



TARANAKI MOUNGA

He Kawa Ora — Back to Life



ANNUAL
REPORT 2019



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VISION

He Kawa Ora – Back to Life

Restoring the ecological vitality of Taranaki Mounga in partnership with iwi, agencies and community.

Outcomes

- The ecological resilience of Taranaki Mounga is restored.
- Taranaki Iwi Chairs and community, supported by local and regional government, embrace and sustain the transformation of Taranaki Mounga to an ecologically resilient state.
- The Taranaki Mounga Project inspires other communities and investors to address New Zealand's ecological challenges at landscape scale.

Project Objectives

- Secure the Mounga against animal and weed pests. Remove the threat of goats and significantly lower the number of other pests so their impact on Taranaki Mounga is reduced. Egmont National Park could become the first national park in New Zealand to be free of hoofed animals.
- Restore Species. Transform the ecological prospects of the Mounga through the re-introduction of lost species and the strengthening of existing populations of threatened species.
- Build community support and commitment by ensuring the transformational changes are valued and secure for the long-term.

Actions

- The creation of a halo. Develop innovative, effective means of pest control to protect the perimeter of Egmont National Park and beyond by creating a biodiversity halo and restoring the ecological corridors from Ki uta ki tai (Mountain to Sea).
- Oranga Mounga Oranga Tangata – Healthy Mountain, Healthy People. Create opportunities for health and environmental education and skill development through the promotion of the Taranaki Mounga Project's focus on nature.





Restore

more whio (blue duck), toutouwai (North Island robin) and North Island brown kiwi to the Mouna in 2019.



Extend

the stoat trapping network to protect whio, toutouwai and kiwi.



Learn

more about the ground-based rat control on 1000 hectares of land.



Implement

a strategy for the complete removal of goats.



Develop

a five-year weed control plan.



Reduce

pest numbers significantly.



Investigate

potential translocations of kākā.



Undertake

a baseline survey on bat distribution and abundance.



Establish

a seabird colony.







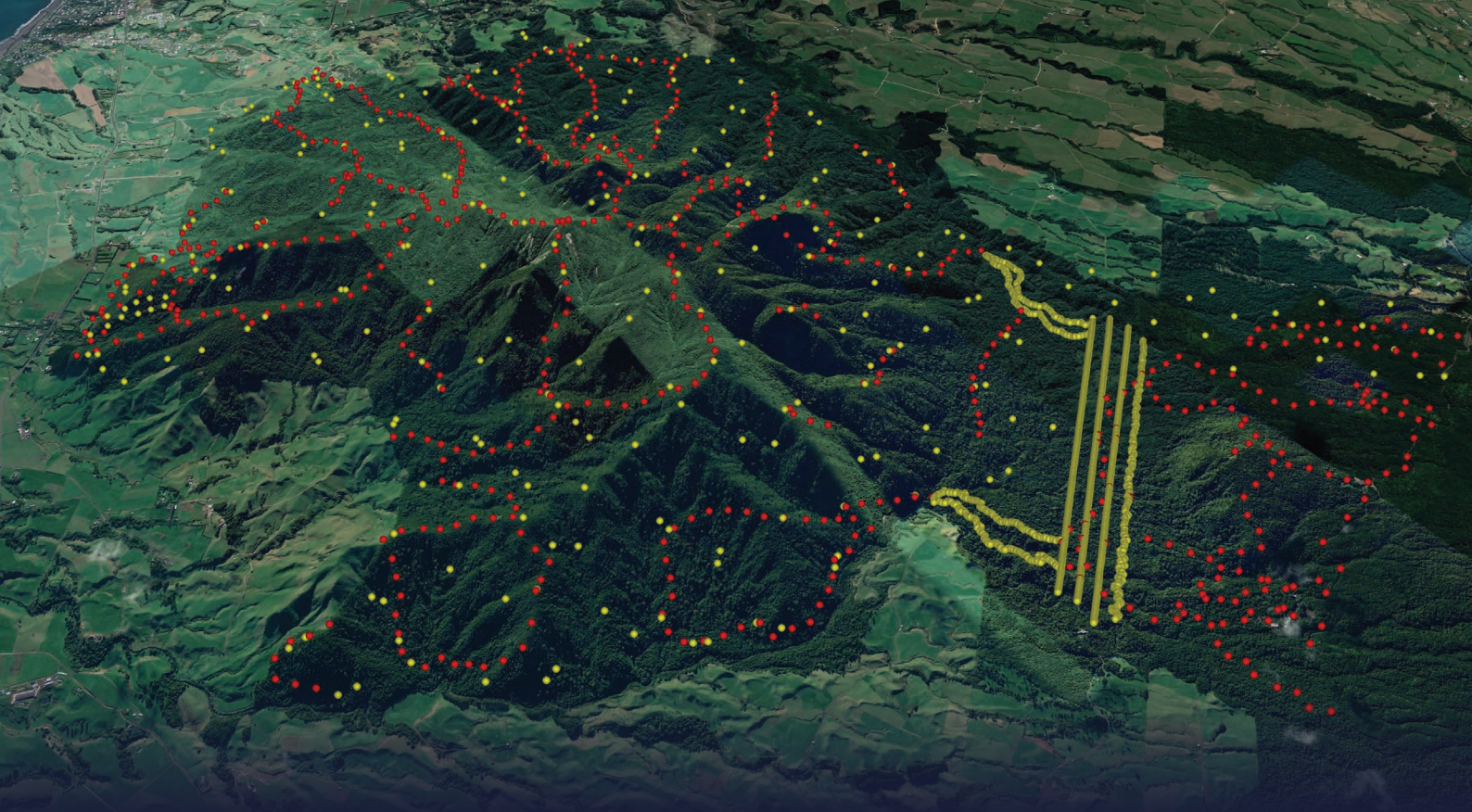
TARANAKI MOUNGA
He Kawa Ora – Back to Life

Taranaki Mounga Project Area

In 2019 we made significant progress in predator management which will aid in restoring a habitat to enable species restoration in the large areas we manage.



