



Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust Newsletter **APRIL 2005**

Greetings all!

Apologies all round for the long time between newsletters this time round, but you will see that your humble servants have been busy and that progress is proceeding apace.

Overview:

As you will recall, the STDC granted \$21,000 to the Trust for the purpose of preparing a comprehensive Feasibility Study on the mainland island concept.

This study is now well underway in the capable hands of Cees Bevers of Oecologico Ltd., with a draft being submitted for comment to the Trust at the end of April. Meantime our hardy band of volunteers continues with the trapping programme, the results of which you can see for yourself in the attached tables and graphs.

Trapping report

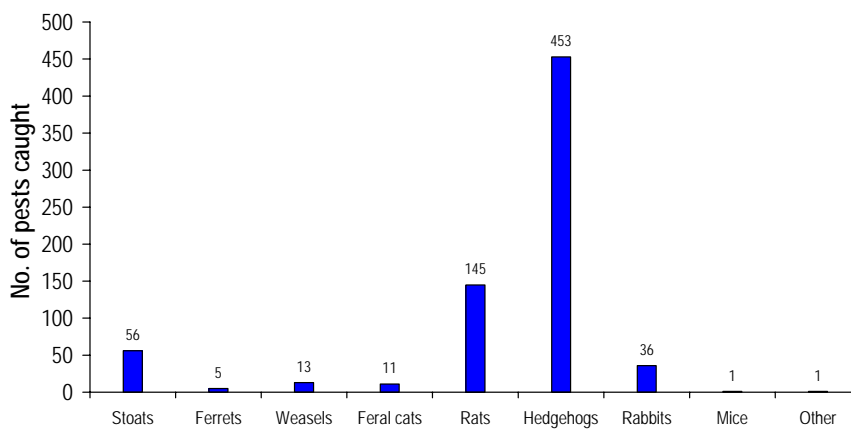
The Trust is trapping the entire 230ha reserve and the about 900ha of surrounding farmland with three concentric looping trap-lines. Traps are spaced 100m apart on the trap-lines. A 4km trap-line around the lake edge has 40 traps, another 8km line on the boundary of the reserve has 80 traps. The 13km long "buffer" trap-line has 132 traps along it.

All trap-checking since the project started June 2004 has been carried out by volunteers. Traps are checked fortnightly between November and April, and monthly between May and October. To date, up until the end of April 2005, the Trust has caught a total of 719 pests! The table below gives the breakdown of what was trapped and where:

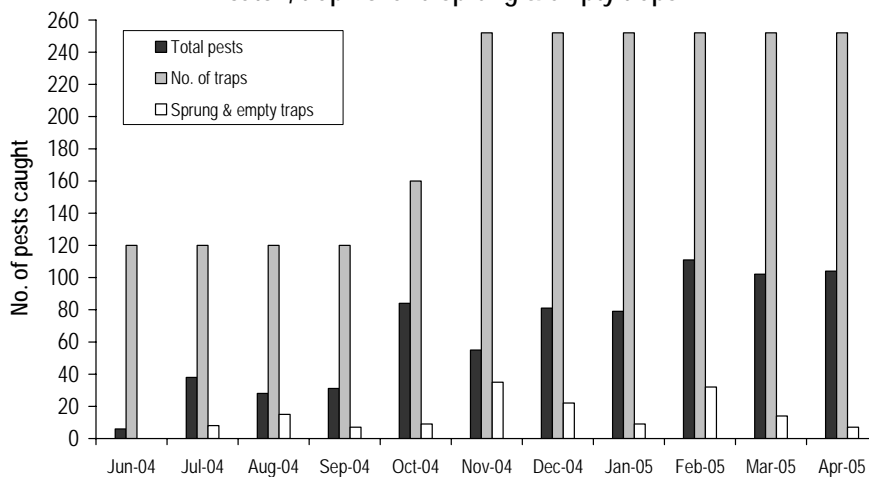
Total pests	TRAPLINES			Total	
	Lake Edge	Boundary	Buffer Line		
Stoats	9	17	30	56	7.8%
Ferrets	1	3	1	5	0.7%
Weasels	3	3	7	13	1.8%
Feral cats	3	7	1	11	1.5%
Rats	69	54	22	145	20.2%
Hedgehogs	21	188	244	453	63.0%
Rabbits	0	17	19	36	5.0%
Mice	0	0	1	1	0.1%
Other	0	1	0	1	0.1%
Sprung & empty traps	15	58	85	158	
No. of traps	40	80	132	252	
Total pests	106	289	324	719	100%

A whopping 63% of the pests caught have been hedgehogs; which has been quite unexpected. These animals can live at high densities, and will eat large native invertebrates living on the ground, as well as ground nesting bird eggs. More rat catches are expected when they recover from the 1080 drops (last one was hand laid Sept/Oct 2004) in a few months probably.

