

Project Janszoon

TOGETHER RESTORING THE ABEL TASMAN

Key facts about rat control in Abel Tasman National Park



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Kākā. Photo: Manaaki Barrett

As part of the Project Janszoon ecological restoration of Abel Tasman National Park, Project Janszoon and the Department of Conservation are planning aerial pest control this winter to protect the Park's native species from high rat numbers.

The pest control is essential for native species recovery and ecosystem restoration as part of a Park-wide pest management programme.

Why we are controlling rats

Monitoring of rats throughout the Park has shown their current numbers to be excessively high. In August 2016, they were tracking at 51%, rising up to 64% in February 2017. Monitoring of beech seed in the Abel Tasman during the 2016/2017 summer showed a moderate seed fall - beech mast has occurred.

Research shows a surge in rat numbers following a moderate beech mast poses a major threat to the park's vulnerable native wildlife including bellbirds, tui, rifleman, giant snails, wild and newly-released kākāriki (yellow-crowned parakeet) and kaka. The abundance of beech seed provides plentiful food to fuel rapid rises in rodent numbers. When the beech seed runs out, rats turn to native birds.

Our pest control will help protect the park's birdlife from predator attacks during their critical spring nesting period, increasing adult and chick survival.



South Island Kākāriki. Photo: ©Ntr Ketararu



What is happening

We will be aerially applying cereal baits containing biodegradable 1080 pesticide (0.15% or 15 parts 1080 to 10,000 parts of cereal bait) over approximately 10,160 ha of Abel Tasman National Park. The toxic bait will be sown at a rate of 2kg/ha – the equivalent of around 5 baits across an area the size of a tennis court.

Prior to the 1080 bait distribution we will carry out a pre-feed aerial application of non-toxic baits over the area. This makes rats more likely to eat the 1080 baits.

Helicopters will use Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology to achieve even coverage of bait. It enables pilots to be sure of boundaries.

The Abel Tasman Coast Track, huts and campsites, and the Torrent and Awaroa township catchment areas, are excluded from the aerial bait distribution. The aerial pest control will also not include any part of the Canaan Downs–Takaka Valley area or the Marahau Valley catchment.

The Abel Tasman Inland Track, Wainui Track, and Falls River track will be closed during the toxic bait application until they have been inspected by DOC staff and cleared of bait. This is likely to entail the closure of these tracks for one day.

ZIP trial

As part of this operation Zero Invasive Predators Ltd (ZIP) is planning to trial an innovative approach to aerial predator control over a 3,600 ha site within the 10,160 ha treatment area.

The ZIP trial will test a method for applying aerial 1080 that, if successful, would result in the complete removal of target pest species – thereby reducing and ultimately eliminating the need for repeated toxin use at defendable sites.

The proposed approach involves an additional aerial application of non-toxic ‘pre-feed’ within the trial area, and a higher sowing rate for the toxic baiting of 4kg/ha.

The site treated will include an intensively monitored 400 ha ‘core’ surrounded by a buffer zone to provide confidence that rats and possums detected have not invaded from outside the treated zone. If monitoring detects any surviving rats or possums after the toxic application, the trial would be repeated.

A similar trial on Mt Taranaki in 2016 appears to have reduced possum numbers to zero and rats to very low numbers. If this trial is successful in completely eliminating rats and possums it will bring us one step closer to the goal of a predator-free New Zealand.



South Island robin. Photo: Herb Christophers

ZIP was established by DOC and the NEXT Foundation in February 2015 to develop the technological capability to completely remove rats, possums and stoats from large mainland areas, and then defend those areas from reinvasion. For more information on ZIP go to www.zip.org.nz.

Why we are using these methods

Aerial 1080 pest control is the most effective pest control method over large areas and difficult terrain.

Research has shown that rapidly rising rat numbers enhanced by beech mast conditions can overwhelm trap networks. Ground control on its own cannot protect threatened bird and native land snail populations when predator numbers are excessively high.