PHOTO: Peter Florence



Kaitake Range

November 2017
- October 2018

November 2018 -
October 2019

November 2017
- October 2018

November 2018 -
October 2019



POSSUM TRAPS

0

300



TRAPLINES

1

25



STOAT TRAPS
DOC200

60

539



NEW COMMUNITY
/ BUSINESS GROUPS

Kaitake Ranges
Conservation
Trust (KRCT)

KRCT,
Methanex



VOLUNTEER
HOURS

60
hours

480
hours



PREDATOR CONTROL
AREA COVERED

200
hectares

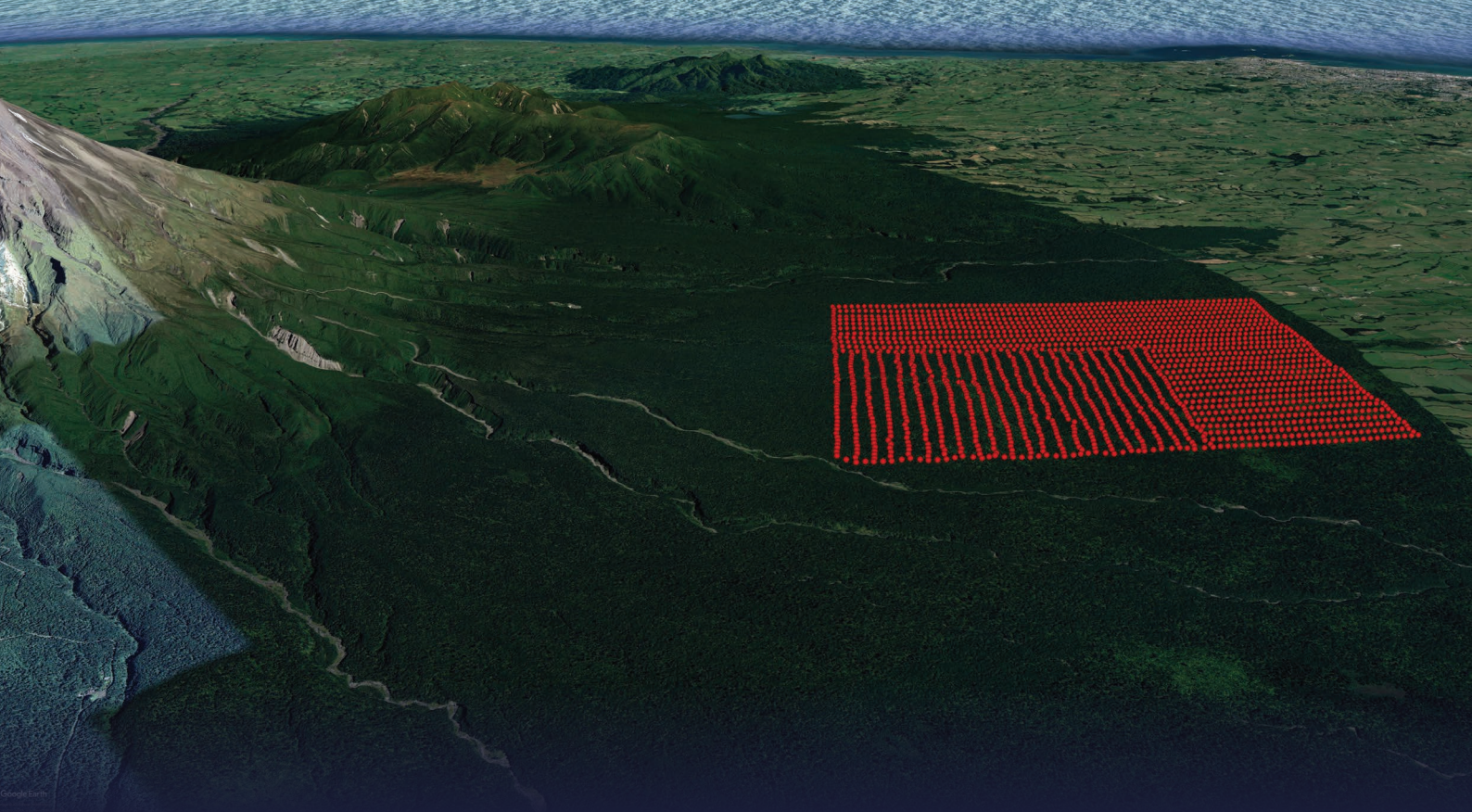
3,000
hectares



DOC
HOURS

200
hours

7040
hours



A24 Rat Control Block

of 1000 Hectares

November 2017 -
October 2018

November 2018 -
October 2019



TRAPS

2160
traps

2160
traps



TITIPOUNAMU
TRANSLOCATIONS

0

60



TOUTOWAI
MONITORING

400
hours
(TMP & Contractors)

400
hours
(TMP & Volunteers)



Taranaki Mounga

	November 2017 - October 2018	November 2018 - October 2019
Stoat traps / DOC200	1241 traps on Mounga + 45 (START Taranaki)	1286 traps on Mounga + 98 new traps and 57 replacement traps
Possum Traps	0	24
Stoat network volunteer hours	672	816
Stoat network DOC hours	576	700
New community / business groups	START Taranaki, 2 families, 6 individuals, BTW Company	START Taranaki, 2 families, 6 individuals, BTW Company. Partnership with Taranaki Kiwi Trust (TKT) - Todd Energy, Countdown, First Gas
Rat tracking results (core lines)	89%	August 3%
Rat tracking results (boundary lines)	93%	August 10%
Possum wax tag results (core lines)	45%	August 10%
Possum wax tag results (boundary lines)	31%	August 16%
Whio numbers	Within eight monitored rivers 28 pairs, 58 fledged	Within eight monitored rivers 39 pairs, 45 fledged
Monitored kiwi	26	23
Kiwi monitoring volunteer hours	525	662
Kiwi released on Mounga	12	11
New hunters tracks	58.5 km	71 km
Re-cut hunters tracks	40.4 km	49.5 km
Goat culls	594	278



