

Save the Dotterels - Waipūreku

Progress Report - November 2024 for Pan Pac Environmental Trust



a) STATUS OF THE PROJECT TO DATE:

Our season began early this year with our first nest being located on 10 August 2024 (compared to 25 August in the 2023 season) A presentation about the Dotterels was held at Sustainable HB on 21 July 2024. This was open to the public and served as an educational opportunity about the dotterels in particular and other coastal birds generally as well as a chance to increase our pool of volunteers. 18 people attended the workshop and we managed to increase our volunteer pool by an additional 5 people bringing our total number of volunteers at the start of the 2024 season to 17 people.

Predator Control:

One of our primary goals for 2024 was to enhance our predator control with a view to:

1. Accurately identifying the key predators attacking nests, chicks and adult birds.
2. Trying to catch more of these predators continuing to cause such high attrition.

Our first step was to increase our predator control team from 2 to 4 people and then to encourage more regular checks and rebaiting of traps along our coastal strip. We also engaged the services of Aimey Tahu and Michael Shand from Sustainable Hawke's Bay. They have amazing skills and experience in developing site-specific field apps using ArcGIS

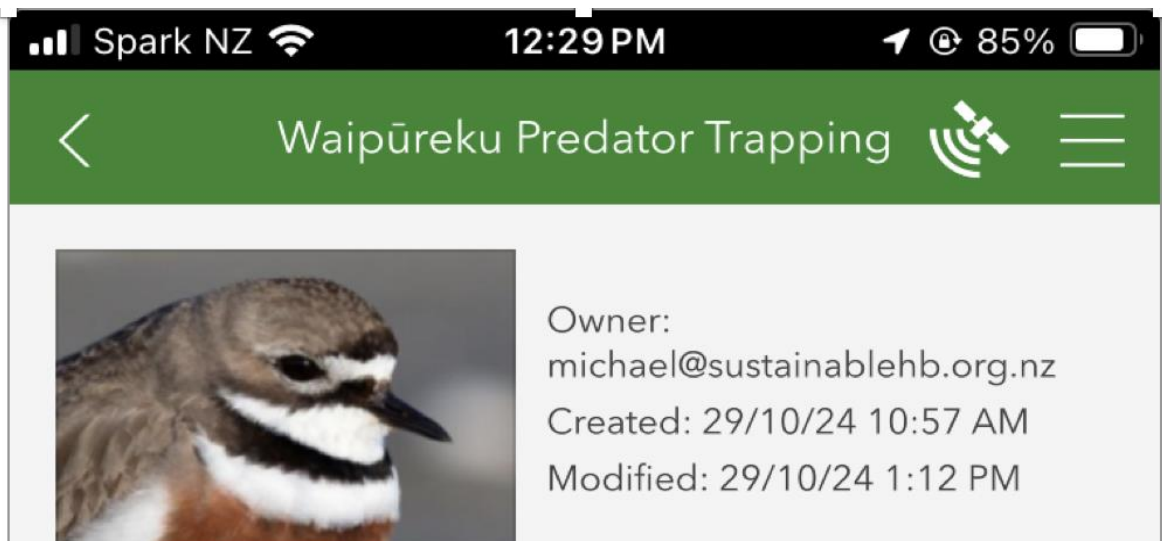


This enabled us to clearly identify a variety of predators as can be seen from some of these trail cam photos and to pin point some of the days and times of their movements.



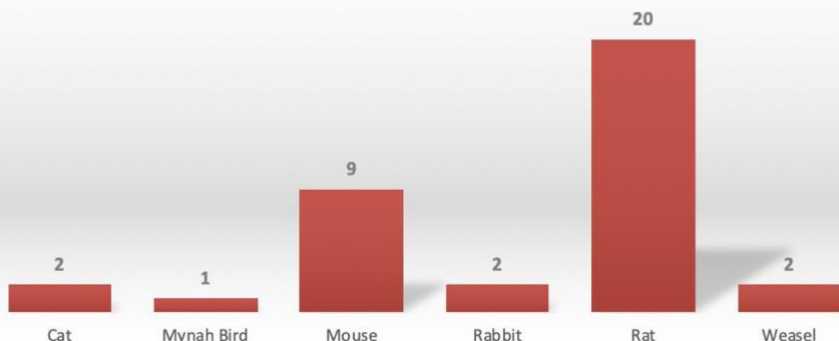


Our Predator Control Team was also greatly assisted by the ARCG's team at Sustainable HB developing a trapping app for our Waipūreku site to enable each of our trappers to record their catches and input other valuable data.



Below is collated data by way of a table and a graph to show records of predators caught and recorded at Waipūreku using the new predator control app. This covers just a two-month period from 10 Aug 2024 (when the first pohowera nest was located) until 20

Waipureku Predator Trapping Aug - Oct 2024



What was caught	count
Cat	2
Mynah Bird	1
Mouse	9
Rabbit	2
Rat	20
Weasel	2
Total	36

Oct 2024. There is still much to do to improve the regularity and consistency of our predator control. But having a team of volunteers to do this as well as utilising technology is a real bonus.

