

WINDY HILL ROSALIE BAY CATCHMENT TRUST



Windy Hill Sanctuary

Newsletter #33

June 2018

Kia ora

In 2004, 2005, 2009, and 2012, after an absence of 140 years, the Windy and Glenfern Sanctuaries reintroduced North Island robins with the goal of establishing self-supporting populations in the Sanctuaries. The robins, however, had different ideas - they like to travel.

Dispersal at the time of each release and of the young following successful breeding seasons meant that robins popped up all over the island with regular reports of our banded birds up on Mt Hobson/Hirakimata.



Incredibly, two of our 2012 robins made their way to the mountain top within a week of being released.

Why the summit seems to attract the last of the rifleman, red crown kakariki, and tomtits on Aotea is not clear but the habitat sustains more bird diversity than anywhere else on the island. Over the last few years, Nikki McArthur, working for Wildlife International - the company that monitors the black petrel - has reported back on the robins. This year he recorded over 90 sightings and states that they appear to be doing well and expanding their territories - one was identified well down on the Peachtree Track. All but one of the birds are un-banded meaning they have bred here on Aotea. So, while we may not have succeeded in establishing North Island

robins at Windy Hill or Glenfern, we have succeeded in re-establishing the birds on Aotea Great Barrier Island!

In May this year the QEII National Trust Board held their Annual Meeting on Aotea Great Barrier and visited two of the three Open Space Covenants within the Windy Hill Sanctuary.

Of our 770 hectares, 267 are in QEII covenants and a further 11 hectares are covenanted against the land title with Auckland Council. A large group of Trustees and their partners enjoyed a walk through the Wheeler/Bell covenant in Tryphena followed by a presentation from the Windy Hill Sanctuary on the outcomes of their 20 years of pest management. The protection in perpetuity offered to landowners through covenanting has been a significant factor in the successful funding bids the Windy Hill Rosalie Bay Catchment Trust has made to organisations over the last 20 years. Thank you to the QEII Trust Stephenson Fund which recently approved a grant to support integrated pest management on the covenants within the Sanctuary.



Econose Sensored Cat Traps

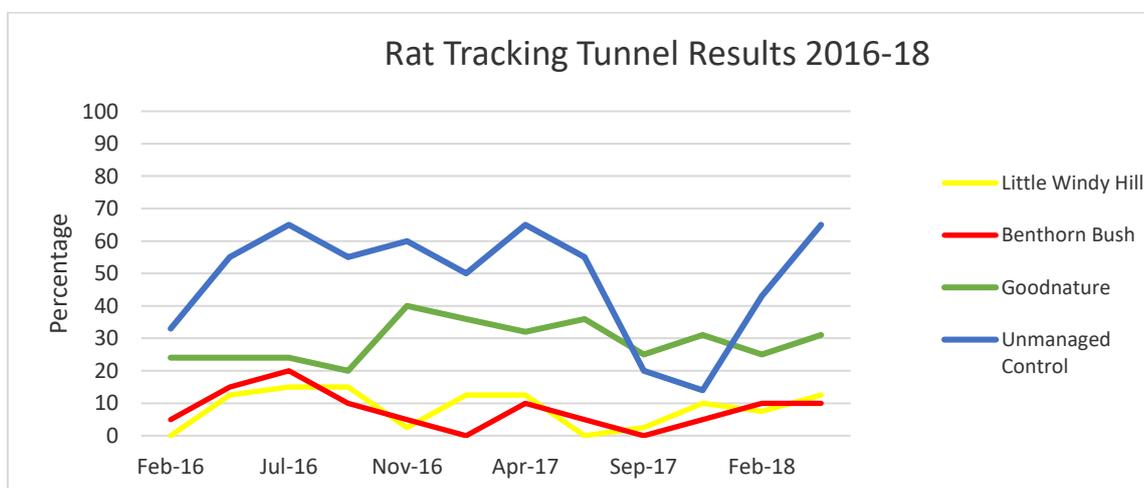
Funded by the Auckland Council Regional Environmental Fund, the Sanctuary recently established 10 Econode sensed cat traps. These are part of the 'Spark Me Up' projects which involves trialling both rat and cat sensed traps. The photos below show the sensed device and its position on the trap. Included in this trial is the use of double opening traps with both a visual lure of feathers and the smell lure from rabbit meat.



The traps appear to be working well with 4 cats caught in the first 6 days. Once the aerials are established messages will be sent from the traps on a daily basis to the field base and a live map showing the status of each trap will be accessible at anytime. The goal of the sensed traps is to reduce the labour required to service traps on a daily basis and to respond quickly when a cat/rat is trapped improving the efficacy of trapping.

Good Nature A24 Trap Project

Discussions are underway with Goodnature about concluding this project over the next few months with the traps being removed from the field and returned to Auckland Council. In the two and a half years of A24 use the rat tracking tunnels in the area have failed to come below 20% and have been as high as 40%. In neighbouring pest management areas using a mix of traps and RatAbate the rat tracking tunnels have been considerably lower – between 0 -20% with the average below 12% .



This is a disappointing outcome because the devices are robust and reliable but simply not effective enough at culling the two species of rats in this habitat. Similar results have been found for the A24 trap areas in the Waitakeres Ark in the Park and at two sites in Southland.

Rakitu Island Eradication

The Sanctuary has been active in the community debate on the pros and cons of the imminent aerial eradication of rats on Rakitu (Arid Island), an island which currently has the highest density of rats recorded anywhere in New Zealand. Being able to contribute local knowledge on the option of trapping only, the results of the Goodnature A24 trap project, and our experience with toxins has assisted the community hear a balance of views. Over the last 6 months, the Trust has published nine Citizen Science articles in the local newspaper to ensure that Barrier residents and ratepayers are aware of the conservation gains made in the Sanctuary and of the varying methods we have trialled and adopted.

The Sanctuary hosted members of Aotea Poison Free on a site visit to meet with our field team, view an intensive trapping and baiting layout, and work with the team checking the the Goodnature A24 trap which was promoted by the group as an alternative to an aerial eradication.

At the recent Forest and Bird AGM, the Minister of Conservation announced the plan to eradicate pigs, cats, and mice from the 42,000 hectare Auckland Island. This will be the largest NZ island done to date.

The Sanctuary is in good heart as we begin winter in earnest and enjoy the quiet increase in kaka, kereru, and tui indicated in our annual bird count. We enjoyed a brief visit from four red crowned kakariki this autumn – we hope they return in spring.

Thank you to our organisational funders and supporters:



Judy Gilbert
Trust Manager