Ngā Motu

Sugar Loaf Islands

November 2017 -
October 2018



T-REX RAT TRAPS
ON CENTENNIAL PARK

30
traps

November 2018 -
October 2019

100
Serviced by Francis
Douglas Memorial
College (FDMC)



VOLUNTEER
HOURS FDMC

240
hours

240
hours



PARTICIPATING
SCHOOLS

FDMC

FDMC,
New Plymouth
Boys' High School
(NPBHS)

A photograph of a small stream flowing through a dense forest. The water is clear and cascades over large, rounded rocks that are heavily covered in vibrant green moss. The surrounding trees and foliage are also lush and green, creating a serene and natural atmosphere. The lighting is soft, filtering through the canopy above.

Heheua te mangemange nui kia tupu
whakaritorito te toi a te kawa ora

Clear the obstruction to let
well-being flourish

Chair and Director's Report

Since the Taranaki Mounga Project was launched nearly four years ago, huge strides have been made to restore the ecology and enhance our connections with Ngā Motu / Sugar Loaf Islands, the Pouakai and Kaitake Ranges and Koro Taranaki.

As we share the great updates from the last year in this Report, we also take the opportunity to acknowledge the support of our founding partners, iwi, community, business, government and philanthropic interests.

Boost in volunteer trapping

As awareness of the Project grows, so does the people's connection to the Mounga. Their desire to see native birds, flora and fauna thrive in our region has brought a huge spike in volunteers wanting to adopt stoat trapping lines across Egmont National Park. As a result, our predator control programme has increased its trap coverage by 30 per cent and the Park's predator protection area now covers more than 17,000 hectares of land. We extend special thanks to the Kaitake Ranges Conservation Trust, START Taranaki, BTW Company, First Gas, Todd Energy, Countdown, Methanex, Francis Douglas Memorial College, New Plymouth Boys' High School and the many families and individuals who have given their time to adopt and regularly maintain these traplines.

An increase in predator control across Egmont National Park

The volunteer trapping efforts complement the increased level of predator control across the Mounga. Control methods include the completion of an aerial 1080 operation in Egmont National Park, an increase in possum, mustelid and feral cat trapping and a programme to remove the threat of goats. In addition, an innovative Zero Possum

trial is well under way on the Kaitake Range in conjunction with the Taranaki Regional Council and its Towards Predator-Free Taranaki programme, Zero Invasive Predators (ZIP), Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research and the Kaitake and Oakura communities. We are proud of all those involved in the trial and the way our lessons and successes are now being applied to other landscape-scale projects across the country.

Titipounamu thank you

Because there was an abundance of titipounamu in the 1000-hectare 'A24 block' next to the Mangaoraka Loop Track on the Mounga, we proudly translocated 60 of the tiny birds to Rotokare Scenic Reserve in May.

This operation was a project milestone because it was the first transfer of birds from the Mounga. It was also an exciting time for Rotokare where five species of endemic songbirds now live. The titipounamu will add to the symphony of bird song at dawn and dusk.

For Taranaki Mounga, it was also a gesture of thanks to the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust for the tireless support and expertise provided to our project over the years.

Collaboration with community

Working with groups towards the common goal of He Kawa Ora - Back to Life has been rewarding for all involved. Although we've already mentioned many groups we work alongside, there are many others we want to acknowledge.

Taranaki Kiwi Trust continues to deliver nationally important kiwi survival and dispersal monitoring. The Trust has reintroduced kiwi to the Park and new business partnerships have led to the extension of traplines on the Pouakai Range. We are enjoying working with Taranaki Regional Council and Towards Predator-Free Taranaki to help Restore Kaitake by reducing possums to zero as well as stopping the re-invasion of predators back onto the range.

Working with iwi and hapū to understand their aspirations and sharing our work through Rangatahi Forum and events has been a pleasure. We are also excited to be working with Taranaki Iwi's new Kaitiaki Whenua Ranger. This is the first position of its kind and is a partnership between the Department of Conservation and Te Kāhui o Taranaki Iwi.

Primary and secondary schools and vocational programmes throughout the region continue to support our project by building DOC200 stoat traps, investigating how to build sound lures for possums, growing mealworms for toutouwai and participating in our Zooniverse citizen science project.

There are so many more examples of collaboration and it is heartening to know our communities are helping to restore the ecological vitality of Taranaki Mounga.

Jamie Tuuta

Taranaki Mounga Chairman

Jan Hania

Taranaki Mounga Director



Partners

Department of Conservation

The Taranaki Mounga Project is one of the Department of Conservation's most significant partnerships. This flagship project has been both challenging and rewarding for the two organisations.

The third year of this partnership project has brought many milestones. Highlights include the implementation of the Zero Possum trial on the Kaitake Range, successful toutouwai breeding of our translocated population, outstanding whio population growth, expansion of our trap network and successful preparation for the upcoming goat programme. These achievements would not have been possible without inter-agency collaboration, especially with the Taranaki Regional Council, and the groundswell of community support and engagement.

Exponential growth in collaborations with health providers, schools, Department of Corrections, community groups, whanau, hapū and iwi has contributed to a concerted region-wide conservation effort. The collective project continues to expand and build on the long history of extensive protection provided to the Mounga. This is an exciting time for conservation, both regionally and nationally, and Taranaki Mounga Project and the Department are together leading the way.