SET-BACKS & CHALLENGES

While the season began full of promise compared to last year with 7 of our first 8 nests all successfully hatching chicks (2 of which went on to fledge) the rest of the season has subsequently been beset with a variety of challenges.

Most disappointing has been the theft of 4 of our predator control trail-cameras that were put on our trap lines. This occurred after a couple of drug-users were found sleeping rough on the beach and were moved on by



rangers and the Police. The theft of cameras and the subsequent destruction of several of our signs on the beach all occurred within 2 days of this and were reported by a local whitebaiter who observed the culprits returning to the beach. These thefts were compounded by Moo Scotting, one of our valued trappers, losing two more of her own cameras to theft (all attached to

waratahs with padlocks]. The information we were gleaning from having cameras on traps and nests has been hugely beneficial but we have been rocked and somewhat deterred from using our remaining cameras as a result of these setbacks. (This will form part of our end-of-season review).



Another ongoing issue and threat to the nesting sites is the random lighting of fires on the beach especially when the birds are nesting and the associated carelessness with ensuring fires are properly extinguished. At least one Fire Service call-out was required at Waipūreku this season after smouldering flames were left to whip up in the spring gales. Fortunately no nests were destroyed, like last year, but the impact on the landscape & wetland wildlife is still significant.

b) COSTS INCURRED FOR PROJECT TO DATE:

Funding received (as paid out to Biodiversity Hawke's Bay)					
Date	Amount received (GST inclusive)				
21/08/2023	\$6,737.00	Pan Pac Environmental Trust			
3/06/2024	\$7,170.00	Pan Pac Environmental Trust			
	\$13,907.00				
Summary of expenditure					
Date	Supplier / contractor	Summary of expenditure	Amount (GST incl)	Invoice number	Comments
<i>Example</i>	<i>ABC Traps</i>	<i>10 x traps</i>	<i>\$765.00</i>	<i>Inv 123</i>	
20/07/2023	Reimbursement No 1	Trap baits, tea infusers, A1 signs	1098.12		M L Scott A/C
10/08/2023	Reimbursement No 2	Stationery, Tape, cable ties, screws, copying, Food & drink.	473.14		M L Scott A/C
20/08/2023	Reimbursement No 3	Traps and Bait	1369.55		M L Scott A/C
29/08/2023	ViewTech	Trail cameras	1926.25	#SO46516	
29/08/2023	The Environment Centre	Room Booking	120.00	INV 2089	
20/10/2023	Reimbursement 4	Wood Screws and Y Posts	128.57		Bernie Kelly a/c
10/10/2023	Reimbursement 5	Traps and Trailcamera Batteries	196.03		M L Scott A/C
16/11/2023	Reimbursement 6	Posters, tinned fish, ammunition	413.05		M L Scott A/C
20/02/2024	Reimbursement 7	Catering, camera battery	286.81		M L Scott A/C
25/03/2024	Reimbursement 8	Trail Camera & Batteries, Viewtech	517.50		M L Scott A/C
27/06/2024	ViewTech	Trail cameras and batteries	2954.35	INV 39987	
23/07/2024	Reimbursement 9	Traps/Photocopying/Catering	713.27		M L Scott A/C
23/09/2024	Reimbursement 10	Posts/Stationery/SD Cards/Moo expenses	447.49		ML Scott A/C
11/11/2024	Reimbursement 11	Hui expenses and Moo S - Koha	682.05		ML Scott A/C
		Total expenses	\$ 11,326.18		
		Remaining	\$2,580.82		

So far this season we have spent approx \$4,800 of the \$7,170 allocated. Most of our costs this season have been spent on improving our predator control. We bought 3 cat traps, 4 x D super rat traps, 4 trail cameras, associated batteries & SD cards and warratahs and locks to secure them. Prior to the thefts, which were pretty devastating, we still gained valuable insights in relation to some of our key predators. In addition to the equipment used we have also been able to offer a koha and travel voucher each month to Moo Scotting who has put in many hours setting up and monitoring our cat traps and

assisting with some of the maintenance of the Doc 200's along the wetland when other volunteers have been unavailable. Our public training workshop on 21 July to educate anyone interested and recruit a few more volunteers and our mid season workshop for volunteers also required some funding for photocopying handouts and resources etc. To date we have 18 committed volunteers who take turns monitoring nests in pairs every weekend and a number who also help with mid-week monitoring, as well as 3 volunteers who take care of the trapping and predator control.

c) PLANS FOR THE NEXT REPORTING PERIOD: 2 main goals

Colour-banding more birds & continuing to improve predator control.

One of the exciting and unexpected things that happened for us earlier this season was that Save the Dotterels HB was approached by an ornithologist – Dr Luke Eberhart-Hertel from the Max Planck Institute in Germany who was working in collaboration with DOC's Mobile Threatened Species Workstream in other parts of NZ to colour-band and undertake tests on pohowera with a view to better understanding their migratory patterns and the connectivity various breeding populations have with other breeding and wintering sites across the country. We were fortunate that they had heard about our work over the past few years with pohowera in HB so in late October they visited our nesting area at Waipūreku as well as the Bayview, Awatoto and Marine Parade sites. This resulted in a number of our adults birds, fledglings and chicks all being colour banded and tested with their unique details recorded. This data will be invaluable for helping to identify where our *manu* go after the breeding season is over, their overall survival rates, how many return to the same region and mate with the same partner etc. and what their breeding patterns are generally.

