

Year 5 Report

Mid North High Value Area

JULY 2023



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Executive Summary

The Mid North area has now completed its fifth year of the NRC High Value Area (HVA) Program and continues to make significant progress towards achieving a connected pest control network across a large scale area in Northland.

Andrew Mentor (Kiwi Coast) continues to coordinate the Mid North HVA Steering Group and help to sustain, connect and grow hapū and community-led conservation projects. From workshops and capacity building, to helping community groups access funding, the MNHVA has worked alongside the NRC to expand and coordinate pest control efforts in the Mid North Area.

Collation of trap data for the 2022 year shows that a total of 40,661 pests were removed from the Mid North area, which now exceeds 40,000 hectares.

Background

The Mid North High Value Area (MNHVA) partnership with Northland Regional Council (NRC) began in October 2018. It involves a collaborative network of hapū and community-led conservation projects working together to restore biodiversity over an area of more than 40,000 ha. The area extends from Purerua and Opua in the Bay of Islands, west to Kaikohe, and north to the lower Hokianga Harbour.

The MNHVA project has a primary goal of connecting landcare groups and projects to create a landscape scale pest control area. The vision of the Mid North High Value Area is to “Link the biodiversity strongholds of Puketi Forest with the Bay of Islands, to provide a safe habitat where native wildlife can survive and thrive in the Mid North.”

MNHVA supports both well-established pest control areas and new community conservation groups, including urban pest control. The goal is to see the creation of New Zealand’s first kiwi corridor as identified by the Kiwi Coast project. MNHVA feeds into the strategic goals of the Kiwi Coast and is part of the ‘second focus area’ identified in the Kiwi Coast Strategic Plan (2017).

This report summarises the results and achievements of the MNHVA during its fifth year of operation from July 1 2022 – June 30 2023.

Goals

To achieve its vision the MNHVA will:

- Work together as communities and land managers to restore the native flora and fauna between Purerua and Puketi, Opuā and Kawakawa and west to Kaikohe.
- Fill the remaining gaps to create a predator trapping network that will significantly reduce predators and assist native biodiversity to thrive.
- Coordinate animal and plant pest operations for maximum efficiency and effectiveness.
- Protect the scattered high density kiwi populations and ensure their genetic viability by enabling safe dispersal.
- Carry out monitoring to inform decision making and track progress towards goals.
- Secure funds and resources to ensure all existing community-led conservation projects in the area continue to operate successfully.
- Motivate and empower further landowners to actively participate in environmental stewardship/kaitiakitanga by holding joint community events and skill building workshops.
- Link in and coordinate with the Kiwi Coast and enable the creation of New Zealand's first kiwi corridor.

Animal and plant pest species controlled through the MNHVA project area include:

- Possums
- Rodents
- Mustelids
- Feral cats
- Feral pigs
- Feral goats
- Woolly nightshade
- Elaeagnus
- Climbing asparagus
- Taiwan cherry
- Wild ginger
- Moth plant

Groups and Projects

The number of groups and projects involved in the Mid North HVA continues to grow as existing projects expand and new groups form. The MNHVA currently supports 68 groups. The location of these groups is shown in Map 1.

Aroha Island

Bay Bush Action Trust

Blue Gum Lane Trappers

Candy Farm, Okaihau

Cavalli View Trappers

Cottle Hill Landcare

Craigmore Horticulture & Wairoa Reserve, Kerikeri

Friends of Rangitane Stream

Hawkhill Farm

Hupara Landcare Group

JH Dowell Trust (Day Point)

Jonathan Rae Trust (Takou)

Kaikohe Ngawha (Top Energy-Manulife-Corrections)

Kauri Cliffs

Kaikohe Christian School

Kerikeri Cubs

Kerikeri Kindergarten

Kerikeri Peninsula Conservation Trust

Kerikeri Plant & Food Research

Kerikeri-Puketotara Catchment CPCA

Kerikeri River West Trapline

Lake Omapere Duck Hunters

Matauri Trust

Maungaparerua Stream Landcare

Mill Road Trappers (Kawakawa)