Brigitte Meier

Director, Operations
Hauraki Waikato Taranaki Region

Taranaki Iwi Chairs Forum

Iwi and hapū continue to actively participate and contribute at all levels of the Taranaki Mounga Project. Their roles include guiding the future strategy of the Project at Board level, monitoring whio, releasing kiwi, helping to translocate titipounamu to Rotokare Scenic Reserve and engaging in predator control. The Project has also created a wonderful opportunity for whānau to reconnect with Koro Taranaki.

Additionally, seven new Taranaki Mounga DOC Rangers are now working on the Project. Many of the rangers whakapapa to the Mounga and nearly all grew up in the region. They are all leaders in their communities and are thriving in their roles. The new skills they have been learning on a number of key projects in Egmont National Park will increase their proficiency and build a sense of kaitiakitanga that will set up the Project for long-term success as we work towards He Kawa Ora.

The Project allows iwi members to contribute towards charting the pathway of our tūpuna.

Hemi Sundgren

Taranaki Iwi Chairs Forum representative

NEXT Foundation

NEXT is proud to be a founding partner of Taranaki Mounga. Since the Project began nearly four years ago, huge strides have been made to transform the mountain, ranges and islands of Taranaki by securing them against predators and restoring native bird populations. The continued support and collaboration among iwi, government, community, business and philanthropists allows us to see first-hand this transformation and to recognise the importance of this journey to restore the ecological vitality of Taranaki Mounga. We are also pleased at the continued growth of this project. Regionally, it has partnered with Taranaki Regional Council, Predator Free 2050 and organisations like Rotokare Scenic Trust and Taranaki Kiwi Trust. Nationally, Taranaki Mounga has inspired many projects to continue the growing call to protect New Zealand's biodiversity.

Barrie Brown

Chair
NEXT Foundation



TSB Community Trust

As a founding partner, the TSB Community Trust remains proud of the success and achievements of the Taranaki Mounga Project. The Project offers a unique portrayal of the diverse ways a region can work towards a common environmental goal. The great progress made in the last 12 months shows the Project's 20-year objectives can be achieved. The opportunities created for the community to own some of the projects and to form greater connections with the Mounga in a variety of environmental, economic, social and cultural ways align with the TSB Community Trust kaupapa. The long-term focus to achieve inter-generational change lies at the heart of the TSB Community Trust. We remain dedicated to working pro-actively with others to contribute to the success and well-being of Taranaki and its people. The TSB Community Trust would like to thank the Taranaki Mounga Board, management, staff and large team of committed volunteers for the significant contributions they have made since the start of the Project.

Maria Ramsay

Chief Executive
TSB Community Trust & TSB Group

Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research

Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research is a partner of the Taranaki Mounga Project and provides underpinning research on pest ecology, pest eradication and suppression, and people's motivations for involvement.

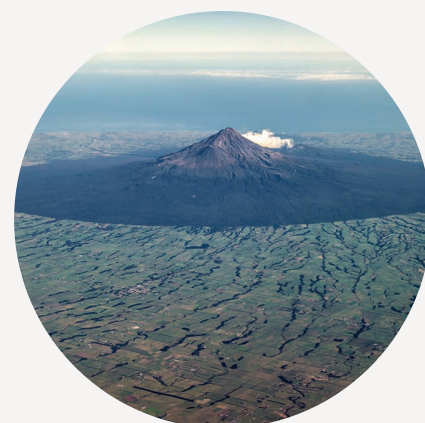
Motion-triggered cameras have been deployed across the landscape to measure, after trapping, the decline in the number of predators, including stoats and possums, and to identify the habitat types that these predators prefer. In collaboration with the University of New England in Australia, we are developing artificial intelligence that will automatically identify pest species in camera images, saving thousands of hours of image processing. The software is currently being calibrated for New Zealand pest species and will be available shortly.

We are using the 'proof-of-freedom' statistical framework to quantify the probability that possum eradication has been achieved on the Kaitake Range, the surrounding rural area and urban Oakura. Lack of detection of possums does not necessarily mean eradication. That depends on the nature of the detection network and the probability that a possum can be detected if it is present. Given no detections, modelling suggests that the detection network is sufficient to declare eradication, with more than 95% confidence.

Understanding people's motivation to become involved in the restoration of Taranaki is a key component of our research. This year we will investigate participation of New Plymouth residents in rat control in conjunction with Towards Predator-Free Taranaki. We also developed a proposal for Predator Free 2050 Limited that identifies methods for linking activities with measures of policy acceptance and community well-being. This nationally-focused work will have direct benefits for the Taranaki Mounga Project and Aotearoa as we work towards the country's predator-free goals.

Grant Norbury

Researcher / Capability Leader





Objective One: SECURE

Secure the Mouna against animals and weed pests, remove the threat of goats and significantly reduce pest numbers and their impact on Taranaki Mouna.



Using the predator control toolbox

The goal of the Taranaki Mouna Project is to dramatically reduce the threats pests and predators pose to the native plants, birds, lizards and insects that call Taranaki Mouna home. Where possible and as technology, community and innovative thinking allow, the Project is working towards the eradication of predators. 2018/19 was a successful year for predator control on Egmont National Park and will define the success of the Project.

Significant achievements in the last 12 months include:

- Initiation of a zero possum trial on Kaitake Range alongside Taranaki Regional Council and Predator Free 2050 Ltd. There were two aerial 1080 operations and possum and mustelid trapping technology now covers more than 3000 hectares of the range. Comprehensive possum trapping technology has also been installed on surrounding farmland and at Pukeiti.
- The control of goats to the lowest level in recorded history.
- The expansion of the stoat control network to more than 17,000 hectares. Volunteers now maintain more than 60 per cent of the traps on the Mouna.
- The maintenance of low rat numbers in 1000 hectares in the 'A24 block'. At the same time, we have delivered nationally significant research on rat control at scale in this forest type.
- The installation of the first possum trap network in the national park on the Kaitake Range. This work was done in conjunction with the Kaitake Ranges Conservation Trust.

