

Rat control in the Lake Sylvan and Lower Dart area: activation of bait stations

What is happening

Following a high seed fall in the Routeburn and Dart Valleys in 2019, rat numbers rose significantly. DOC responded to this predator irruption by carrying out an aerial 1080 (sodium fluoroacetate) predator control operation over 14,700 ha the following spring as part of our Tiakina Nga Manu (TNM) program. Subsequent monitoring in these valleys showed that rat abundance had been reduced from 25% pre-operation to 2% post-operation.

Despite the success of the operation, monitoring undertaken pre COVID-19 revealed rat densities had continued to rise. The rat number were reaching above-acceptable thresholds for our native species, particularly those species highly susceptible to rat predation such as mohua/yellowhead and pekepeka/bats.

In response to this, the Department of Conservation (DOC) plans to control rats over approximately 1,775 ha of the Lake Sylvan area and Lower Dart Valley using hand-laid Pindone poison in bait stations.

How it is happening

White plastic bait stations will be filled with cereal baits containing the rodent pesticide Pindone. These bait stations are laid out in a 100m x 50m grid pattern through the forest. Baits are cereal pellets about 2cm long, cylinder shaped and dyed green.

Timeframe

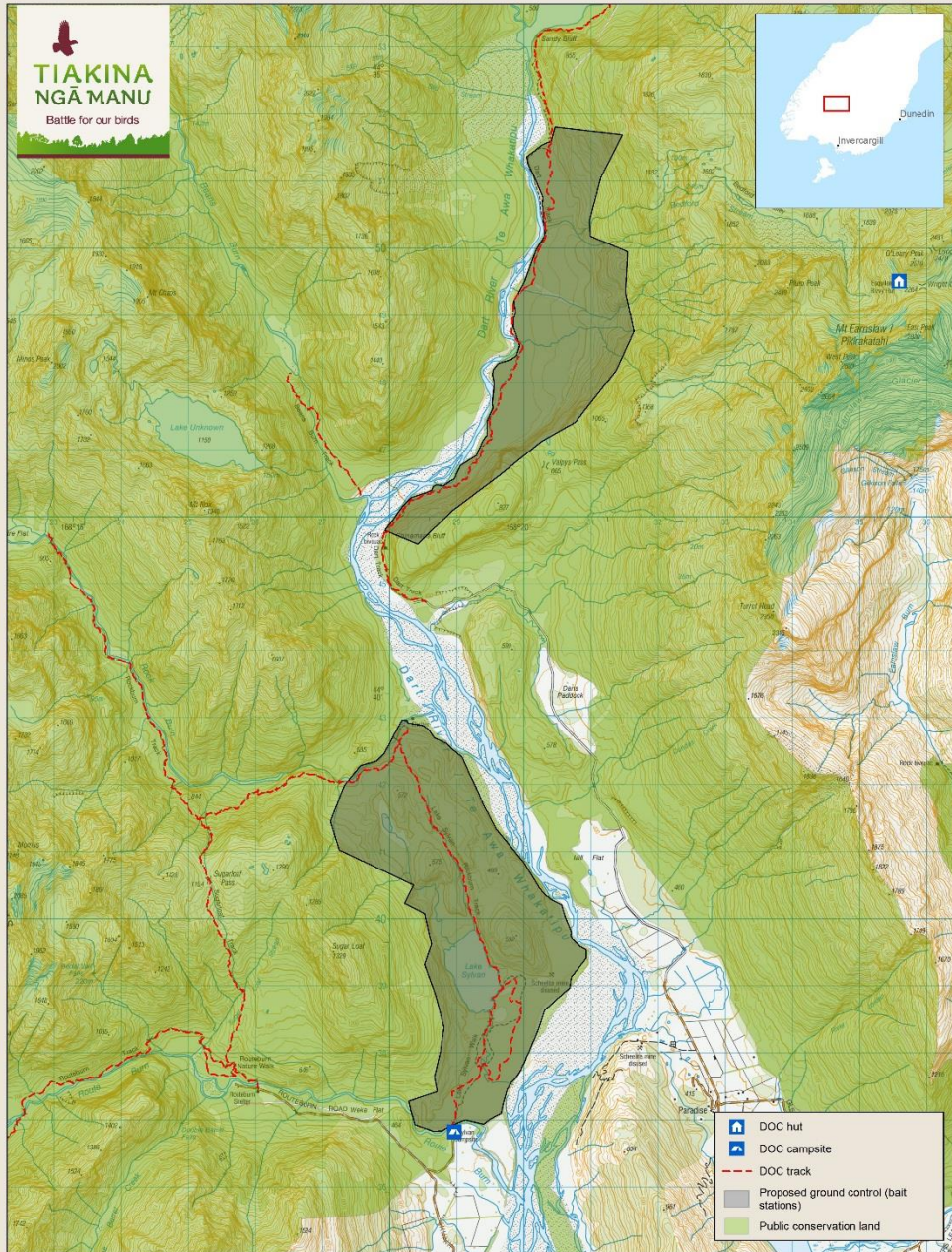
Rodent monitoring has determined the areas where rat control is required. Bait filling will begin from early July onwards and will be carried out over approximately five weeks. The operation will run for the period rats in the affected areas are likely to be a threat to native wildlife. This is not a defined time period and will be based on monitoring results. Once the operation is completed all bait will be removed from bait stations.

