

Protect our species

Dart-Routeburn-Caples



Predator control operation to protect native species from widespread pest plagues

In response to this year's mega beech mast (large-scale beech seeding), DOC Wakatipu is planning an aerial 1080 operation to protect local species.

Dart-Routeburn-Caples sites and values

Where heavy seedfall occurs predator numbers soar. DOC's predator control in approximately 16,000 hectares of conservation land in the Wakatipu area will help to protect native species at risk. These species include the resident yellowhead/mohua population.

Yellowhead/mohua

Mohua are small insect eating songbirds that were once common throughout New Zealand. 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 rat and stoat plagues the species takes a huge hit – about 80% to 90% of birds are killed.

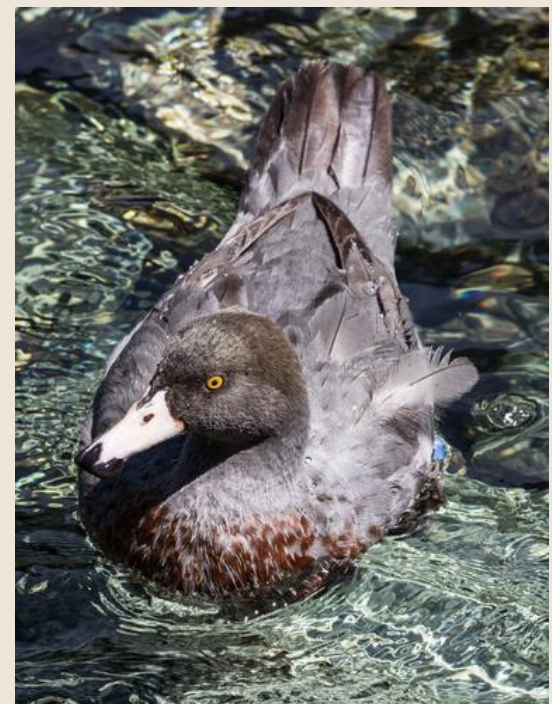
Regular pest control has prevented mohua from disappearing from these valleys but they are still struggling. Continued pressure on predators is needed to allow the population to thrive and recover.

Blue duck/whio

Whio live in fast flowing rivers in parts of Mount Aspiring National Park and the Caples Valley. Stoats are a threat to whio, especially during the breeding season, and have been filmed attacking female whio on the nest and taking eggs.



Mohua. Photo: Ron Enzler



Whio. Photo: Ron Enzler

Other species

Several other threatened species present in the area, such as the southern long-tailed bat/pekapeka, rock wren/pīwauwau, kaka and kea, will benefit from the predator control operations.

Predicting increased rodent populations – 2014 and 2016

A widespread heavy seedfall in South Island beech forests in early 2014, and again in 2016, led to escalating rat and mice numbers. Two events of such magnitude in quick succession was thought to be unusual. DOC, with the help of NIWA, is getting better at predicting these mast events.

Previous pest control work and outcomes

DOC carried out aerial 1080 pest control in the winters following the prolific forest flowering over more than 600,000 hectares each season.

Monitoring showed an average rat kill of about 95%, which reduced rodents to undetectable levels at most sites and stoat plagues were avoided.

Intensive species monitoring showed the nesting success of rock wren, mohua, robin and rifleman was significantly higher within pest control areas than outside.

2019 – the battle continues

Extensive seeding is occurring again in 2019 but on an even larger scale, likely to be the biggest mast in decades.

This natural event, that should benefit native species, will be hijacked by introduced predators and rodent and stoat numbers will skyrocket.

Seedfall and rodent levels are monitored at sites where rare and endangered native species are under greatest threat.

When rodent numbers reached critical levels, that triggered predator control.

Without predator control, some species such as yellowhead/mohua, kākā, orange-fronted parakeet/kākāriki karaka, rock wren/pīwauwau and bats/pekapeka will suffer heavy losses.