Moturoa Island Private Wildlife Sanctuary

Moturua Island

Native Forest Restoration Trust NFRT - Puketi Mokau

Okaihau Eco Warriors

Okaihau Farmers

Onekura Rd Trappers & Puketotara DOC Reserve

Opapa Kiwi Protection, South Hokianga

Opua Bike Trail

Orcada Ltd

Oromahoe Trust

Pamu Kapiro-Avocado

Pamu Kapiro Station

Pamu Mangatua

Pamu Puketotara

Pamu Takou Bay Milk

Pathways Drive, Kerikeri

Puketi Forest Trust

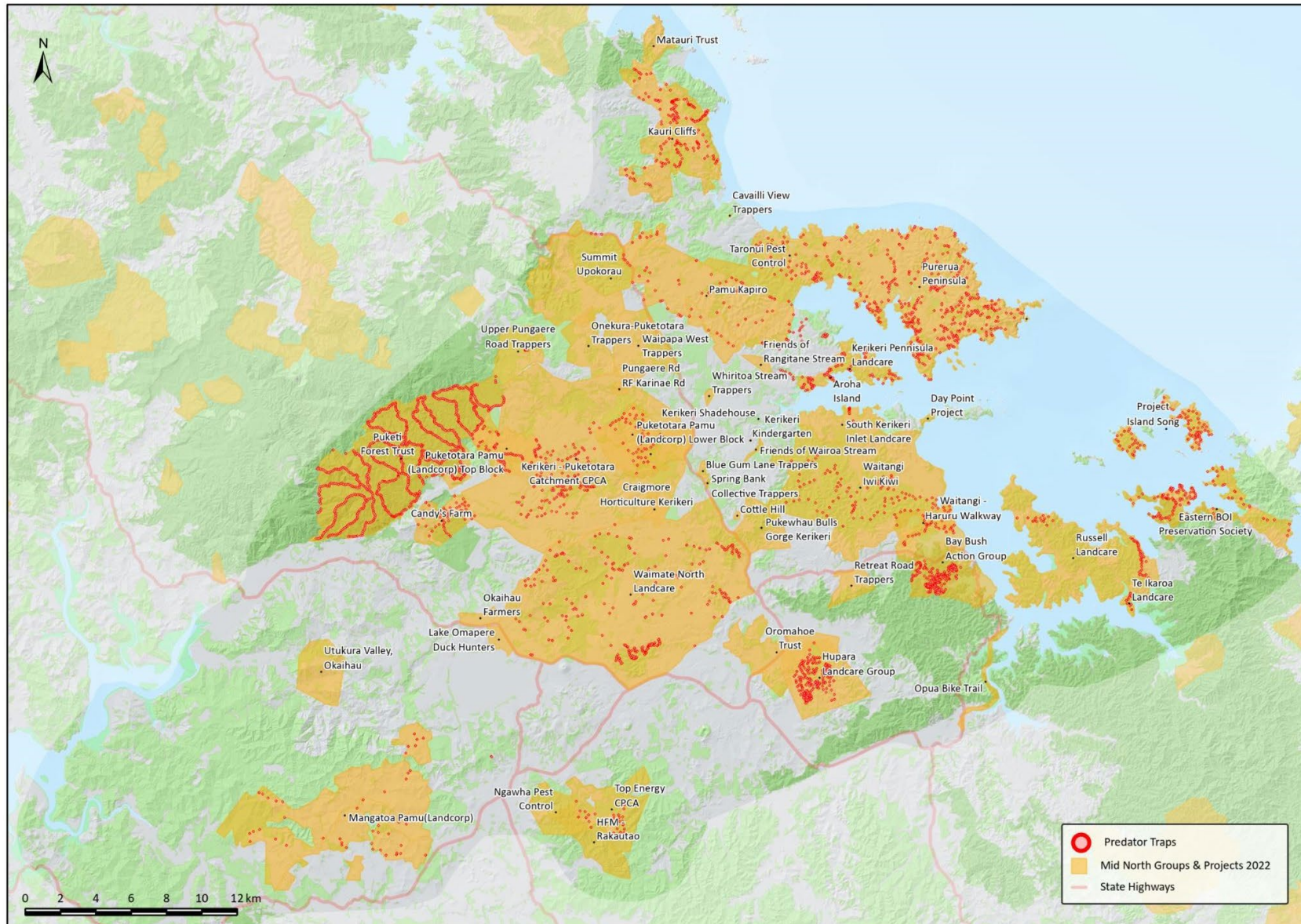
Puketi HQ Trapping Loops
Pukewhau Bulls Gorge Kerikeri
Pungaere Road Trappers
Purerua Peninsula- Pest Free Purerua
Retreat Rd Trappers Haruru
Selwyn Driver Whitehills
Signal Road Trappers Okaihau
Siteworx Kapiro
South Kerikeri Inlet Landcare (SKIL)
Springbank Collective
Summit Forests
Summit Upokorau Ecological Project
Taronui Pest Control Area- Pest Free Purerua
The Shadehouse Volunteers Kerikeri