DOC will contact neighbours, stakeholders and interested parties prior to the operation starting, and warning signs will be in place immediately prior to the operation.



Rifleman. Photo: Ron Enzler

Pesticide Treatment Area: Lake Sylvan and Lower Dart Valley



1:50,000
 NZGD 2000 New Zealand Transverse Mercator
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 Basemap: LINZ Topo50
 DOC: Geospatial Services
 20/12/2019



Dart
 Ground Predator Control 2020
 Area of ground control: 1,775 ha



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai
 New Zealand Government



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Why we are controlling rats

Where heavy seed fall occurs predator numbers soar. DOC's further predator control in approximately 1,775 hectares of public conservation land will help to protect native species at risk of rapidly recovering rat populations. These species include the resident yellowhead/mohua population.

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.



Mohua. Photo: Ron Erzler

Important information

Pindone is poisonous to humans and domestic animals, including dogs. Poisoning can occur through eating baits or poisoned animals. The risk to dogs with pesticide in carcasses will remain until they have completely rotted. Veterinary advice should be sought for any suspected poisoning. *NB: Vitamin K is an effective antidote for suspected poisoning from Pindone in domestic animals.*

These risks can be eliminated by following these simple rules:

DO NOT touch bait or bait stations, or eat bait

WATCH CHILDREN at all times

DO NOT EAT animals from this area or from within a 2km 'buffer zone' outside the operational area boundary while warning signs are in place.

Remember, poison baits or carcasses are DEADLY to DOGS. Do not allow DOGS access to baits or carcasses.

Dogs are not permitted in the National Park.

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides placed at the public access ways to the affected areas. Warning signs indicate pesticide residues may still be present in baits or animals.

Please refer to the DOC online Pesticide Summaries for up-to-date information about this operation including the caution period. The DOC online Pesticide Summaries interactive map is found at this link: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/pesticide-summaries/>.

The presence of warning signs indicates that pesticide residues may still be present in baits or animals. Warning signs will remain in place until the end of the caution period. 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 the Queenstown Visitor Centre by calling 03 442 7935.

If you suspect poisoning

Always contact:

- Your local doctor; or
- Local hospital; or
- National Poisons Centre: 0800 764 766 (urgent calls) or 03 479 7248 (non-urgent and general enquiries), or dial 111.

For more information

Geoff Owen, DOC Operations Manager
Whakatipu-wai-Māori / Queenstown Office
Cavells Building, 1 Arthurs Point Road
Queenstown 9371

Phone: 027 7034 620

Email: queenstown@doc.govt.nz