

# BATTLE FOR OUR BIRDS in 2016 – Dart, Routeburn and Caples Valleys.



## Protecting native species at risk

The Department of Conservation (DOC) has confirmed a heavy seeding (mast) in many native forests this year. This has increased the abundance of introduced predators such as rats and stoats. DOC has been planning for additional predator control to protect our native species from this surge in predators.

DOC has identified the Dart, Routeburn and Caples Valleys as priority areas where endangered native species are under great threat. Seed fall and rodent levels have been monitored closely and the planned predator control has been triggered.

Without this control some species such as mohua/yellowhead, whio/blue duck, pīwauwau/rock wren, kākā, kea and pekapeka/long-tailed bat could suffer heavy losses. We seek your support for the effort required to reduce the impacts.

## 2014 – Pest control works

A widespread heavy seed fall in South Island beech forests in early 2014 led to escalating rodent numbers. DOC carried out aerial 1080 pest control in the following winter and spring across more than 600,000 hectares. Monitoring showed that overall the 27 operations achieved an average rat kill of about 95%, and averted stoat plagues.

First results from bird and bat monitoring showed the nesting success of mohua, pīwauwau, robin and rifleman was significantly higher within pest control areas than outside. Monitoring of these and other species has continued and further results confirm the benefits of the additional pest control in 2014.

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

## 2016 – The battle continues

While extensive beech seeding as seen in 2014 is uncommon, it has been confirmed again in 2016. Two seeding events in quick succession is rare, but has occurred before. Smaller localised beech masts generally occur every 3–4 years. Rimu and other podocarp tree species may also seed prolifically in some forests. This causes an increase in predator numbers that will again need to be controlled at priority sites such as the Dart, Routeburn and Caples Valleys.

DOC's monitoring will continue after the operation to assist our ongoing management of the area's indigenous biodiversity.



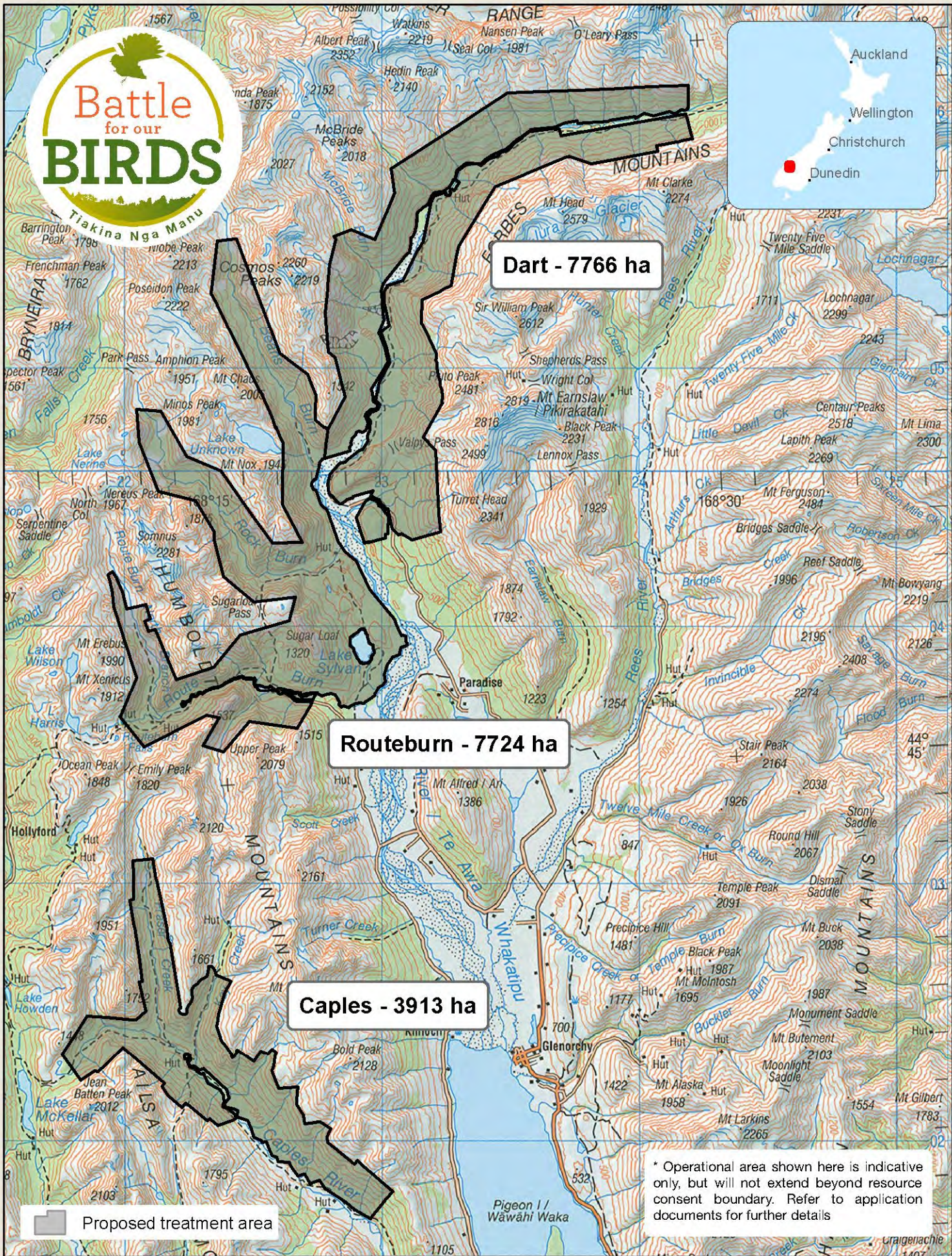
A ship rat attacks a bird nest. Photo: DOC