Upper Pungaere Trappers
Utakura Valley Pest Control
Vision Kerikeri/Friends of Wairoa Stream
Waiare Rd Landcare Group
Waihou Valley Trapping
Waikare Whenua Kaitiaki
Waimate North Landcare
Waipapa West Trappers
Waitangi Endowment Forest
Waitangi Iwi Kiwi Project
Waitangi Treaty Grounds
Whiritoa Stream Trappers



Bay of Islands Academy Planting Day at Purerua Peninsula, October 2022.

Mid North HVA Maps



Map 1: Mid North Groups and Predator Traps, July 2023. Map: Biospatial

MNHVA and Purerua Peninsula

Pest Free Purerua Peninsula

Purerua Peninsula in the Bay of Islands sits inside the MNHVA and is home to the “Pest Free Purerua” project, now in its third year of operation. The Purerua - Mataroa Peninsula covers over 7,600ha on the northern reaches of the Bay of Islands and is also home to around 25% of Northland’s kiwi population. The project is funded by Jobs for Nature via Save the Kiwi, and is supported by Ngati Torehina, Ngati Rehia, private landowners, Pamu Landcorp, Plant & Food Research, Summit Forests, Bay of Islands International Academy, Department of Conservation, Save the Kiwi Trust, and Northland Regional Council.

The project (<https://pfp.kiwi>) has significantly boosted existing pest control in the area since beginning in 2020. The goal of the project is pest elimination, which is supported by an immediate buffer zone known as Taronui, and the larger protection zone provided by the Mid North HVA.

In 2022, 1,434 pests were trapped on the peninsula through a variety of methods (Table 1). The main traps used include DOC 200s for stoats, SA2s for possums, and T-Rex and SnapE traps for rats.

This year a number of additional pest control tools and monitoring techniques have been introduced into the project to help eliminate pests and track progress towards goals.

These have included live capture traps (single and double ended), automatic mayo lure dispensers with cameras, helicopter and firearms work targeting feral goats, wax tag monitoring, drones and conservation dogs.

Table 1: Purerua and Taronui Trap Catch Results, 2021 & 2022

Purerua and Taronui	2021	2022
Possums	315	290
Rats	666	617
Stoats	24	15
Weasels	42	34
Feral Cats	45	28
Hedgehogs	219	203
Mice	12	33
Goats	-	200
Other	-	14
TOTAL	1,323	1,434



Map 2: Pest Free Purerua project area



Goat removal operation on Purerua Peninsula.

Objectives

MNHVA progressed all five key objectives in Year 5.

Objective 1.

Enable the groups to continue their existing work

Resources were provided to groups within the MNHVA including traps, lures, toxins, bait stations, herbicide, monitoring tools and safety equipment as requested.

Budget priority was given to ensuring professional predator trappers under contract to NRC were resourced to complete all trapping rounds for each project to complement the unpaid work of the many landowners involved.

The Mid North HVA has continued to work closely with NZ Corrections Ngawha to produce trap boxes for groups.

Objective 2.

Fill the gaps to complete a continuous predator control trapping network

The Mid North predator trap network targeting feral cats and mustelids (weasels, stoats and ferrets) was further expanded, linked and intensified

As in previous years, assistance was provided to groups to map their trap locations and project areas using GPS data. This information was then uploaded to Trap.NZ and mapped to help projects manage their data and identify gaps across the MNHVA.

The expanded trapping network reflects the increasing number of local landowners getting actively involved in pest control and biodiversity stewardship and is reflected in the increase in groups involved in the MNHVA year on year.

The increasingly connected predator control network between Puketi Forest and Project Island Song will provide a kiwi corridor and an avian flyway between two significant biodiversity strongholds.

Objective 3.

Coordinate toxin use for effectiveness

Further bait stations were supplied to groups to infill and expand the bait station network over the Mid North area. Bait stations, including biobags for toxins are used for possum and rat control, cyanide and pindone respectively.

Objective 4.

