



Shining a spotlight on some of our local trapping heroes

There are a number of 'good sorts' around Whakatū Nelson who aren't afraid to roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty trapping introduced predators. Introduced predators such as rats and stoats, threaten ecosystems that support a rich diversity of plants and animals, some not found anywhere else in the world.

Local trapping groups are doing their bit, working in conjunction with Nelson City Council's Nelson Nature programme to coordinate predator control and habitat restoration in an area called the 'Nelson Halo'. The Halo includes major areas within our region where predator control and habitat enhancement will best benefit native wildlife.

The Nelson Halo includes remnant forests, regenerating bush and coastal vegetation radiating out from the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary. The Halo also includes Council Reserves such as the Maitai and Roding Conservation Reserves, Botanical Hill and The Grampians, but also backyards, lifestyle blocks and private forest patches. Reducing introduced predator numbers in these areas will provide better protection for native wildlife to feed and raise young.

In 2017, introduced mammals were eradicated within the predator-proof fenced Brook Waimārama Sanctuary in Nelson City. As birds disperse from the sanctuary, there is huge potential to further enhance these and other native bird populations around the city. Below are just a few of the Halo trapping groups making a positive difference for wildlife in our region.

Bringing birdlife to the Grampians

The group Birdlife on Grampians started trapping in 2009. The group has 28 volunteers on the roster, and many have been helping since the group started. They now have 461 rat and possum traps.

"Tree traps work really well on rats," says group organiser Bryce Buckland. "They are easy to check, easier to rebait than a trap on the ground and around 80% of our rat kills are in tree traps. Since 2014 we have killed 2,181 rats in trees and



Some of the area covered by the Pipers Halo group



The formidable jaw of a weasel, caught by Birdlife on Grampians

since 2294, the total rat kills from all traps is 4467."

"Killing pests sounds gruesome but we need to reduce them and retain control if we hope to give our native birds a helping hand.

"Our group can't function without the great work of our volunteers.

"Volunteers obviously don't get paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless."

A big area to cover

Marsden Valley Trappers cover an area of 243 ha in a steep valley covered in a mix of mature natives, forest pine and rejuvenating habitat.

"We have around 15 active trappers checking around 900 traps, spread out over 19 lines," says group coordinator Kathryn Richards. "People check their lines between one and two times a month, with the odd trapper out each week. Hard to estimate the hours involved but I think all lines would take about 35 hours per month.

"The biggest challenge we face is the terrain we are trapping in. Another challenge is finding new volunteers keen and able to trap in this terrain. Accessing the top of the valley is a big walk as we don't have vehicle access right to the top.

"As a group, we know each other quite well, and we meet regularly for a casual catch up at the pub. This has been of great benefit to the group as it keeps us connected and able to support each other."

Pipers Halo trapping group

The Pipers Halo group trap around Pipers Reserve, as well as a number of smaller Council Reserves nearby.

"We have 227 traps including ten mustelid traps, 40 possum traps, 170 rat traps, plus a few mouse traps," says group organiser Stu Hanchet.

"In the last 12 months, we have caught 381 pests, including three mustelids, 142 rats, 13 possums, 19 hedgehogs and 204 mice.

"Our 25 active volunteers have checked the traps in five of the council reserves about 80 times in the past year, covering a distance of around 500 km. Highlights for us have been the almost total absence of possums caught at Pipers Reserve in the past 12 months, and also the first confirmed stoat catch on our patch."

A solitary job around Pikimai

Birds for Pikimai is a solo trapping project aimed at increasing inner-city birdlife. Brian Olorenshaw noted that the lovely green space and established trees around the Cathedral on Pikimai Church Hill seemed to have a lack of birdsong, so a year ago, Council supported his plan to establish and monitor pest traps within the Cathedral gardens. This has since extended to Fairfield Park and the area of mature bush alongside Melrose House. Brian says that pleasingly, several people have commented on the increasing birdsong coming from these inner-city green spaces.

These are only a few of the 20+ groups trapping in Whakatū Nelson. If you want to connect with one of these groups, find out what groups are active in your neighbourhood or start your own trapping project, contact nelson.nature@ncc.govt.nz.

Want to trap pests at your place?

Grab yourself a Nelson Nature subsidised predator trap for your backyard.

Traps range from \$15 to \$60 and are available in a variety of types and sizes to target different pests. Nelson residents can purchase traps from the Department of Conservation Visitor Centre by Millers Acre carpark.

More than 250 Nelson residents have already taken advantage of the subsidised backyard trap scheme since it was launched in September 2020, purchasing backyard traps for rats, stoats and/or possums.

Want to find out if there is a trapping group near you or join one of the groups above?

Email nelson.nature@ncc.govt.nz or visit:

predatorfreenz.org/get-involved/find-a-group