All in all we felt very privileged to be included in this study and found Luke and Katie, the researchers and project coordinators, to be a wonderful source of knowledge and inspiration. The good news is that Katie Gray who works for DOC will be returning in the first week of December 2024 to colour-band more of our birds and some of our volunteers will be working with her on this ongoing project. Here are a few photos of some of the highlights taken on 31 October 2024.



Katie Gray & Luke Eberhart-Hertel



Releasing two colour-banded pohowera



d) PROBLEMS ARISING:



Despite our efforts to give greater emphasis to the importance of keeping dogs on a lead and reiterating that no unauthorised vehicles are permitted on the beach, we still have to contend with many breaches of the cordon by dog-walkers with off-lead animals and a few people on quad or motor bikes who deliberately ignore all signage and continue to drive right through the middle of the nesting area. This season we found two dead chicks one of whom (shown in this clip) was sadly run over only a week or so from fledging.

Feral cats remain our biggest headache and are very elusive despite 'catching' them roaming on trail cams. We are sure many of our chicks succumb to cats and eagle-eyed kāhu (hawks).



Apart from our loss of trail camera equipment, ongoing issues with breaches of the nesting area, fires and rubbish left on the beach, we have felt on the whole that there is a growing respect for and

awareness of the work we are doing to protect these endangered endemic birds.

One example of this was a local fisherman who put some driftwood markers around a nest he found on the beach. He got heaps of positive responses from the wider community when we posted the following feedback on local facebook pages to thank him..

(even his Dad saw the post and said he was proud of his son!)



THANK YOU HORI!

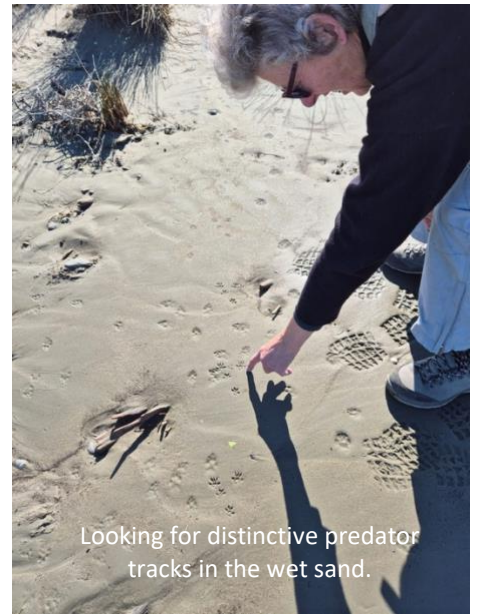
While monitoring the pohowera (banded dotterels) at Waipūreku Clive yesterday, I was approached by a shy but thoughtful fisherman called Hori who had spied a dotterel nest in the stones and put a stake in the ground to mark the spot.

We are so grateful that there are people like him who have learned about the birds, respect their place in the environment and are keen to protect them. He was a bit *whakamā* about me taking his photo ... but this is the nest he located in the stones.

One of our very talented volunteers, Deb Lee - (nick-name - Banksy) also painted these colourful murals on the old graffiti blocks at the start of our monitoring area at Waipūreku. It has really enhanced the entranceway and taught the public about some of the birdlife in our wetland area.



Hopeful volunteers surveying the estuary with the symbol of hope in the distance



Looking for distinctive predator tracks in the wet sand.



Releasing our first fledgling after colour-banding 31.10.24

Summary to date:

So far this season we have located 24 nests within our monitoring area at Waipūreku. 10 of those nests have successfully hatched a total of 23 chicks, 7 nests have failed (primarily due to predation or human interference,) 1 is 'unknown' and 6 are still active. Of those who hatched chicks, only 2 have made it to fledging stage that we can confirm. In fact very few chicks seem to survive beyond a few weeks and tracking their progress once they are mobile is very difficult.

Key lessons this season has reinforced for us to date are:

Hawke Bay Dotterel Viewer



- That a strong predator control programme is crucial and needs to remain a primary focus
- There is enormous value in using trail cameras to identify the causes of nest failure, to study the birds behaviour and the threats they face, and to identify key predators on the coastline and around our traplines generally BUT this is high-risk given the potential for theft of equipment.
- A dedicated team of volunteers, both, monitors and trappers, as well as strong community support and partnerships can make a real difference to conservation and protection efforts, especially for endangered species like the pohowera.

A BIG THANK YOU:

- to all our dedicated volunteers who make this group project possible,
- to PPET for the invaluable funding support you have provided that has enabled us to progress our pohowera protection in ways we would not have otherwise, and
- to Biodiversity HB for being our financial umbrella group.

These pohowera are unique to Aotearoa and a taonga to treasure.