Protect existing kiwi populations and link them together

Mid North kiwi populations are among some of the highest densities on the mainland of New Zealand. In year five, groups across the MNHVA continued their work to protect existing kiwi populations and build kiwi numbers so that they can expand into new territory and eventually link with other populations.

Progress towards breeding success and protecting the survival of existing kiwi has been achieved by focusing on intensive professional predator control and engaging dog owners in the need for good dog control to keep kiwi safe.

Taronui Bay and Purerua Peninsula have been a major focus area in year five where, being a peninsula, it is easier to protect the area from re-invasion at the isthmus.

The area east and south of Puketi Forest has also been an important focus, where we have worked to reduce predators and create a buffer zone to protect kiwi populations inside Puketi Forest. An extension of trapping lines around Waitangi, Haruru Falls and Opua has also helped to reduce predator re-invasion into Opua Forest where Bay Bush Action have carried out extensive predator control work.

Objective 5:

Plant pest control

Groups involved in MNHVA continued their plant pest control, targeting moth plant, *Elaeagnus*, wild ginger, climbing asparagus, woolly nightshade and Taiwan Cherry. Weed control materials are supplied as needed for groups.



Kiwi Coast stand at the Bay of Islands P & I Show, November 2022.

Animal Pests

All MNHVA projects recorded their trap catches and submitted their results to Kiwi Coast as part of the annual data collection. The collation of trap catch data showed that in 2022 a total of 40,661 pests were removed from the Mid North, across approximately 40,000ha. These catch results included 13,533 possums, 14,587 rats, 510 stoats, 409 weasels and 566 feral cats (Table 2).

As stoats kill 95% of kiwi chicks before they reach one year old, the 510 stoats trapped will have significantly increased the likelihood of kiwi chick survival.

As these results do not account for pests removed by toxins, the actual numbers of animal pests removed from the area will be far higher.

Table 2: Mid North HVA 2022 Trap Catch Results

Mid North HVA	2022
Possums	13,533
Rats	14,587
Stoats	510
Weasels	409
Feral Cats	566
Other	11,056
TOTAL	40,661

Detailed Pest Results by Group

Table 3: MNHVA Groups & Projects Collated Pest Control Results, January - December 2022

Group or Project	Possums	Rats	Ferrets	Stoats	Weasels	Feral Cats	Wild Rabbits & Hares	Feral Pigs	Magpie	Myna	Hedgehog	Mice	Other catches	Totals
Apex Predator Control	1,441	295	0	15	0	30	2	10	0	1	36	3	3	1,836
Aroha Island	13	38	0	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	76	0	134
Bay Bush Action Trust	445	1,161	0	19	2	11	0	0	0	1	62	321	0	2,022
Blue Gum Lane	34	201	0	0	0	0	29	0	0	0	15	49	9	337
Bulls Rd Pokaka	27	64	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	7	46	0	146
Candy Farm, Okaihau	55	57	0	0	0	3	3	1	0	0	12	0	0	131
Cavalli View Trappers	15	19	0	0	1	6	8	0	1	18	12	144	0	224
Cottle Hill Landcare	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	5
Craigmore Horticulture & Wairoa (Airport) DOC Reserve Kerikeri	47	243	0	14	9	4	1	0	0	0	39	47	2	406
Friends of Rangitane Stream	21	116	0	0	2	1	12	0	0	0	0	135	0	287
Hawkhill Farm	44	38	0	2	2	0	13	23	0	0	0	3	0	125

Hupara Landcare Group	144	378	0	6	21	38	11	0	0	0	116	0	0	714
JH Dowell Trust (Day Point)	15	18	0	2	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	41
Jonathan Rae Trust (Takou)	146	52	0	7	0	0	1	1	6	0	5	32	0	250
Kauri Cliffs	1025	523	0	13	10	23	105	17	16	33	250	52	0	2,067
KCS Kaikohe	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Kerikeri Cubs	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kerikeri Kindergarten	73	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	140
Kerikeri Peninsula Conservation Trust	221	1,689	0	28	26	16	379	0	3	10	75	1,601	0	4,048
Kerikeri Plant & Food Research	9	11	0	1	0	12	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	34
Kerikeri-Puketotara Catchment CPCA	688	1106	0	17	9	85	195	0	75	21	158	322	3	2,679
Kerikeri River West Trapline	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Lake Omapere Duck Hunters	114	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	116
Manulife Forest Management: Rakautao	4	4	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	27
Matauri Trust	185	160	0	11	4	1	23	0	32	10	99	155	29	709
Maungaparerua Stream Landcare	139	21	0	1	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	176
Mill Road Trappers (Kawakawa)	11	6	0	1	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	1	0	28