- Contributing to Year One of the Taranaki Taku Tūranga – Towards a Predator-Free Taranaki project.

These successes would not be possible without the support of the Taranaki community. The emergence of more than a dozen groups and individuals to adopt stoat trap lines on the Mouna has enabled the trapping network to expand and directly contributes to the growth of whio and kiwi populations.

The leadership of companies like BTW Company, First Gas, Todd Energy, Countdown, Methanex and others which have engaged with the Project has empowered their staff to directly contribute to the restoration of Taranaki, achieving benefits far greater than conservation alone.

Programmes like START Taranaki and New Horizons Aotearoa create opportunities for young people to connect with their Mouna and to contribute to his restoration through predator control initiatives, adding significant value to the Taranaki Mouna Project.

The Project is on the cusp of delivering its original goal of dramatically reducing pests and predators, as well as eradicating several predators in the near future.

Zero room for goats

For more than 100 years goats have lived within the Egmont National Park boundaries. They have caused significant damage to the forest structure, as they eat young seedlings, saplings and ring-bark mature trees. This vegetation is an important food source for invertebrates and native birds. Left unchecked, goats would have this impact again within a short period of time.

An increase in targeted hunting activities across the park and on surrounding properties means the Taranaki Mouna Project is well on the way to eradicating goats from the area.

In July 2019, state-of-the-art thermal camera aerial technology was trialled as part of the search for the final remaining goats in the sub-alpine area of Egmont National Park.

The good news was that the experienced thermal team did not detect any goats, nor did they see any sign of goats during 30 hours of operational flying time.

This information corresponds with hunting data which saw only 13 feral goats culled between March and September 2019 after 1500 hunter hours.

Taranaki Mouna is currently looking at options to finish the job and prove the removal of threats posed by goats to biodiversity in the park.

The Project's efforts also turn to areas outside the park's boundaries. The team will share information with neighbours on the importance of ensuring their goats are secured within their properties to reduce the risk of them escaping and re-establishing a population on the Mouna.



Keeping predators out of the Kaitake Range

For more than 10 years the Kaitake Ranges Conservation Trust, formerly the Okato Development Trust, has been quietly setting traps in an endeavour to restore native species to the Kaitake Range.

Although kākā and kiwi in the Kaitake Range are a distant memory, the momentum for their return is growing. The injection of Taranaki Mounga Project traps, the awareness created among residents by Restore Kaitake and the success of Towards Predator-Free Taranaki have accelerated the work by the Trust whose volunteers have surged from eight to 40.

With the increase in awareness comes a demand for new traps. Taranaki Mounga supported the construction of more than 400 which are among nearly 540 now on the range.

Over the last year the Trust and its volunteers have spent more than 480 hours actively setting traps made by community groups, then regularly checking and maintaining them on many of the 25 tracks on the Kaitake Range.

The Trust's Chair, Pete Morgan, is

overwhelmed by the community response and says people are becoming more aware of the value of biodiversity.

"We're all working towards the same thing - having more native birds, wildlife and plants intertwined within our daily lives," he says.

Taranaki Mounga Project Manager Sean Zieltjes agrees.

"We are already seeing more birdlife on the range. It's wonderful and thanks to the huge community effort."





Mixing business and biodiversity

Over the last 12 months a number of Taranaki-based businesses have supported biodiversity efforts on the Mouna.

One such business is BTW Company (BTW) which has provided opportunities for its staff to check and maintain 53 traps along a five-kilometre loop near the Mangaoraka carpark by the North Egmont Visitor Centre.

BTW Director Grant Aitken says as with many other community projects the company supports, the staff enjoy being actively involved.

"We're proud to be a company that supports the volunteering efforts of its staff and the benefits have been immense," says Grant. "As well as supporting the Taranaki Mouna Project, staff well-being and the camaraderie across teams have increased."

BTW Company Environment Team Leader Dave Bolger said staff were so keen to be involved, names had to be drawn from a hat. One staff member who is an avid tramp and runner missed out in the draw so he contacted Taranaki Mouna and now looks after his own trapline.

"Our surveyor, Trent Davis, was gutted

he missed out. The trapline he now looks after is pretty demanding. Trent is loving it," says Dave.

After nine monitoring days, four stoat and 61 possums have been caught.

Taranaki Mouna Project Manager Sean Zieltjes says the support of businesses like BTW Company has seen the trapping network across the Project area increase by 30 per cent.

"This provides an opportunity for native birds, flora and fauna to thrive. It's also great to know that staff are either discovering or reconnecting with the Mouna again. The wellness benefits of being on the park are immense."

As well as supporting the Project's trapping efforts, BTW Company has provided engineering support by designing a transportable aviary as part of a plan to return kākā to Taranaki. Project Janzoon, a NEXT Foundation partner in Abel Tasman National Park, is currently using the aviary as part of its efforts to restore fauna in that part of New Zealand.

Other Taranaki businesses which have now adopted stoat trapping lines in Egmont National Park include First Gas, Todd Energy, Methanex and Countdown.



TOP: BTW Company staff who have been maintaining traps on the Mouna.

PHOTO: Vicki Zieltjes

INSET: Jess Battaerd from BTW Company.



Shaping a new horizon for local students

Making a DOC 200 stoat trap is not easy. Just ask students from Coastal Taranaki Area School and Manukorihi and Devon intermediate schools.

Since 2018, when New Horizons Aotearoa joined Taranaki Mounga, about 60 Year 7 and 8 students have done what many people cannot when they mastered trap building.

This after-school mentoring programme uses building as a platform to lift students' confidence while opening their eyes to Taranaki's natural environment. Students are selected by their schools to participate in the programme.

New Horizons Aotearoa Founder and Patron Kere Ell says all students and mentors learn about the Taranaki Mounga Project and its vision for the future.

Students have made 70 traps, half of which have been set to trap predators in Blue Rata Reserve.

