How to protect kokako

Major Pests

The main threats to native birds living in trees are climbing animals such as possums, ship rats and stoats. Of these, possums and ship rats have been identified through research as the major predators of kokako. They prevent the birds from breeding by eating both eggs and chicks. While the kokako female can put up a fight, she cannot prevent them from relentlessly killing her young.

Although cats, dogs, ferrets and other animals constitute a serious threat to ground-dwelling birds, like the kiwi, these animals do not significantly impact kokako numbers.

In a nutshell, you protect kokako by killing possums and ship rats.

How to control possums and rats

The recommended method for controlling possums and ship rats in Kaharoa is to use poison baits in bait stations.

These bait stations must be positioned so there is at least one per hectare - or at 100m intervals throughout the bush. (Two bait stations per hectare is preferable for rat control.) A track network may be required to connect the bait stations.

Bait stations are filled prior to the nesting season with a poison bait to protect the birds when they are most vulnerable.

What are the benefits?

By killing possums and rats, you will be protecting other forest birds and a wide range of palatable tree species. You can have a healthier environment in your bush and enjoy a better dawn chorus as a bonus.

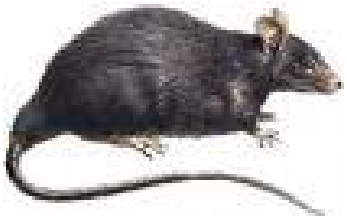
By using bait stations, you can recover any unused bait. Also, by using bait stations, protection is offered to non-target bird species.

What are the risks?

Children, dogs and stock can all be at risk from exposure to poison baits. Measures can be taken to minimise these risks when toxins and poisoned carcasses are present.

What is a ship rat?

Two species of rat live in the North Island, both of them introduced:



Ship rat - Ship rats are seldom seen because they are nocturnal. Nevertheless, they are prolific in lowland North Island forests and are very resourceful hunter-gatherers. The tail of a ship rat is longer than its body.

Norway rat - Larger in size than the ship rat, the Norway rat has a thick tail that is shorter than its body. Commonly seen on farms, they live in places where people use, store, process or dispose of food. They are rare in forest environments.

Of these rats, the ship rat is known to be the most voracious predator of forest birds.

What will it cost?

The set-up costs for pest management relate to installing bait stations, marking tracks and monitoring pest numbers. The cost of this initial work is around $130-$150 per hectare.

Can I get funding assistance?

Funding assistance for sustainable land management, which includes Pest Animal control, may be available through Environment Bay of Plenty's Environmental Programmes scheme, if your property meets certain criteria.

Alternatively, the Kaharoa Kokako Trust is willing to seek funding on a landowner's behalf to assist with initial setup costs.

Ongoing costs relate to purchasing toxins and maintaining tracks. These costs are around $35 per hectare, but vary depending on terrain, access and potential labour costs. Once again, the Trust can potentially secure funding to cover or reduce costs.

What other support is available?

Advice - More advice on pest management options for your property is available through the Trust. Environment Bay of Plenty also offers free, expert advice on pest control.

Bait stations attached to trees allow safe management of possums and rats.

Manpower - The Kaharoa Kokako Trust has mobilised a large workforce of volunteers to work on operations in the Kaharoa Conservation Area. The Trust is willing to explore options for helping you with your pest control.

Without pest control most chicks will never leave the nest.

Interested in creating a safe environment for kokako on your property?

Contact the Kaharoa Kokako Trust by phoning Anne Managh on (07) 345 9952.

Alternatively, you can contact Environment Bay of Plenty (0800 368 267) or the QE II Trust (07 543 3235) for support to protect native forests.

www.kokako.org.nz