

BATTLE FOR OUR BIRDS

2017 - *The Dart and Routeburn Valleys*



Protecting native species at risk

The Department of Conservation (DOC) will be continuing its pest control operations to protect vulnerable native species, starting in Spring 2017.

Pest control is an ongoing battle as every year we face new challenges; forest conditions can change, predator populations may recover from earlier control operations and movements of predators can put vulnerable species at risk once more.

DOC has identified the Dart and Routeburn Valleys as priority areas where native species are threatened or at risk of extinction. In particular, this area is a stronghold for mōhua/yellowhead, one of our endemic native birds. Rodent levels are being monitored closely and an aerial 1080 operation may again be needed as we are recording higher than expected rodent tracking numbers in some areas.

If rodent tracking numbers continue to rise, and rat numbers increase to high levels in the spring, we risk the mohua becoming locally extinct.

Previous pest control works

The 2016 BFOB programme controlled predators across about 820,000 hectares (about 770,000ha of aerial 1080 and more than 50,000ha ground control) . It prevented a number of rodent and stoat plagues and controlled possums to protect priority at risk populations of threatened native species.

National monitoring results show that kākā, rock wren and kea all had better nesting success and raised more young in areas with 1080 treatment than areas without.

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/battle-for-our-birds/>



A ship rat attacks a bird nest. Photo: DOC



South Island mohua are particularly vulnerable to pest predation. Photo: RonENZler



3.5 km

Scale at A4 = 1:125,143
 NZGD 2000 New Zealand Transverse Mercator
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 Basemap : LINZ Topo250 / 50
 DOC, Geospatial Services
 24/07/2017



Dart-Routeburn
 Aerial Predator Control 2017
 Proposed treatment area: 11,709 ha



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

New Zealand Government



What are we protecting?

- The Dart and Routeburn are home to a number of significant animals and plants whose survival is threatened by increasing predator numbers.
- The 2017 Dart-Routeburn operation will be targeted to protect the resident mohua/yellowhead population.

Mohua / yellowhead

- Mohua are a small insect eating songbird that was once common throughout New Zealand.
- Mohua now occupy only 3% of their original range.
- The Dart-Routeburn area is one of four mainland mohua populations recognised as critical to the long term recovery and survival of the species.
- Mohua nest within small holes in trees which makes them easy prey for rats and stoats.
- In years when predators are abundant mohua breeding is curtailed. During big plagues the species takes a huge hit – about 80% to 90% of birds are killed.

Other species

- Several other threatened species are present in the area including pekapeka/southern long-tailed bat, whio/blue duck, pīwauwau /rock wren, kaka and kea. Birds are often caught on the nest by predators. If the adults evade attack, the eggs and chicks are easy prey.
- In addition to threatened species many other well-known birds are vulnerable to rat and stoat predation including kākārīki/parakeet, toutouwai/robin and korimako/bellbird.

Where is it happening?

- The area to be treated across the Dart and Routeburn is shown on the map – over 11,000 ha. Nearby valleys are included – the Beans Burn, Rock Burn and Route Burn North Branch. Unlike previous aerial 1080 work in this area, the Caples Valley and upper reaches of the Dart will not be treated.
- No pesticide will be applied onto private land or over tramping huts, camping sites and public amenity areas.
- Prior to the operation starting DOC will notify the public, contact neighbouring landowners, and place warning signs at access points.



Mohua/yellowhead (nationally vulnerable). Data shows that in every 'mast' year where rats were not controlled, local mōhua populations have suffered.

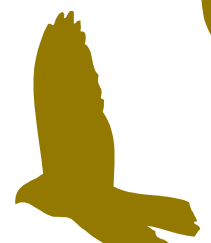
Photo: Barry Harcourt



Adult male at entrance to nest, Routeburn Flats. Photo: Ron Enzler



Whio/blue duck (nationally vulnerable). While they are slowly regaining a foothold in the Routeburn and Rock Burn, they remain susceptible to predation. Photo: Department of Conservation



Key facts

The pesticide 1080 (sodium fluoroacetate) will be spread within cereal baits that are shaped as cylindrical pellets about 3cm long and weighing 6 grams each.

Bait laying will begin in the first period of favourable weather from early September 2017. The operation will occur over 2 days. The first lays the non-toxic "pre-feed" pellets that will accustom pests to the pellets as food. About a week later (weather depending) another day will be required to lay the toxic bait pellets. The toxic baits are dyed green to deter birds.

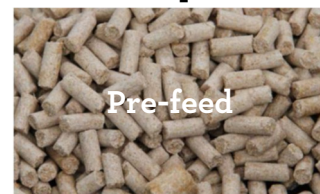
Only 0.15% of a bait pellet is 1080 poison (9 milligrams) and baits are deployed at 1.5 kg/ha. A helicopter will distribute baits along flight paths controlled by GPS. The baits are biodegradable and disperse in water and the soil to non-toxic levels.

All walking tracks within the control area will be closed during the pre-feed and toxic bait operations - about 1 day each time.

Deer repellent

Across the Dart and Routeburn Valleys both the non-toxic and toxic bait pellets will be coated with deer repellent. This darkens the colour of the pellets (as shown). While repellent reduces the risk of deer being poisoned, it will not prevent this entirely. Hunters must still adhere to the usual safety precautions when hunting within or near the entire treatment area - the Dart and Routeburn Valleys.

Non deer repellent baits:



Pre-feed



Toxic

Deer repellent baits:



Toxic (1080) pellets are green.

Pre-feed pellets are brown.

Photos courtesy of OSPRI NZ

Operational planning

The use of 1080 requires the consent of the Medical Officer of Health. DOC also approves the pesticide operation on behalf of and following procedures approved by the Environmental Protection Authority. DOC applies conditions to ensure that all legal and policy requirements are met and that any potential risks are managed. Consent approvers usually impose conditions on the operation to further safeguard the public and the environment.

To gain these consents a detailed Assessment of Environmental Effects was completed. A copy of this can be obtained from your local DOC office.

Important information

The pesticide 1080 is poisonous to humans and domestic animals. Unfortunately, dogs are highly susceptible to 1080. Poisoning can occur through eating cereal baits or poisoned animals. The risk to dogs from pesticide in dead animals will remain until the carcasses have rotted, perhaps for more than 6 months.

These risks can be eliminated by following these simple rules:

- **DO NOT touch bait**
- **WATCH CHILDREN at all times**
- **DO NOT EAT animals from this area**
- **Poison baits or carcasses are DEADLY TO DOGS.**

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about 1080. These signs indicate pesticide residues may still be present in baits or animals. When signs are removed you can resume normal activities in the area. Please report suspected vandalism or removal of signs. If in doubt, check with your nearest DOC office.

If you suspect poisoning always contact:

Your local hospital, the National Poisons Centre 0800 764 766 or dial 111.

For more information -

www.doc.govt.nz/battleforourbirds

Department of Conservation, Queenstown Office
1 Arthurs Point Road, Arthurs Point, Queenstown 9371 (PO Box 811, Queenstown 9348)
Phone: (03) 442 7933 Email: queenstown@doc.govt.nz

The Operations Manager for this operation is Geoff Owen Operations Manager Wakatipu District (gowen@doc.govt.nz)