"To see the look on their faces and to see how proud they were of their efforts was awesome," says Kere. "They could see first-hand they were doing their part in helping to bring back

birdlife to our Mouna while enjoying immensely an environment they might not ordinarily experience."

This year two programme is run at the schools and the 2018 classes were rewarded for their efforts with an invitation to a kiwi release on the Mouna.

Taranaki Mounga DOC Ranger Tama Blackburn has been working with the students and has seen first-hand the confidence they have gained.

"It's so cool to see all generations coming together for a great cause! We have a shared vision of becoming predator-free and we are watching the revitalisation of our native species for the next generations to enjoy," says Tama. "The knowledge sharing between our elderly, parents and students is priceless and I feel privileged to share my knowledge of conservation with them."

New Horizons Aotearoa pupils have

also supported their local communities and partnered with Red Cross to build 'buddy benches', which encourage student connection and reduce isolation. The benches were given to six Taranaki schools. This year Manukorihi Intermediate students are building two benches for Owae Marae and Devon Intermediate students are building picnic tables for their school.

Kere is grateful to all involved and to those who donated their time to the programme.

"Thank you to Taranaki Mounga for providing another opportunity for our students to grow as future leaders and to help to make a difference," says Kere. "Also a big mihi to partner schools, Jean Sandel Retirement Village, our mentors, ITM Building Supplies New Plymouth for supplying materials and support, Bishop's Action Foundation, TSB Community Trust and all the teachers and whānau involved."

ABOVE: Students from Manukorihi Intermediate and Coastal Taranaki Area School who participate in the New Horizons Aotearoa programme with their teachers and supporters.



IMAGE: Taranaki Mouna DOC Ranger Tama Blackburn with NPBHS Year 9-13 students ready to lay predator traps during the schools 'Something for Nothing Day.' PHOTO: Andy Jackson



Objective Two

RESTORE

Restore species by transforming the ecology of the Mouna by re-introducing lost species and strengthening existing populations of threatened species.



Short-tailed bat monitoring

Long and short-tailed bats are critically endangered in New Zealand. Over the years there has been a number of suspected sightings of these bats on our Mouna, but they have been unconfirmed.

In early 2019 our team conducted monitoring to detect the presence of short-tailed bats around the park. Our DOC Taranaki Mouna Rangers analysed more than 200,000 audio files and concluded no bats were recorded. More work to detect bats will be conducted in the future.



Toutouwai flourish on our Mouna

In 2017 and 2018 nearly 100 toutouwai were released into the toutouwai block, a 1000-hectare area where rat and predator control has been intense. The number of predators in the block has been kept low to enable the toutouwai to breed and to improve their chances of survival.

Monitoring toutouwai within this block is important to track their progress and determine whether a population has established. Dedicated DOC staff, volunteers and a team from Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust conducted pre-breeding monitoring in September 2018 and post-breeding monitoring in February 2019. The toutouwai monitoring team logged sightings of the birds and noted their behaviour.

Over the two monitoring periods 33 individuals, both banded and unbanded, were sighted within the block. Unbanded birds are those bred on the Mouna.

Although 14 pairs were observed, three paired females were missing at the end of the breeding season. It is not known whether they were predated while nesting or whether they were being shy, which is their tendency during moulting

at the end of the breeding season. The team will find out more about these females during pre-breeding monitoring in late 2019.

Eight of the 14 pairs were observed feeding at least 12 fledglings which still depend on their parents, although they have left the nest. This was a good result, given the small numbers. The team also observed good recruitment of birds hatched on the Mouna by those released during the Project. Six unbanded birds have paired with released birds and the first unbanded pair was also observed.

Although the initial numbers are low, it is hoped toutouwai will continue to breed successfully, to set up new territories and to form a strong population in this large forest. Increasing predator control is important if a safe haven is to be provided for these taonga.

TOP RIGHT: A banded toutouwai.
PHOTO: Tony Green

ABOVE: A short-tailed bat.
PHOTO: DOC

LEFT: Whio.
PHOTO: Vicki Zieltjes

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a green DOC polo shirt and khaki shorts, sits on a mossy rock by a river. A brown dog, Tai, stands next to her, wearing a green vest and a wire mesh muzzle. The background is a lush green forest with a stream flowing over rocks.

Protecting our precious whio

Joe Carson says she has the best job in the world. As a DOC Biodiversity Ranger, Joe manages the whio / blue duck programme in Egmont National Park. While working on the Mouna, she's accompanied by her whio dog, Tai.

The local whio population in the park was designated "functionally extinct" in 1945 because of predation by stoats and rats. Since whio monitoring began in 2005, numbers have increased from seven pairs, two ducklings and two fledglings to 39 pairs, 51 ducklings and 45 fledglings in 2018. The recent results were from eight monitored rivers.

This increase is thanks to Joe, Tai, the dedication of DOC staff and Joe's colleague Lyn Hassell and her whio dog, Marti. Additional support has come from the Central North Island Blue Duck Trust, Genesis Energy National Whio Forever and the Kiwibank Conservation Dog Programme.

Joe is ecstatic with the rise in whio numbers on the Mouna.

"Seeing the population hitting new records in the past few years has been truly amazing," says Joe. "A lot of people's blood, sweat and tears have gone into getting these results and it is extremely gratifying hearing stories from locals and visitors on the Mouna encountering these taonga and the buzz that they get."

Reducing predator numbers is a major factor in the increase of whio. In the last four years stoat trapping has increased from 7500 hectares to 17,000 hectares. Plans are under way to lay trapping networks along more rivers to protect whio already nesting there.

Regular management of all the traplines has brought an increase in volunteers giving time toward the protection of whio.

"Our volunteers are awesome. The work they are doing is not always just a nice walk in the park. It is hard graft in often less than ideal conditions and is making a real difference in protecting our wildlife. Our future relies on amazing people like these," says Joe. With more rivers protected with stoat lines and the ongoing work by Joe and Lyn and their whio dogs, Tai and Marti, the future is bright for these taonga species on the Mouna.



