

Te Potae O Awarua

Whio and kiwi protection project in North Western Ruahine Summary Report for 2011–2012

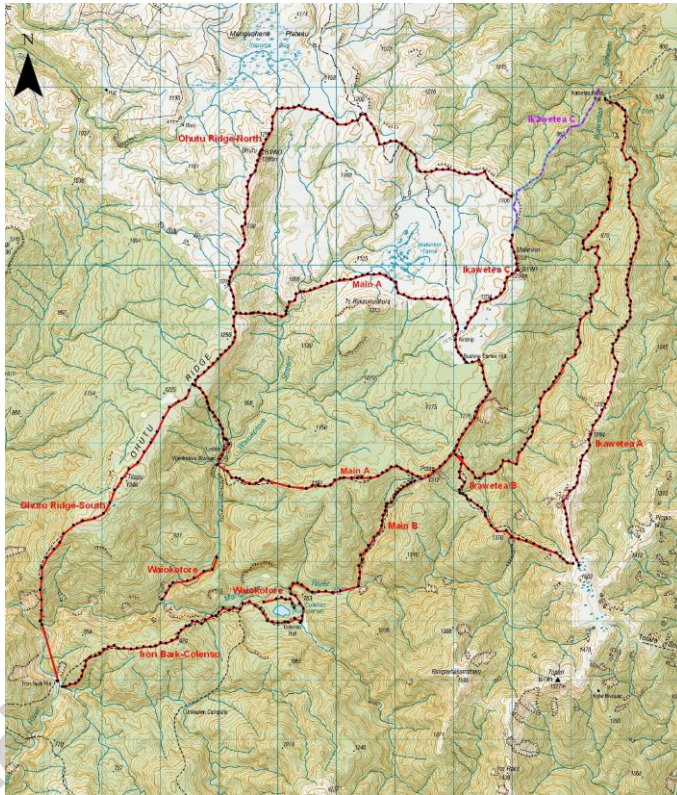
Te Potae O Awarua roughly translates to 'the protection of the Awarua lands' and is the name given to a joint initiative by the Aorangi Awarua Trust and the Department of Conservation. It is situated in the north western part of the Ruahine Range in an area of high biodiversity values and incorporates land administered by both the Aorangi Awarua Trust and Department of Conservation. The Te Potae O Awarua project has developed into a predator control programme predominantly for whio with benefits for kiwi. Recent research into agents of decline for whio has shown that stoat control is the most effective way of increasing their survival.

Whio have been recorded throughout the Ruahine for many years. In 2003 a survey plan was established to determine their distribution over 11 catchments to give an indication of likely places to focus management. Three aerial 1080 drops occurring in 1994, 2004 and Oct 2010 are likely to have benefited whio but it is only with the instigation of this project that any targeted pest control has occurred. In 2007 Te Potae O Awarua site subsequently became recognised by the Blue Duck Recovery Group and included in the Blue Duck Recovery Plan 2009–2019 as one of the North Island's five Recovery sites.

The project began with an initial line of 200 Doc200 predator control traps established around Ruahine Corner to Lake Colenso area. New lines have been added every year and there is now network of about 760 traps providing protection for a larger area of whio and kiwi habitat. (see map) The main emphasis of this project has been to maintain control of mustelids and rats through regular trap checks. Due to the remote nature of this location, access is difficult requiring helicopter transportation. Other avenues for access will be looked at and discussed at the end of this season.

There are two ONE (Operation Nest Egg) kiwis in the Ikawatea catchment initially set up by Cape Kidnappers Project in conjunction with Aorangi-Awarua Trust and latterly taken over by ECOED, a Hawkes Bay based Environmental Education Trust. The two birds are presently requiring a transmitter change but the future of ONE here is uncertain due to lack of

funding. The last kiwi recruit was released back to Blue Slip in late July 2011.



Map 1 showing stopt lines (not including Ohutu Stream and new Aorangi Lines).

2011/12 season summary

The aerial 1080 drop that occurred in October 2010 covering much of this area had a post RTC of 0.33% and will have had secondary benefits to avian species present through pest reduction.

Six trap checks were undertaken this season carried out by staff and volunteers from Department of Conservation, Aorangi Awarua Trust volunteers and contractors. The results of these checks is listed in figure 2. Henry traps on Ohutu Ridge and in Waiokotore stream have not been checked due to teething problems with the traps. These traps are due to be replaced as soon as the new version is available.

General observations over 2011/12 year was that who numbers remained relatively constant with birds being regularly seen in Mangatera, Ohutu, Apias, Ikawatea Rivers and Potae Creek and Waiokotore streams. No major flood events this season but river levels were high and light flooding was frequent through the spring summer. No formal census surveys were conducted this season.

Baiting is presently with eggs kindly donated to this project from Zeagold Foods and some trials have been undertaken using dried rabbit meat which although expensive appears equally effective.

Fig 2: Overall catches for 2011/12 season

	Stoat	Weasel	Rat	Hedgehog
Te Potae Volunteers line	22	6	75	8
Ikawatea	39	0	181	3

Colenso Iron Bark	14		61	0
Aorangi Awarua Trust lines	15	0	44	5
Total	90	6	361	16

Ideas for extra funding

Finances are increasingly tight for all and this project requires external funding to keep afloat.

If anyone out there has any ideas where we may be able to secure some funds for this project please contact me at the phone number below.

Thanks to all participants/sponsors

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all partners to this project especially Zeagold Foods for donation of eggs, Aorangi Awarua Trust for continued commitment to checking lines and processing invoices, Rangitikei Helicopters Ltd for safe transportation too and from the site and checking of contractor lines, Horizons Regional Council, Lotteries Environment and Heritage Fund, BNZ Save the Kiwi Fund and Horowhenua Forest and Bird, for donating some funding, Darren Peters DOC RD&I for support and technical advice and last but by no means least to volunteers for giving up their valuable time to conduct line checks.

Plans for 2012/13

A check has just taken place at end of June 2012.

Conditions are wintery in that part of the world at present and catch rates are very low. We will not be undertaking any further line checks until October 2011 as spring slowly approaches this part of the world.

With increasing restraints placed on the Department of Conservation and difficulties securing ongoing funding for this project partners will convene to discuss where to from here in July 2012. The outcome of this meeting will provide the basis for what level of work will continue on this project in the future.

If anyone requires any further information please contact;

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