

Kārearea – our native Falcon. There are only 5,000 of this endangered species left and they are sometimes spotted around Wellington city.

Creating an Urban Movement for Nature

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Predator Free Wellington



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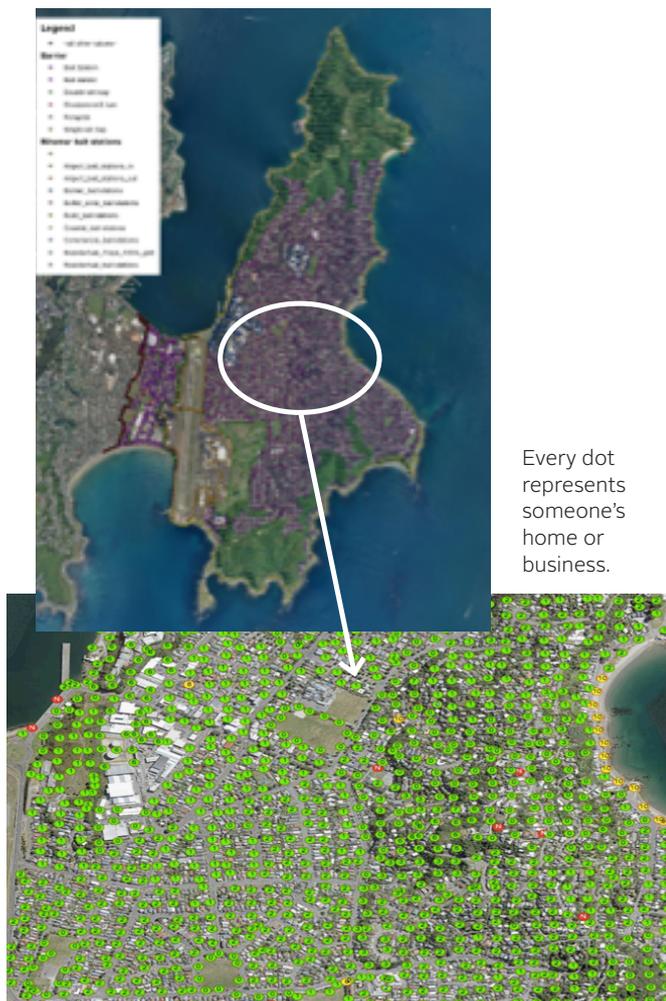
The Miramar Peninsula predator eradication project

We started out with this incredibly ambitious goal on the Miramar Peninsula to eradicate every rat, stoat and weasel as well as Kilbirnie and Rongotai. Our barrier zone is an area of 1200 ha or in kiwi speak an area where well over 20,000 people work, live and play – this is just stage 1.

The recipe – it involved 4,500 bait stations, 2,500 double set traps, 1000 additional traps, 13,000 detection cards and wax tags, 26 field staff and contractors servicing this network over 6 months - basically walk 25m in any direction on that Peninsula and you are going to hit some of our kit. It also involved 1800 community traps and literally hundreds of kgs worth of peanut butter – a big shout out to our mates at Fixx and Fogg for the sponsorship of peanut butter – rats love peanut butter.

Logistics – huge but to make this even happen we needed over 3,000 individual permissions these thousands of dots on a map (below) showing the locations of all our devices represent people's homes, businesses, and public spaces, thousands of relationships that have had to be built to enable this to happen. The level of engagement is unprecedented. It involved cups of tea in people's homes and all sorts of interesting interactions e.g. one individual wouldn't sign up until our representative went inside his house and had a guitar jamming session.

Our context means we have an unparalleled opportunity to effect real social outcomes through conservation work it means we are actively involved in peoples lives going on to their property every week for over 6 months – that is about building trust.



Not just about gaining permissions so we can go about our work, the success of this project relies on everyday Wellingtonians stepping up to get involved, whether getting their hands dirty catching the rats or fielding information into us – our team of 26 has turned into a team of thousands and thousands.

We had people stopping us in the street telling us there was piwakawka or kereru in their backyard for the first time. The social outcomes are as much a focus for us as increasing biodiversity. **Having the city on board is not a nicety it is essential – I'll give you an example.**

Meet Daryll – a Strathmore resident on Miramar. He first got involved in trapping with PF Miramar because he couldn't sleep at night, got a trap from PF Miramar and caught 24 rats in two weeks. His energy and commitment spread through Strathmore where he started rolling out traps to his neighbours.