Moturoa Island Private Wildlife Sanctuary	0	56	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	110	19	0	0	185
Moturua Island	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Native Forest Restoration Trust - Puketi Mokau Shirley Guildford	18	71	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	95
Okaihau Eco Warriors	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30
Okaihau Trappers	190	44	0	9	0	4	0	0	0	0	34	0	0	281
Onekura Rd Trappers & Puketotara DOC Reserve	124	208	0	4	0	5	52	0	10	210	0	180	0	793
Opapa Kiwi Protection, South Hokianga	36	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39
Opua Bike Trail	0	10	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	12
Orcada Ltd	862	21	0	7	13	8	0	72	0	1	8	3	97	1,092
Oromahoe Trust	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Pamu Kapiro-Takou Bay	471	501	0	7	51	39	109	0	3	14	25	15	213	1,448
Pamu Mangatua	914	133	0	16	34	38	20	182	2	2	155	2	980	2,478
Pamu Puketotara	319	161	0	17	37	11	66	60	3	2	47	5	193	921
Pathways Drive, Kerikeri	0	8	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	5	0	17

Puketi Forest Trust - Including JFN Expansion	1,496	3,082	0	127	9	32	0	10	0	4	43	522	0	5,325
Puketi HQ Trapping Loops	162	124	0	1	0	9	3	0	0	3	17	195	0	514
Pukewhau Bulls Gorge Kerikeri	315	184	0	7	5	2	0	0	0	0	4	18	1	536
Pungaere Road Corridor	40	81	0	1	1	3	15	0	0	0	0	2	0	143
Purerua Peninsula - Pest Free Purerua	67	515	0	10	26	18	0	0	4	10	199	33	200	1,082
Retreat Rd Trappers (Haruru)	26	117	0	17	2	3	56	0	0	0	5	325	15	566
Selwyn Driver Whitehills	87	67	0	2	3	4	0	8	0	0	19	0	0	190
Signal Road Trappers Okaihau	181	268	0	8	5	11	1	0	0	0	71	10	0	555
Siteworx Kapiro	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
South Kerikeri Inlet Landcare (SKIL)	209	371	0	9	3	6	41	0	0	1	6	140	0	786
Springbank Collective	26	54	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	82
Summit Mokau	61	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	61
Summit Upokorau CPCA	243	145	0	9	18	10	0	2	0	0	23	0	35	485
Taronui Pest Control Area - Pest Free Purerua	223	102	0	5	8	10	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	352
The Shadehouse Volunteers	9	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	24

TJ Pest Termination	704	162	0	43	44	32	21	73	4	1	132	4	97	1,317
Top Energy Ngawha	4	19	0	10	4	5	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	50
Upper Pungaere Trappers	173	132	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	5	6	0	320
Utukura Trappers	141	23	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	4	0	0	174
Vision Kerikeri/Friends of Wairoa Stream	11	239	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	67	2	319
Waiare Rd Landcare Group	487	246	0	11	4	16	67	77	6	3	30	90	0	1,037
Waihou Valley Trapping	21	11	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	35
Waikare Whenua Kaitiaki	303	72	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	378
Waimate North Landcare	382	645	0	10	13	43	25	0	0	0	227	10	0	1,355
Waipapa West Trappers	29	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	37
Waitangi Endowment Forest	65	111	0	9	11	6	0	0	1	0	38	0	0	241
Waitangi Iwi Kiwi Project	21	54	0	15	24	4	7	0	0	0	14	2	2	143
Waitangi Treaty Grounds	141	271	0	3	0	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	426
Waitotara Drive Reserve	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Whiritoa Stream Trappers	23	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
Totals	13,533	14,587	0	510	409	566	1,312	536	166	455	2,048	4,624	1,915	40,661

Education and Events

Changing pandemic restrictions meant that in 2022 many events were able to run which had not been possible in previous years. Kiwi Coast was active in communities across the MNHVA at shows, community events and schools. A highlight was the Bay of Islands P & I Show, which went ahead in November 2022 after multiple cancellations. More than 750 people passed through the Kiwi Coast stand, learnt about pest control initiatives in the HVA, and connected with others.

