 to make this more obvious for newbie
- Please re-mark the junctions from AB line to other trap lines running perpendicular so they can be seen from all angles. Please replace faded triangles on 54L from ~trap 10 onwards. Still needs doing in May
- Exclusion plot EX2 top wire needs straining and corner P post needs strainer wire waratah'd in Still needs doing in May
- Suggest putting a marker at the NL/AB Jct to indicate that you need to follow the S line to get to AF/AB jct Still needs doing in May

Crombie

- In Nov 2019 and Feb 2020 significant numbers of pigs (~40 and ~26 respectively) have been reported at the Crombie. Paul Jacques has written a short report on this noting that he suspects the Crombie flats area alone is home to several hundred pigs. Paul compares this to the last time he was in the Crombie in April 2009 where although he saw some sign did not encounter a single pig. He considers this to be an incredibly piggy area. Pigs were encountered in all habitats and are naïve to humans. Hunting was challenging due to the dense and high crown fern. <https://doccm.doc.govt.nz/wcc/faces/wccdoc?dDocName=DOC-6213544> Whether this is of significant concern or not is under debate. Being a mega-mast year there will be more food resource available for pigs and the high numbers may simply be a reflection of that. It would be beneficial to make a more concerted effort to calculate the pig numbers and gain further advice on what impact these pig numbers may be having on the ecosystem.
- May still need warning sign re gas use in the hut/carbon monoxide poisoning? Check.

Grant Burn

- Summary of track marking;
- TT lines and circuit are marked with blue triangles with pink triangles denoting the TT's
- TCE line marked with pink and yellow and trap boxes marked with yellow. Needs some triangle maintenance
- TR line marked with yellow. Needs most of triangles replacing. Currently very faded and lots's of flagging tape filling gaps
- Note SC1 tap is on South side of track, whereas GPS say's it's on the N.side
- Needs a triangle on GB side of tree on track at start of WTR trap line

Table 2: Birds seen at each site - May 2019

Species	Poteriteri	Crombie	SB	Y22	GB	Comment
SIPO						
VOC						
Grey Duck						
Par. Shelduck					Y	
Black Shag					Y	
WF Heron						
NZ Falcon		Y		Y		3 seen Crombie
Kereru	Y		Y	Y	Y	
Kea	Y					
Kaka	Y	Y		Y	Y	Common throughout
YCP		Y		Y		
Parakeet sp	Y		Y		Y	
Ruru	Y					
Rifleman	Y		Y	Y	Y	
Grey Warbler	Y		Y	Y	Y	Common
Bellbird	Y		Y	Y	Y	Common
Tui						
Mohua		Y				Only 3 at Crombie
B Creeper	Y			Y	Y	Scattered
Fantail	Y			Y	Y	Common
Tomtit	Y		Y	Y	Y	Common
SI Robin	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Common
Silvereye	Y		Y	Y		
Blackbird		Y			Y	
Song Thrush						
Starling						
Chaffinch	Y	Y		Y		
Greenfinch	Y	Y		Y		
Redpoll	Y	Y		Y		
SBBG					Y	
Pied Shag				Y		
LT cuckoo	Y	Y	Y		Y	Several heard
Fernbird						
Dunnock				Y		
Black Swan						
Pipit						
Mallard						
Kingfisher		15				
Welcome Swallow						
Little Pied Shag						
Canadian Goose	Y					
Shining Cuckoo						
NZ Scaup						