Rifleman. Photo: Ron Enzler

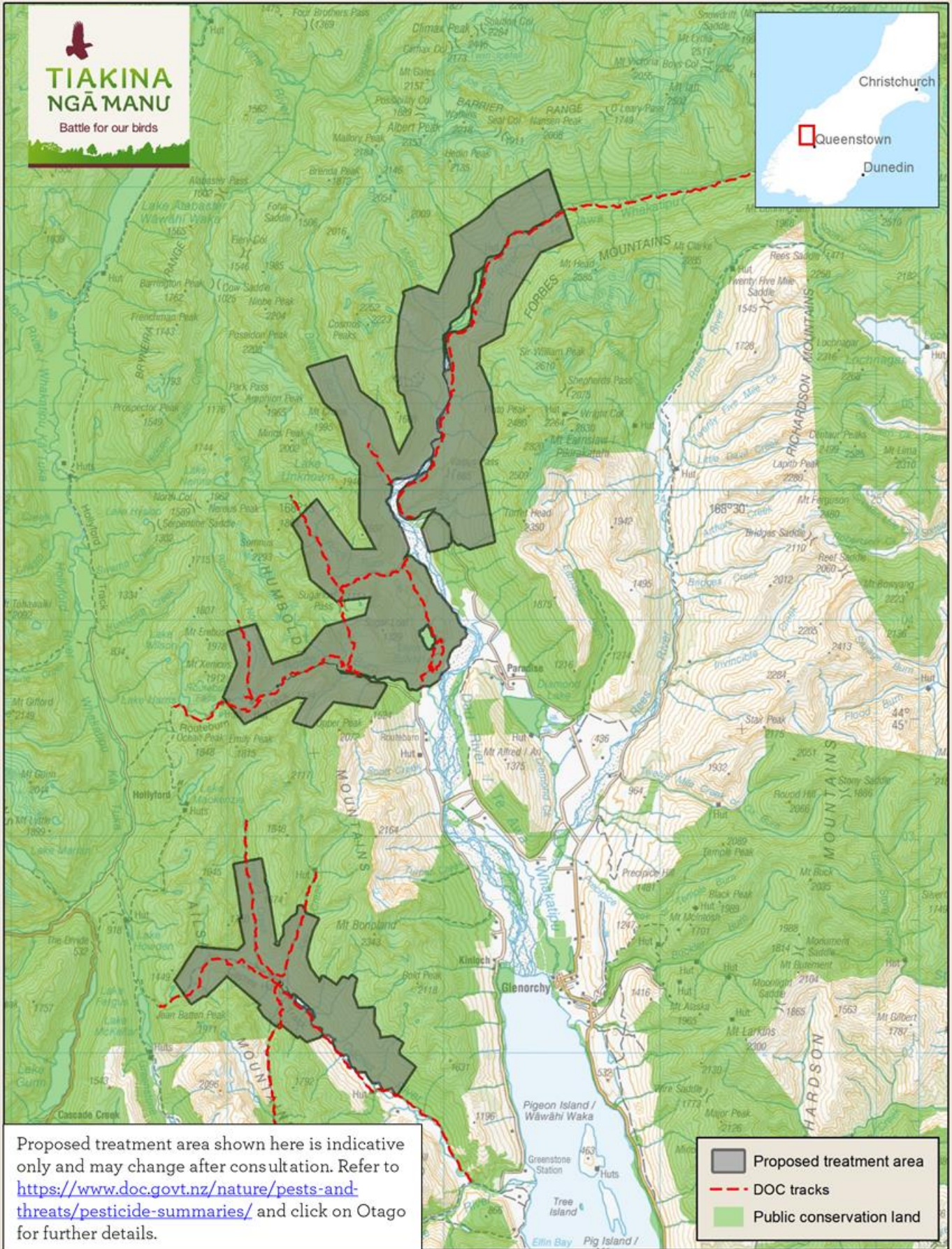


Rock Wren. Photo: Wynston Cooper






TIAKINA NGĀ MANU

Battle for our birds



Proposed treatment area shown here is indicative only and may change after consultation. Refer to <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/pesticide-summaries/> and click on Otago for further details.

-  Proposed treatment area
-  DOC tracks
-  Public conservation land

5 km

Scale at A4 = 1:225,000
 NZGD 2000 New Zealand Transverse Mercator
 Not for navigation
 Crown Copyright Reserved
 Basemap : LINZ Topo250 / 50
 DOC, Geospatial Services
 15/08/2019



Dart, Routeburn and Caples
 Aerial Predator Control 2019
 Proposed treatment area: 15,999 ha



Department of
 Conservation
 Te Papa Atawhai

New Zealand Government

A range of pest control methods will be used, including traps and toxins

Aerial application of 1080 (sodium fluoroacetate) baits is used as it is the most cost-effective predator control method over large areas. 1080 is a man-made reproduction of a naturally occurring toxin, and it is currently the only viable method in remote or rugged terrain.

In more accessible areas, traps or bait stations can be laid, depending of the density of pest populations. High predator numbers can overwhelm trapping networks in some areas. In those cases, aerial 1080 pest control supplements existing trapping.

Aerial 1080 pest control targets rats, but stoats will also be killed through eating poisoned rodent carcasses.

Operations start with an aerial pre-feed of non-toxic baits to encourage rats to eat the 1080 baits that are later applied.

Time frame

Operations are triggered as rodent populations reach monitored thresholds. The Wakatipu operations, which are weather dependent, will take place from early September onwards. There may be a need for a second operation, subject to the success of the first and this will be communicated to all stakeholders once more is known.

Planning

DOC works closely with iwi and consults with key stakeholders before finalising details. Before operations begin, DOC contacts affected neighbours, puts up warning signs and advertises in local newspapers. Use of 1080 requires the consent of the Environmental Protection Authority, and permission from the Ministry of Health. The process includes an assessment of environmental effects (AEE) to safeguard the public and the environment.

What you need to know

The Department of Conservation complies with all relevant regulations and takes a precautionary approach to the aerial application of pesticides.

- *The 1080 cereal baits are about 2cm long, cylinder-shaped and are dyed **green**.*
- *Non-toxic pre-feed cereal pellets are about 3cm long, cylinder-shaped but are **brown coloured**.*
- *Deer repellent will be used across the Dart, Routeburn and Caples Valleys; this can darken the colour of the pellets but the toxic pellets remain **green**.*

Managing risk

Dogs, in particular, are highly susceptible to 1080. The risk to dogs from poisoned carcasses will remain until they have completely rotted; this will be for around 8 months depending on conditions.

Please take a precautionary approach. Risks can be eliminated by following these simple rules:

- *DO NOT touch or eat 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 pesticides. Warning signs indicate pesticide residues may still be present in baits or animals. When signs are removed, this means you can resume normal activities in the area. Please report suspected vandalism or unauthorised removal of signs. If in doubt, check with your local DOC office.

More information

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What to do if you suspect poisoning

Contact emergency services: **111**

National Poisons Centre: 0800 764 766

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Also see www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/tiakina-nga-manu



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