South Island kākā are particularly vulnerable to pest predation. Photo: Toni Ellis







5 Kilometres

Scale at A4 - 1:190,000  
 NZGD 2000 New Zealand Transverse Mercator  
 Not for navigation  
 Crown Copyright Reserved  
 Basemap: LINZ Topo250 / 50  
 DOC, Geospatial Services  
 4/07/2016

Dart-Routeburn-Caples Brochure Map July 2016 A4P.mxd  
 \\Sousosvr1\ais\GIS\Projects\2016\SouthIsland\VR92616\_BFOB\_Dart\_Routeburn\_Caples\

Dart/Routeburn/Caples  
 Battle for our Birds  
 Area of application: 19,403 ha



Department of  
 Conservation  
 Te Papa Atawhai  
 newzealand.govt.nz



## What are we protecting?

- The Dart, Routeburn and Caples are home to a number of significant threatened animals and plants that are threatened by booming predator numbers resulting from last summer's beech mast.

### *Mohua / yellowhead*

- Mohua, once common, now occupy only 3% of their original range. The Dart, Routeburn and Caples Valleys are a stronghold for this 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. Monitoring after 1080 control in 2014 shows an 89% nesting success for mohua.

### *Other species*

- Several other threatened species are present in the area including whio/blue duck, pīwauwau /rock wren, kaka and kea. These birds are often caught on the nest by predators. If the adults evade attack, the eggs and chicks are easy prey.
- Monitoring in Kahurangi National Park shows that nesting success of rock wren in 2015/16 was 45% in areas treated with 1080, while only 9% success in other areas.
- 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.

### *Southern long tailed bats / pekapeka*

- The southern long-tailed bat is declining rapidly because of predators, particularly rats. It is essential to protect bats in their natural homes as they disperse very slowly.

### *Native flora*

- Possums inflict huge damage to native vegetation in our forests. Possums are also opportunistic predators of small birds and their eggs.

## Where is it happening?

- The area to be treated across the Dart, Routeburn and Caples is shown on the map – over 19,000 ha. Nearby valleys are included – the Beans Burn, Rock Burn, Route Burn North Branch, Kay and Fraser Creeks.
- 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.



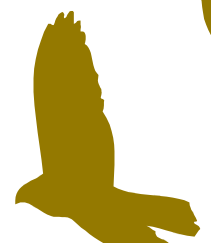
Mohua/yellowhead (nationally vulnerable). Data shows that in every 'mast' year where rats were not controlled, local mōhua populations have suffered. Photo: Barry Harcourt



Pīwauwau/rock wren (nationally endangered). These are found in the alpine parts of the Routeburn and Dart Valleys, such as Harris Saddle basin above Routeburn Falls. Photo: Rod Morris



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.

The non-toxic “pre-feed” pellets that accustom pests to the pellets as food were laid on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

The toxic pellets that contain the pesticide 1080 will be laid at the first viable opportunity after Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October, when weather and operational conditions permit. The toxic baits are dyed green to deter birds.

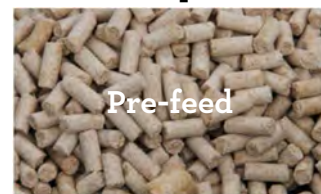
Only 0.15% of a bait pellet is 1080 poison (9 milligrams). Baits are deployed at 1 kg/ha, an average of one 6 gram bait per 60m<sup>2</sup>. A helicopter will distribute baits along flight paths controlled by GPS. The baits are biodegradable and disperse in water and the soil to non-toxic levels.

All walking tracks within the control area were closed during the pre-feed operation, and will again be closed during the toxic operation for about 1 day.

## Deer repellent

Across the Dart, Lower Routeburn and Caples 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, Routeburn and Caples 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, and resource consent from the regional council. 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](http://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](mailto:queenstown@doc.govt.nz)

The Operations Manager for this operation is Mark Mawhinney, Senior Biodiversity Ranger ([mmawhinney@doc.govt.nz](mailto:mmawhinney@doc.govt.nz))