Aerial application of 1080 baits is the most cost-effective predator control method over large areas and can be the only viable method in rugged terrain. It reduces pest numbers to extremely low densities and is needed to supplement other pest control such as our extensive stoat trapping network. Aerial 1080 pest control also reduces stoat numbers through their eating poisoned carcasses and it maintain possums at low numbers.

A 2011 Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment report into the use of 1080 found it was the most effective tool to protect our native wildlife.

Without the highly-effective aerial 1080 pest control, the ecology of the Park will continue to decline and we would not be able to reintroduce species lost to the Park in the past. Since 2014 kakariki, kaka and South Island robin have been released back on to the mainland part of the Park and South Island saddleback on to Adele Island.

Timeframe

The non-toxic pre-feed operations are planned to commence in July. No toxic baiting will take place until after 24 July, when school holidays have finished. The precise timing of both these operations is dependent upon periods of favourable weather.

Public notices informing of the pest control will be placed in local newspapers several weeks before operations begin and warning signs will be erected at access points and high public-use sites on the day prior to and day of the toxic operation.

Adjoining landowners, concessionaires and interested parties will be notified of the 1080 bait application 24hrs before it takes place.

Pest control management

DOC, Project Janszoon and the Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust have talked with neighbouring landowners, concessionaires, iwi and others with an interest in the Park about the restoration strategy they have put in place and how it is to be achieved.

To date a stoat trapping network of more than 3,000 traps across the Park is in place, aerial 1080 operations to control rats and possums have been undertaken in 2014 and 2016 and ground-based possum and rat control is happening along the coastal strip.

A permission to undertake the operation will be sought from the Nelson/Marlborough Public Health Unit and from DOC. DOC and the Public Health Unit set conditions for the operation to manage public safety and environmental risk. The Environmental Protection Authority also set stringent procedures and standards that must be met.

The process for obtaining approval involves a DOC Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE). A copy of the AEE for this operation can be viewed at the DOC Motueka office.

Important information

The pesticides we use are poisonous to humans and domestic animals. Poisoning can occur through eating baits or poisoned animals.

- 1080 baits are cereal pellets about 2 cm long, cylinder-shaped and are dyed **green**.
- Prefeed aerial cereal pellets are about 2 cm long, cylinder-shaped but are **fawn-coloured**.

In particular dogs are highly susceptible to 1080.

The risk to dogs with pesticide in carcasses will remain until they have rotted, perhaps for more than six months.

These risks can be eliminated by following these simple rules:

- **DO NOT touch bait**
- **WATCH CHILDREN at all times**
- **DO NOT EAT animals from this area**
- **Remember, poison baits or carcasses are DEADLY to DOGS**

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. Warning signs indicate that pesticide residues may still be present in baits or animals. When signs are removed, this means that you can resume normal activities in the area. Please report suspected vandalism or unauthorised removal of signs. If in doubt, check with DOC.

If you suspect poisoning

Always contact:

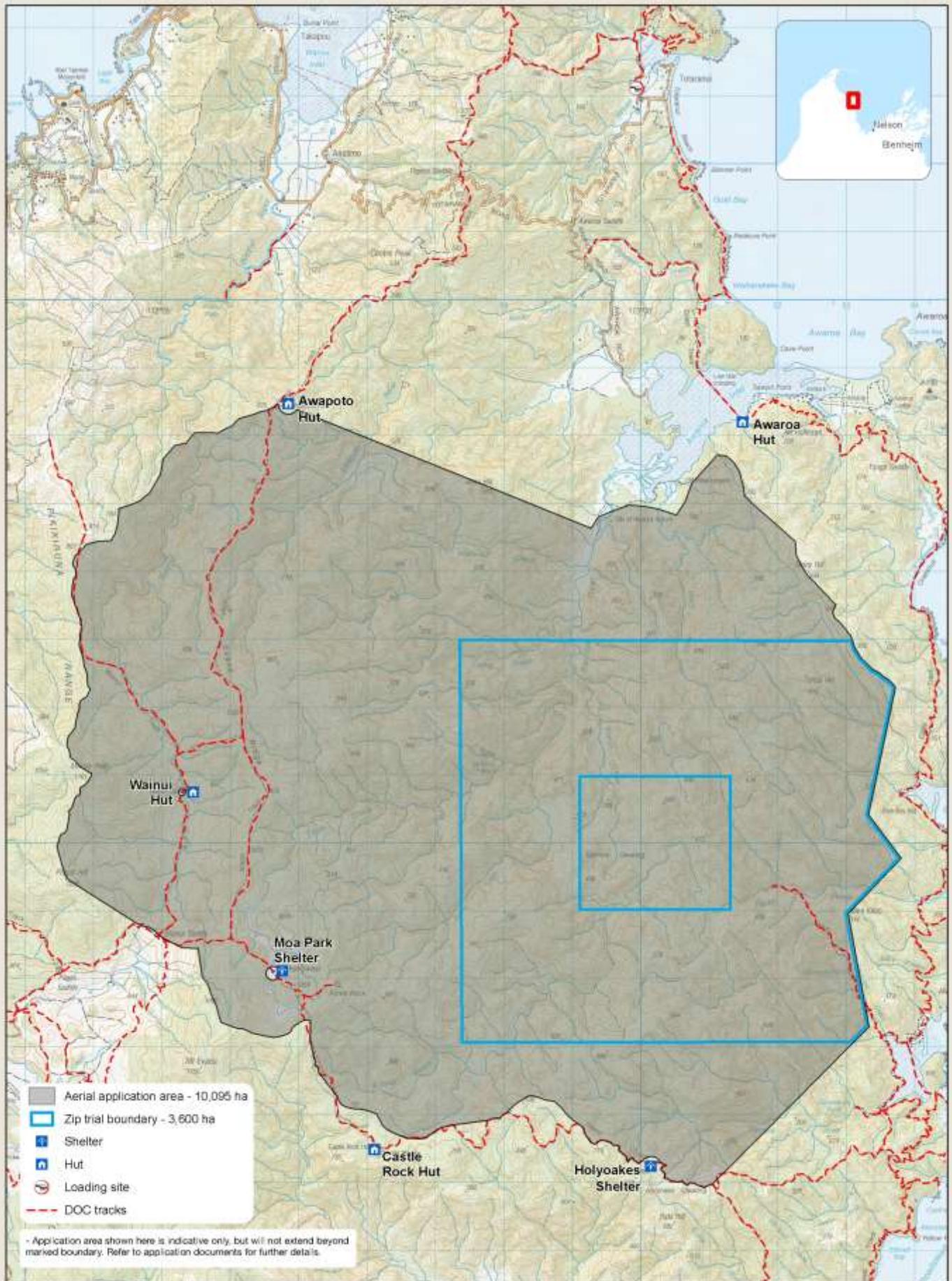
- Your local doctor or
- Local hospital or
- National Poisons Centre:
0800 764 766 (urgent calls) or
03 479 7248 (non-urgent and general enquiries), or dial 111

For more information

Motueka Office
Department of Conservation
PO Box 97, Motueka
Telephone: 03 528 1810

Please contact the Motueka office if you would like to be notified again prior to the operation.

Pesticide operational area



- Aerial application area - 10,095 ha
- Zip trial boundary - 3,600 ha
- Shelter
- Hut
- Loading site
- DOC tracks

- Application area shown here is indicative only, but will not extend beyond marked boundary. Refer to application documents for further details.

0 1 Kilometres

Southern Abel Tasman Treatment Area
 1080 Aerial Pest Control 2017
 Proposed Treatment Area: 10,095 ha



10/05/2017
 10/05/2017 Area Approval & Assessment Meeting
 Map 5014/01/01
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 DOC, Department of Conservation