



Key facts about rat control in the Abel Tasman National Park

As part of the work to restore and preserve the Abel Tasman National Park's rich wildlife, Project Janszoon and the Department of Conservation are planning aerial pest control this winter/spring to protect native species from very high rat numbers.

The pest control will help the recovery of native species and ecosystem restoration. It is part of a park-wide pest management programme that includes an extensive trapping network.

Why are we controlling rats in the Abel Tasman?

A heavy beech mast took place in the Abel Tasman National Park in 2019/2020 during which an enormous amount of beech seed fell, and predator numbers surged because of the abundance of food.

Alongside trapping networks an aerial predator control operation was undertaken to control rats in the winter of 2019. This helped protect the park's vulnerable native wildlife including tūī, toutouwai/robin, giant snails and kākārīki (yellow-crowned parakeet) from predator attacks during their critical nesting period, increasing adult and chick survival.

However, given the unprecedented amount of food in the system, rat numbers have been able to recover to levels that again threaten our native wildlife.

High numbers of rats can overwhelm the extensive trapping networks operating in the park so we are planning a focused aerial pest control operation in 2020 in the upper reaches of the park.

Aerial pest control is highly effective and we are protecting a higher-elevation area of the park that is a stronghold for native wildlife.

What is happening?

We will be aerially applying cereal baits containing biodegradable sodium fluoroacetate (1080) pesticide (0.15% or 15 parts 1080 to 10,000 parts of cereal bait) over approximately 8,310 ha in the upper reaches of Abel Tasman National

Park. The toxic bait will be sown at a rate of 2 kg/ha—the equivalent of around 5 baits across an area the size of a tennis court.

Prior to the toxic bait distribution we will carry out a pre-feed aerial application of non-toxic

baits over the area. This ensures predators are more likely to eat the toxic baits.

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

The aerial pest control will not include any part of the Canaan Downs–Takaka Valley area.

The Abel Tasman Inland Track and Wainui 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.

Why we are using these methods?

Research has shown high rat numbers, and the subsequent surge in stoat numbers, can overwhelm trap networks. Over 90% of the Abel Tasman National Park is trapped however ground control on its own cannot protect threatened bird and snail populations when pest numbers are very high.

Aerial pest control using sodium fluoroacetate is the most effective control method over large areas of difficult terrain to reduce pest numbers (rats and possums) to extremely low densities. It also provides added protection from stoats as they scavenge poisoned carcasses.



Kākāriki/yellow-crowned parakeet



Kākā

A 2011 Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment report into the use of sodium fluoroacetate found it was the most effective tool to protect our native wildlife. Sodium fluoroacetate is ideally suited for use in New Zealand because while introduced mammals are extremely vulnerable to the toxin, monitoring shows most native species are not at significant risk from 1080 operations.

Without aerial pest control the ecology of the park would continue to decline and we would not be able to protect recently reintroduced species such as kākā, whio/blue duck, pāteke/brown teal and kākāriki.

Timeframe

The aerial application of toxic bait will take place from 7 August 2020, and be preceded by the aerial application of non-toxic pre-feed baits. The precise timing of both these operations will be determined by periods of favourable weather.

Public notices will be placed in local newspapers at least two weeks before operations begin and

warning signs will be erected at access points to the treatment area and high public-use sites.

Adjoining landowners and concessionaires will be notified of the toxic bait application before it takes place.

Pest control management

DOC, Project Janszoon and the Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust continue to engage with neighbouring landowners, concessionaires, iwi and others with an interest in the park about the restoration strategy for the Abel Tasman and how it is to be achieved.

A stoat trapping network across more than 90% of the park is in place, there are also self-resetting rat traps in coastal areas. Aerial pest control oper-

ations to control rats and possums have been undertaken alongside ground-based possum and rat control along the coastal strip.

Permission has been received 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.

