

Consulting on the protection of native taonga species at Tennyson Inlet during 2021

The Department of Conservation's Waitohi / Picton Office proposes to reduce rat and possum numbers to protect mistletoe, the large carnivorous land snail and forest birds from local extinction at Tennyson Inlet

The proposed operational area is one of the largest intact and 'original' forested landscapes remaining within the Marlborough Sounds.

Without control, pest species such as rats and possums continue to have a detrimental impact on the species remaining within this area.

Why we are controlling rodents and possums?

Predation by rodents and browsing by possums causes threatened native species such as pīkirangi / red mistletoe (*Peraxilla tetrapetala*), the giant carnivorous land snail (*Powelliphanta hochstetteri obscura*) as well as once common bird species like tītītipounamu / rifleman (*Acanthisitta chloris*) and toutouwai / bush robin (*Petroica australis*) to decline in numbers. If left unchecked this predation of our most vulnerable remaining native taonga could lead to local extinction.

The Department of Conservation is proposing to carry out predator control to protect these and other endemic species over approximately 8,625ha (see attached map). This will give these and other species a better chance to breed and for their offspring to reach adulthood.

Use of a range of predator control methods to protect species

Aerial application of cereal pellets containing 1080 is the most effective control method over large areas. It is the only viable method in remote, rugged terrain.



Photo: Tennyson Inlet from Opouri Saddle DOC Picton

Ground-based trapping and bait stations are effective in smaller more accessible areas, but the number of rodents, possums and stoats can overwhelm trapping networks. Aerial 1080 operations target rodents and possums. Stoats are also reduced effectively as they scavenge poisoned rodents and possums.

Predator control works

Over several years DOC's Threats Management Team carried out intensive monitoring of tītītipounamu / rifleman, toutouwai / bush robin and weka (*Gallirallus australis*) at Tennyson Inlet. For the purposes of this research the area was divided into two, a treatment and non-treatment area.

1080 pellets were aerially applied over the treatment area in 2013 and again the following year as a mega beech masting event occurred.

All monitored tītītipounamu / rifleman survived the 1080 operations. The first summer following control monitored birds produced over three times more chicks after pest control than in the area without predator control. A year later the monitored tītītipounamu / rifleman raised more than twice the number of young in the 1080-treated area than in the non-treatment area.

All monitored robins survived through the pest control operation. Nesting success was nine times higher after 1080 treatment than in the comparison area. This resulted in seven times more chicks.

Adult birds also fared much better over the winter after pest control than without.

All monitored weka survived the 1080 operations, but several were killed by unknown causes (not 1080). Interestingly monitored weka did not benefit to the same degree as monitored tītītipounamu / rifleman and toutouwai / bush robin. This species being far more capable of defending itself and chicks from predators.

Similar results have been observed for species such as mohua / yellowhead when monitored at other sites.

Planning

A contractor, Vector Free Marlborough Limited (VFML), has been engaged to deliver the 2021 Tennyson Inlet operation on DOC's behalf.

Consultation – Have your say

DOC engages and works closely with its Treaty Partners, over predator control operations. The Department also consults with stakeholders, affected landowners and communities.

In the coming months VFML and/or DOC staff may contact you to discuss the proposed operation; how it may affect you, and what we can do to mitigate these effects.

Feedback gathered during the consultation will be considered ahead of VFML lodging applications for consent and may be used to amend plans for the operation.

A notification fact sheet will be distributed nearer the time of commencement to confirm any changes to the boundary plan and the timeframe.

Additionally, prior to the operation commencing there will be advertisements in the local newspaper and immediately prior to the operation starting, warning signs will be placed at entrances to public conservation land.

Timeframe

This operation would occur sometime after 1 July 2021. The operation is very weather dependent.



Photo: Tītītipounamu / rifleman banding, Editor Hill Photo: DOC Picton

Methods

Pest control is proposed using cereal baits containing biodegradable 1080 applied aerially over 8,625ha of the Tennyson Inlet area. Helicopters with calibrated buckets will distribute bait along pre-determined and monitored flight paths.

Use of 1080 requires permission from the local Public Health Protection Office of the Ministry of Health.

DOC assesses vertebrate predator control operations that use a toxin on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). DOC staff follow procedures approved by the EPA. These regulations ensure that the toxin is applied safely to safeguard the public and the environment.

The Department will contact iwi, landowners and stakeholders after the operation to inform them that the operation has been completed.



Photo: Toutouwai / bush robin Photo: Shellie Evans

Key Facts: What you need to know

1080 is a manufactured, biodegradable toxin. Its active ingredient, fluoroacetate is a salt that occurs naturally in poisonous plants in Australia, Africa and Brazil. It does not accumulate. It is broken down naturally by micro-organisms, fungi and plants into harmless compounds and does not leave permanent residues in soil, water, plants or animals.

The Department of Conservation complies with all relevant regulations and takes a precautionary approach to the aerial application of biodegradable 1080.

All operations begin with an aerial pre-feed of non-toxic bait to encourage rodents/possums to eat the toxic bait that will be applied afterwards.

- The toxic cereal bait pellets contain 0.15% of 1080. They are about 2cm long, cylindrical and dyed green.
- Non-toxic pre-feed cereal pellets are about 2cm long, cylindrical and sandy coloured (not-dyed).

Managing risk

1080 is poisonous to humans, domestic and game animals. Dogs are highly susceptible. In areas where the toxin has been applied, the risk to dogs will remain until poisoned carcasses have disintegrated, which can be more than six months.

Risks can be eliminated by following these rules:

DO NOT touch bait

WATCH children at all times

DO NOT EAT animals from this area

Toxic baits and carcasses are **DEADLY to DOGS**.

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. These warning signs indicate pesticide residues may be still present in baits and animals. When signs are removed this means you can resume normal activities in the area.

For more information

Please contact:

Vector Free Marlborough Limited

PO Box 5171, Springlands, Blenheim 7241

Freephone 0508 548 008

Email: communications@vectorfree.co.nz

www.vectorfree.co.nz/current-aerial-operations

OR

Department of Conservation

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Tennyson Inlet Predator Control

This map shows the proposed application area for predator control. Boundaries are indicative and may change subject to consultation and other operation planning requirements.