For the first time, Kiwi Coast also visited the North Hokianga A & P Show in February 2023 where there was a lot of community interest, and where Kiwi Coast was awarded Best Trade Site.

A number of skill building workshops and school visits were also held in the Mid North with great attendance and interest from the community.



Kiwi, Traps and Equipment

Kiwi

The larger Mid North projects participate in the Annual Kiwi Call Count Survey, either with human listening at accessible sites or with Kiwi Listening Devices (KLDs) at less accessible sites or where no kiwi are known to be present.

Results have been collated and submitted to the Northland Brown Kiwi Call Count Monitoring Report which is being prepared by DOC.

Traps and Equipment

Trap and bait stations were kept in stock and were readily available to groups when required. Extreme weather events saw many groups lose traps, which were quickly replaced from the trap inventory in the MNHVA. The types and total number of traps deployed to groups this year is seen in table 4.

Table 4: Mid North HVA 2022 Trap and Bait Station Deployment.

Kiwi Coast Mid North 2022-2023	
DOC 200 doubles	397
DOC 200 singles	50
DOC 250	5
AT220 new or repaired	48
SA2 Cat/Possum	659
Rat box & trap	206
Live Capture	10
Timms	2
Philproof bait station	327
Romark bait station	180
Enviromate bait station	6
Pied Piper bait station	9
Ramps	63
TOTAL	1962



Kiwi moving safely among traps. Photo: Zane Wright

Pāteke

Pāteke monitoring

Pāteke (brown teal) are the rarest mainland duck in New Zealand. Kiwi Coast works each year with community groups, specialist staff at DOC and NorthTec to assist with the Annual Northland Pāteke Flock Counts and investigate new pāteke sites.

In February 2022, the Mid North HVA once again assisted DOC to carry out the Annual Pāteke Flock Count Survey, with Matakā Station, The Landing and NZ Corrections also participating.

DOC Analysis of the 2023 Annual Pāteke Flock Count data confirmed that pāteke are flourishing in eastern Northland, particularly at sites with sustained and intensive predator control. The flock count total has increased since year 4, with DOC Senior Biodiversity Ranger Nigel Miller stating that this shows **"...a positive indication of pāteke population trends, particularly since predator control started"**. The ongoing survival of the flock will depend on suppression or elimination of mustelids and feral cats, an ongoing focus for the MNHVA.



Pāteke release

In March 2023, 20 pāteke were released at The Landing, on the Purerua peninsula. This release was supported by Ngatiwai Trust, Ngati Torehina, the Pāteke Recovery Group, NRC and Kiwi Coast. Monitoring in April and May found seven of the 20 pāteke deceased in close proximity to the release ponds. Five of the seven were assessed to be cat predation. A further two have an undetermined cause of death. The remaining birds have since been found to have dispersed further afield making monitoring more difficult. Ongoing efforts to locate the pāteke have included using different types of transmitters and following up on reported sightings at nearby areas such as Rangitane stream.

A network of live capture cages and feral cat kill traps were already in place on the peninsula. In response to the cat predation, these traps were all activated and additional equipment was set up including night vision equipment and trail cameras. This operation is ongoing.



Ngati Torehina Kaumatua Hugh Rihari at the Pāteke release, March 2023.



Feral cats caught on a trail camera, Purerua Peninsula.

Mid North Steering Group

The Mid North High Value Area Steering Group would like to thank Northland Regional Council, Save the Kiwi and Kiwi Coast for the support of the work in the Mid North/Bay of Islands. The work would not happen if it were not for the many hundreds of volunteers and enthusiasts, iwi and hapū, farmers, businesses and corporations taking responsibility for their areas. We particularly acknowledge Ngati Torehina, Ngati Rehia and Ngati Kawa for their roles and support of pest control initiatives on Purerua, Taronui and the wider rohe of the Ipipiri/Bay of Islands.



Summary

The fifth year of the MNHVA has been a success with good progress made towards all five objectives. All groups involved have worked well together, carrying out animal and plant pest control and monitoring over 40,000 hectares.

New predator traps deployed into key gaps have linked further traplines of neighbouring groups together into a growing combined predator trapping network across the Bay of Islands.

The Pest Free Purerua Project continues to move from strength to strength and has met all targets to date.

We continue to adjust our methods, trial new techniques, and connect with communities who are helping the Mid North HVA grow in strength each year.



Acknowledgements

Mid North HVA would like to thank the following organisations for their ongoing support of goals for this area.



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