Lake Rotokare Mainland Island trapping programme total pest trap-catch



Lake Rotokare Mainland Island trapping programme total monthly catch, trap no. and sprung & empty traps



Intensive rat control coming!

In order to re-introduce birds like robin and kokako, we need to get the rats right down and keep them there. An important tool for doing this is a network of traps right in the forest. Cutting of tracks to establish a trap-lines for rat control is well underway, and 75% completed. Rat trap will be placed in between stoat traps on the lake and boundary trap-lines; narrowing the trap gap down to 50m. Two more rat trap-lines, using cheaper and smaller rat traps, will be put in place between the lake and boundary lines. Rat traps are spaced 50m apart, with trap-line being approximately 100m apart. A total of 380 traps targeting rats (and mice) will be placed out in the coming months.

Thanks to our volunteers!

A huge debt of gratitude is owed to the core group of dedicated volunteers who have done the bulk of the work in fundraising, supplying, building, setting out and checking the huge total of 252 traps which are at this very moment restoring this precious environment for all of us.

They'll hate seeing their names, but too bad: Joe Menzies, Mark Caskey, Donald Litchfield "Litchie", Murray Sulzberger and Murray Prankerd – take a bow. Just to give you an idea of the work they have done, it takes seven or eight hours to check the boundary, and nine hours (for two people) to check the "buffer" line. We're having trouble stopping "Litchie"; he's still doing the Lake and boundary lines every two weeks even now – this extra trapping is certainly benefiting the wildlife – thanks Litchie. Overall it's a massive effort guys; good on ya! Anyone who can help out with this huge task, please contact us (contact details below).

Highlights from feasibility study progress report (Oecologico Ltd):

- Massey student Nicola Atkinson has completed a report on the trees proposed to be cut out of the ridge-line on the proposed fence route.
- Committee members have talked with four funding agencies for preliminary "feeler" meetings – initial indications are positive, and \$10,000 for trapping has been approved from DOC's Biodiversity Fund for the buffer control line.
- Accurate costs of the current trapping programme have been determined, allowing a cost comparison between pest control and a pest proof fence over the long run to be done. This is also useful for applying for funding to carrying on trapping etc.
- Mapping of the proposed sanctuary boundary and potential land incorporations have been completed by BTW Surveyors Ltd. Accurate estimates of the area of forest, lake and wetlands within the reserve was also done.

As you can see, we are nearing the "sharp end" of this exciting project, and the trustees would like to thank everyone for their support and enthusiasm for the pest proof fence proposal to date.

Finally, other highlights in brief:

Meanwhile the new logo has been finished off (see top), the proposed new boat ramp and recreational facilities have the support of the Community Board and have been forwarded to the council's Annual Plan for funding, a visit to the Bushy Park (Wanganui) Xcluder fence under construction, was made, the Herpetological Society (lizards) is interested in doing a study, and the Normanby Lions have offered assistance.

Once again, many thanks for your efforts and support to date, keep up the good work and if you require any further info or can help with the trap-checking, trap sponsorships etc., don't hesitate to contact any of the executive members listed below. Thanks a million too to you surrounding landowners for your support and co-operation, don't hesitate to ring Joe anytime if you have the slightest concern about anything.

Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust contact details

Chairman	Joe Menzies	Ph: (06) 764 5068
Trapping co-ordinator	Murray Sulzberger	Ph: (06) 764 8561
Trapping co-ordinator	Mark Caskey	Ph: (06) 762 2979
Treasurer	Mike Weren	Ph: (06) 765 7474
Trust Secretary	Jo Swamy	Ph: (06) 765 7424