TOP: DOC Biodiversity Ranger Joe Carson with her whio dog Tai by the Waingongoro River. PHOTO: Vicki Zieltjes

INSET: Whio chicks. PHOTO: Lyn Hassell



Reciprocating with Rotokare

PHOTO: Vicki Zieltjes

If you have been to Rotokare Scenic Reserve at dawn or dusk, you would have heard the symphony of bird song.

This 230-hectare predator-free environment is protected by an 8.2 kilometre pest-proof fence and native flora, lizards and invertebrates are thriving. Native birds like hihi, kiwi, kārearea, kererū, toutouwai, tieke and pāteke abound.

Earlier this year a native bird species was returned when 60 titipounamu were translocated from the Mounga to Rotokare as part of the restoration of the Rotokare reserve.

Monitoring in the A24 block located near Egmont Road on the way to the North Egmont Visitor Centre showed several hundred of these small birds. The thriving titipounamu population made a good case for moving them.

A milestone for Taranaki Mounga as it was the first transfer of birds from the park, it was also an exciting time for Rotokare which now hosts members of New Zealand's four remaining endemic song-bird families. The translocation also provided another regional habitat for titipounamu to thrive.

It was an inspiring example of reciprocity by Taranaki Mounga and a way to thank the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust and volunteers who have supported and provided expertise to Taranaki Mounga and DOC teams over a number of years.

Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust Conservation Manager Fiona Gordon (*pictured*), one of many dedicated staff at the Trust, has worked there for the last three years. Her conservation and species work has taken her from Stewart Island / Rakiura to Whangarei.

As well as ensuring the continued success of Rotokare, she has enjoyed collaborating with conservation projects like Taranaki Mounga.

Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust staff and volunteers have supported the Project through a number of toutouwai activities such as pre-feeding and translocating 95 birds from Pureora Forest to the Mounga. Rotokare assisted the Project with its toutouwai population establishment, monitoring and trained volunteers.

"It's been great to see us all enhancing the biodiversity gains for the region," says Fiona. "At Rotokare we are also helping our national populations by having hihi, pāteke and other birdlife at the reserve."

DOC Senior Biodiversity Ranger Emily King appreciates being able to work alongside Fiona and the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust.

"It is always a pleasure to work alongside conservation colleagues who have a shared vision and are actively

creating positive momentum towards protecting native biodiversity, both regionally and nationally," says Emily.

"This titipounamu translocation is worth celebrating. It was wonderful for the population on the Mounga to be at a high enough level to be used as a source, something we all aspire to."

So what's next for Rotokare? Work is under way to introduce more pāteke and potentially more birds like kākā and kākārīki from the parrot family. Increasing the lizard and invertebrate populations is also likely.



INSET: Titipounamu close-up.



NPBHS Head Boy Zac Drinkwater leads the way with traps ready to be laid in the Kaitake Range.
PHOTO: Andy Jackson

Objective Three

SUSTAIN

Build community support and commitment by ensuring the transformational changes are valued and secure for the long-term.



TARANAKI MOUNGA

He Kawa Ora – Back to Life

New rangers enhance Project delivery

The seven new Taranaki Mounga DOC Rangers contracted to the Project since late 2018 to work on a number of initiatives on the Mounga have made a strong impact.

As well as setting up dozens of new trapping networks to help groups like the Kaitake Ranges Community Trust continue their work, the rangers are applying their skills to enhance current predator control technology so that results in the field are maximised.

They work closely with the broader DOC team to monitor toutouwai (North Island robin) and bat species and were part of the support team for the recent translocation of titipounamu (rifleman) from the Mounga to the Rotokare Scenic Reserve. The team also attend community events where they share their experiences of their work on the Project.

Taranaki Mounga Project Manager Sean Zieltjes says the new team brings experience that ranges from working with native bird species and alongside communities to having a deep understanding of mātauranga Māori and experience in predator control.

"But they are also a breath of fresh air and their enthusiasm is infectious," says Sean. "We've been spoilt with the people we have on board. All different but the common theme is their passion for the outcomes of the Project."



Showcasing Project at Puke Ariki

The Taranaki Mounga Project exhibition - He Kawa Ora - has been a permanent display at Puke Ariki Museum in New Plymouth since October 2018.

The exhibition showcases the Project and the different technology used to trap pests around the country. The technology ranges from artificial intelligence used in open source software by Cacophony Project through to our team showing visitors the types of predator control we use on the Mounga. There is also an interactive experience where participants are immersed in a chorus of birdsong as they help protect native birds against pests.

Since the exhibition opened, there have been more than 200,000 visitors

to Puke Ariki Museum. This figure includes 6490 students from 259 classes attending museum education programmes.

Exposing New Plymouth residents and visitors to our Project is another opportunity to share our vision as we restore the ecological vitality of our Mounga.

Thank you to the team from Puke Ariki Museum and New Plymouth District Council for helping bring our vision to the city centre.

ABOVE LEFT:
New DOC Ranger Georgina Tubby.

ABOVE RIGHT: Waimirangi MacDonald virtually traps predators.



From left Rainbow Springs' Emma Bean, Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage and Taranaki Kiwi Trusts Sian Potier with two kiwis released on to the Mouna. PHOTO: Pat Murphy



From left Hoani Eriwata and Te Awa Kura Eriwata, of Te Atiawa, watch Parker Conservation's Kevin Parker weigh a titipounamu as part of its health check before its translocation to Rotokare Scenic Reserve. PHOTO: Simon Collins



Unique role created through partnership

ABOVE: Kaitiaki Whenua Ranger Wayne Capper with his tūpuna Koro Taranaki. PHOTO: Vicki Zieltjes

Kaitiaki Whenua Ranger Wayne Capper (Taranaki Iwi, Te Atiawa, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngā Ruahine) is loving everything about his new role, created as a partnership between the DOC and Te Kāhui o Taranaki Trust.

