



Mt Bruce (Pukaha)

Post operational report for 2006-07

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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Publication date January 2008
Publication No. GW/BIO-G-08/14

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1. Executive summary

This is a further update report for Mt Bruce (Pukaha) for the financial year ending 2006/07. It is a follow-on report from the 2004/05 report (**reference number 05/01**). There was a draft operational report written for the 2005/06 year, but not completed in the final typed stage.

The Mt Bruce buffer is an area of land which forms a complete protection zone around the Mt Bruce Reserve (Pukaha). The south east portion of the Mt Bruce buffer falls in the Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) region and the remainder is in the Horizons Regional Council region.



For the purpose of this report, when the Mt Bruce or the buffer area is quoted, this will refer to the south eastern area in the Greater Wellington region.

The buffer management area totals 2,223 hectares and remains unchanged.

Overall there are a total of 18 landowners involved in the management area.

The land formation is rolling hill country which gradually gets steeper closer to the Mt Bruce Reserve (Pukaha). The vegetation varies from remnant native bush, to open pasture, with many types of exotic plants throughout.

The methods of control remain the same with Fenn No. 4, Timms traps and Sentry bait stations filled with Pestoff pellets. The aim of this buffer is to reduce the reinfestation of predators into the Mt Bruce Reserve (Pukaha) to allow the released endangered bird species of kokako and kiwi to live and breed with a much reduced threat of predators. All other fauna and flora will benefit greatly from this project.

2. Recommendations

This is an ongoing programme and must be maintained into the future. Not to do so would result in predators having unrestricted access to the Mt Bruce Reserve (Pukaha) boundary. This would be disastrous for the Department of Conservation's breeding programme of the rare and endangered birds.

3. Objective

To reduce and maintain all predator numbers to very low levels and to restrict any reinfestation into Mt Bruce (Pukaha). These predators include possums, cats, ferrets, stoats, weasels, hedgehogs, ship rats and Norway rats.

4. Operational area

The operational management area is 2,223 hectares in total.

The Mt Bruce buffer falls into two Bovine Tb operational areas.

There is a large piece of remnant bush between Mt Bruce (Pukaha) and the Ruamahanga River on Fred Keil's property known as "Bushgate". This bush will provide a natural corridor for the migration of native birds from outside of Pukaha.



5. Prescriptive contract

Greater Wellington Regional Council's Business Unit (BioWorks), undertook the monthly servicing of all equipment under a prescriptive contract and subsequently supplied data on predators killed, along with bait used to the Biosecurity Animals Liaison Officer who oversaw the contract at the end of each servicing interval. Part way through the year an agreement was reached between the two parties to stretch the service intervals out to five weekly visits.

The predator control contract expired in late November 2006 and BioWorks was granted a temporary extension to the old contract until February 2007. From the end of February until the end of the financial year, BioWorks has continued to carry out maintenance at Pukaha under the terms of the expired contract.

6. Results

The monthly results for the 2006/07 year to the end of June are listed below:

Month	Cats	Rats	Hedgehogs	Magpies	Ferrets	Rabbits	Stoats
July	2	8	1	0	0	0	0
August	1	25	5	2	0	0	0
September	0	14	17	0	0	0	0
October	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
November	0	32	18	0	1	7	0
December	0	77	19	0	0	1	1
January	0	42	47	3	1	0	1
February	1	29	54	2	2	0	2
March	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
April	3	32	63	3	1	0	2
May	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
June	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total:	7	259	224	10	5	8	6

Brodifacoum used: 140.3kg

7. Discussion

Even with the servicing rounds being moved out to five week checks, the predator control buffer appears to be working well. A meeting was held at the Mount Bruce Bird Reserve with Department of Conservation and Horizons Regional Council staff in February 2007, to discuss the outcomes from the last season's predator control and to discuss plans for the next 12 month period. Department of Conservation Biodiversity Ranger (Tony Silbery) was delighted with the outcomes of their breeding programme

for rare and endangered birds at Mount Bruce for the last year. He stated that there had been no incidences of birds being predated, which was a sign that predator numbers were at very low levels in the bush. One kaka had nested very low to the ground and would have been susceptible to predation if there were any predators roaming about.

Later on we were taken for a walk in the bush where telemetry equipment was used to locate a couple of kiwi in their burrows so that everyone could take a look at them.

Department of Conservation staff feel confident that the buffer job is working really well to compliment the work that they are doing within the interior of the Reserve. However they have raised one concern about the need to move towards raised sets for Timms traps that are close to the perimeter of the bush reserve. Monitoring of the kiwi has shown that these birds are now moving out to the periphery of the bush/pasture margins and there could be some risk of catching kiwi in a Timms set on the ground.

8. Reinvasion

Reinvasion of pest predators will always be an issue however; this is not considered to be a major problem, as the most important function of the buffer is to reduce the numbers of predators travelling through that could subsequently enter the Mt Bruce (Pukaha) Reserve.

9. Weather

Inclement weather patterns at Pukaha can have some major bearing on the period of time required to complete a servicing interval on this operation. Pukaha is historically a high rainfall area and any prolonged wet period makes for difficult access to some of the control sites. During the winter months prior to the onset of lambing, it is impossible at times to reach all sites. This means that some sites are invariably missed until there is some drying out of the pasture.

10. The future

It is imperative for the success of the Pukaha project that the buffer is maintained. The aim is to continue with monthly servicing intervals which will be carried out from now on by the use of contract labour.

11. Operating budget

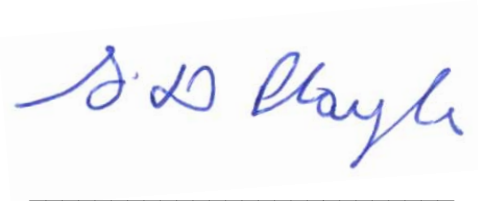
The operating budget for this operation was well under spent for the 2006/07 year. The actual budget was \$31,500.

12. Costs

Set out below is a breakdown of costs from Greater Wellington's SAP system, up until the end of the financial year 30 June 2007.

	\$
Labour	1,406.00
Contractors	22,257.00
Vehicle/plant	45.60
Materials/supplies	1,887.94
Total:	25,596.54

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