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

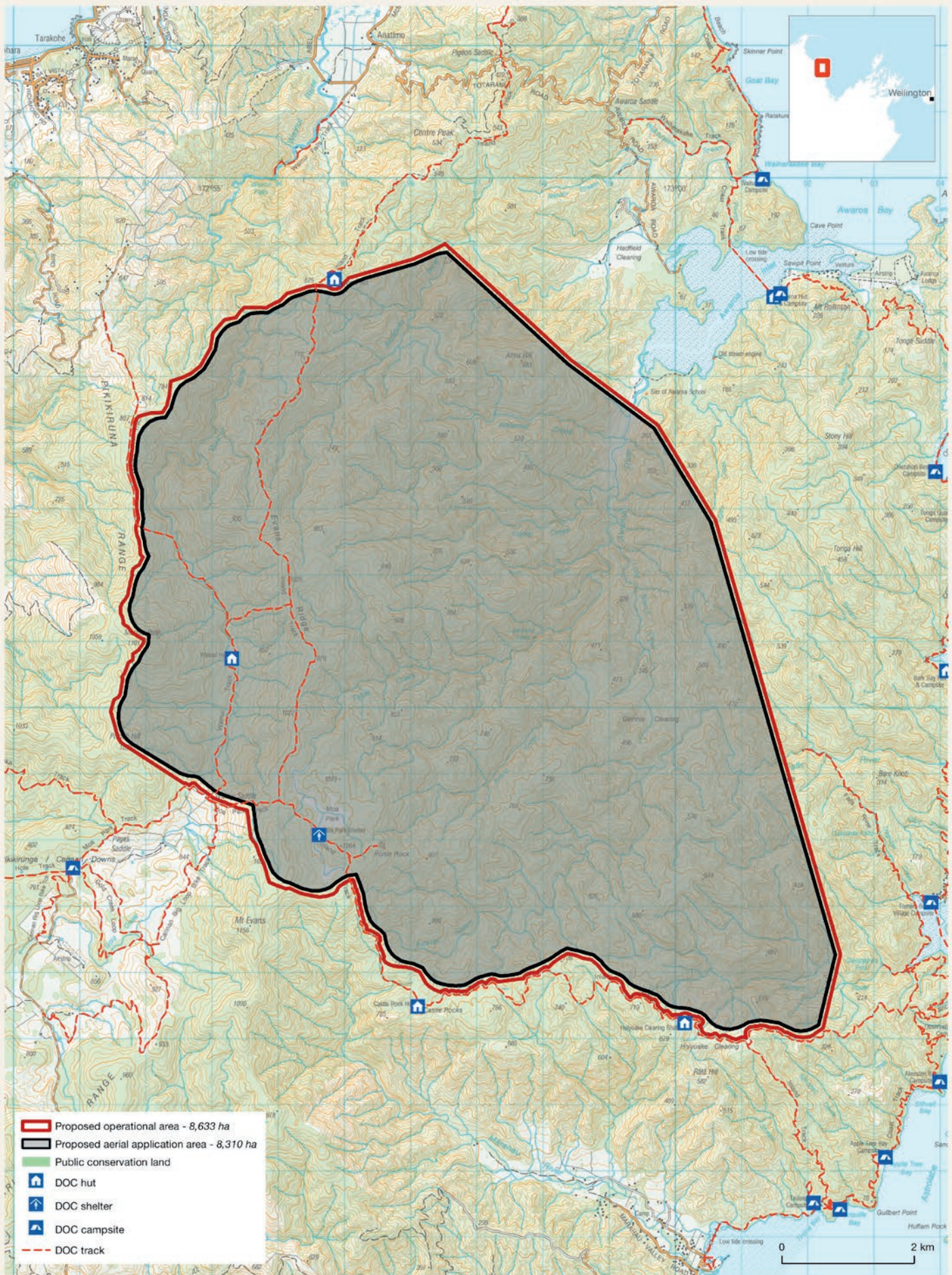
Always contact:

- 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 7143
Phone: 03 528 1810

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



Southern Abel Tasman Operation Aerial Predator Control 2020

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