Wayne is working alongside the DOC Visitor Assets team as he manages the upkeep of 29 cultural sites returned to the iwi as part of its 2015 Treaty of Waitangi settlement. These properties lie within the rohe of Taranaki Iwi between Oeo in South Taranaki and New Plymouth's Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands, part of the Taranaki Mounga Project area.

The partnership is the first of this nature between iwi and DOC.

Since starting the role in February 2019, Wayne has immersed himself at DOC to gain knowledge of its work. He has also ensured the ongoing protection of taonga sites and shared his learnings with hapū members, Te Kāhui o Taranaki Board and staff.

"I'm enjoying learning from DOC staff and am also planning ahead to uphold the mana and mauri of our 29 sites," says Wayne.

He has also been working alongside the Taranaki Mounga team who are striving for He Kawa Ora - to bring Koro Taranaki back to life, a philosophy close to Wayne's heart.

"If our Mounga is healthy, then so is our ngahere, our awa, our people," says Wayne. "Everything comes from him. The awa is the lifeblood that provides life and food. We must continue to look after him."

Te Kāhui o Taranaki Iwi Tumuwahakarito CEO Wharehoka Wano is pleased with how well Wayne is working and is looking forward to the future.

"For Taranaki Iwi, it is about building capacity so we are able to care not just for these 29 sites that have been under DOC stewardship but also our wider Taranaki Iwi environment - our maunga, awa, moana, whenua me te rangi," says Wharehoka. "Wayne's training with DOC will prove invaluable as we build our

own on-the-ground kaitiaki team to monitor the state of our taiao, of our environment. Wayne's enthusiasm has been infectious and we are so pleased to have him on the team."



INSET: Putaha Trig on Kaitake Range. PHOTO: Georgina Tubby



Restoring Kaitake together

The return of kiwi and kōkako to the Kaitake Range and the protection there of tui, miromiro and kererū will be achieved by the collaborative approach of Restore Kaitake.

PHOTO: Georgina Tubby

Restore Kaitake utilises the predator control expertise and tools provided by Towards now - Predator-Free Taranaki and Taranaki Mounga Project.

However, the true champions are the Oakura and Kaitake residents actively trapping pests in their backyards and alerting contractors to possum sightings and the members of the Kaitake Ranges Conservation Trust vigorously managing stoat traplines on the range.

To help enhance bird populations on the range, Restore Kaitake has initiated intensive predator trapping so possum numbers can be lowered to zero and to significantly reduce other pests in the area. The operational area covers about 8600 hectares and falls within the natural boundaries created by the Oakura River, the coastline, Timaru Stream and the well-protected Pukeiti.

Toward Predator-Free Taranaki

Project Manager Toby Shanley appreciates the intensive predator control work and support of Oakura and Kaitake residents.

"We are grateful to our farming community who allow access through their properties to manage traps," he says. "Our thanks also to local hapū, Oakura township residents, local schools and all who have a connection or enjoy spending time on the Kaitake Range."

Restore Kaitake has 286 rat traps in backyards and reserves and contract hunters have successfully lowered possum numbers to a manageable level. There are also 300 possum traps and bait stations in rural areas and Kaitake Ranges Conservation Trust volunteers manage more than 539 stoat traps on the Kaitake Range.

This trapping scheme, including 1500 other possum traps, 1700 bait stations and an aerial 1080 application

in mid-2019 form a multi-tool approach to predator control that prevents predators going from the ranges to farmland and vice versa.

Bait stations have been placed strategically on farms and a virtual barrier of 1300 wireless monitored traps has been installed to stop this flow. "The bush-pasture margin is prime habitat for possums," says Toby.

Taranaki Mounga Project Manager Sean Zieltjes says various organisations are collectively making a huge difference to the area's biodiversity.

"Landscape-scale restoration work requires strong partnerships," he says. "The partnership of the coastal community, Taranaki Regional Council, Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust and Taranaki Mounga is on track to bring kiwi back to Kaitake. That would be an excellent result and a thank you to the local community for all their efforts."



Taranaki Mounga DOC Ranger Tama Blackburn hands a DOC200 traps to a NPBHS student to lay during the school's 'Something for Nothing Day.'
PHOTO: Andy Jackson



Fantastic Fungi

Our Mouna is home to many different types of fungi. Here are just some of the many wonderful fungi found on and around Egmont National Park.

PHOTOS: Georgina Tubby and Brandon Kingi.





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Te Korowai o Ngāruahine Trust
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Te Kaahui o Rauru
Te Kāhui o Taranaki Iwi
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Ngāti Te Whiti
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Our People

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PHOTO: Keith Finnerty

The Taranaki Mounga Project team

Gareth Hopkins, DOC Operations Manager; Jan Hania, Taranaki Mounga Director; Sean Zieltjes, Taranaki Mounga Project Manager; Darryn Ratana, DOC Partnerships Manager; Emily King, DOC Senior Biodiversity Ranger; Tim Sjoberg, Biodiversity Coordinator; Fern Brand, DOC Partnerships Ranger; Jared Coombes, Goat Operations Manager; Andrew Macalister, Goat Eradication Project Lead; Robyn Janes, Digital and Project Liaison; Tui MacDonald, Taranaki Mounga Communications Manager; Brandon Kingi, Taranaki Mounga DOC Lead Ranger and Taranaki Mounga DOC Rangers Cody Luckin, Michael Blanks, Georgina Tubby, Tama Blackburn, Joe Hau and Shaun Bayliss.

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Landcare Research



TARANAKI MOUNGA

He Kawa Ora — Back to Life

Heheua te mangemange nui kia tupu
whakaritorito te toi a te kawa ora

Clear the obstruction to let
well-being flourish

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