We undertake weekly trap and bait station checks, this means going into people's backyards, to service traps, etc. Whilst we had 99% support for the project from residents, not everyone wanted us in their backyard, This is where Daryl came into the picture – his skills in being able to connect with his community having built relationships over years at place in a pretty tough area of town has been huge for us. He approached us about getting involved and has been volunteering with us for well over 6 months and having him as part of the team has enabled us to access the Black Power gang pad, social housing areas and other marginalized communities that we otherwise wouldn't be able to access. Daryl, has struggled to find employment but our hope that this training will set him up in a new career/stepping stone for next career.

Daryll is one of thousands and thousands of Wellingtonians stepping up to do their bit – the motivations different but the goal is the same, hugely diverse people contributing in all sorts ways – that is epic!!

This project is great for the city, great for it's people and great for our native biodiversity – it is building resilience, connected communities all united under a shared vision

This slide is the title screen from a recent documentary that charts Daryll and his family's story If you haven't seen this documentary then do it!!



Of course stepping into the unknown never been done before EVER means there are going to be a heap of learning opportunities along the way– we have had to continually adapt and pivot.

The team crawling over the Peninsula, know it intimately and handed out some interesting nicknames – nappy valley and the bakery, all creating huge risk to the project.

We have had to negotiate with hoarders and people on home detention, the bottom photo shows the basement of someones house who was on home detention this all takes time and skills to negotiate. These are all situations we could never plan for but have had to navigate continuously. This is no an ordinary predator eradication operation!! We are incredibly lucky to work with amazing people backed up with great partners.

Having an active construction zone as part of your barrier defence system was a challenge – for us this Cobham Drive cycleway. All part of working in a city our context is static – nothing stays the same.

The learning here was adapting from a traditional ‘technical’ conservation mindset to one that puts people at the core. Our biggest challenges and also opportunities are to do with us not ecology. If we have any hope of delivering a national vision of a Predator Free Aotearoa by 2050 then we need to look at this differently.

There is a reason why this has never been done before – it is incredibly tough!



We are currently mopping up the very last rats on Miramar, each cell has it's own case file, on the ground this it what it means. This photo (below) shows one of our mop up spots (tiny little cells where we think there is still activity) – essentially throwing everything we have at the situation.

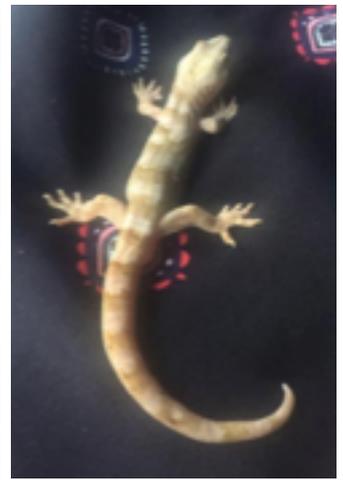
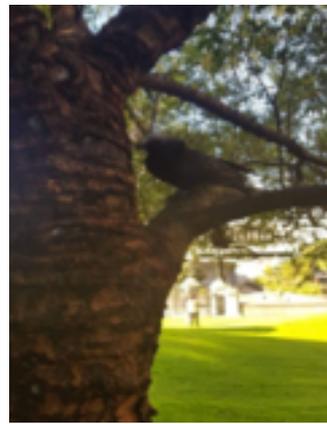
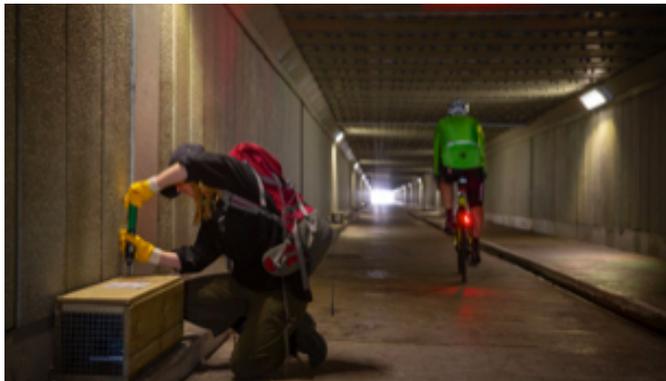
On the tree of doom pictured here you can see: Kamate trap, Several strikers, Bait station with brodi, Victor trap inside bait station, Chew card, Wax tag, Trail camera. Just out of shot is a T-Rex trap. **This is what it takes!**

As well as some of the challenges like servicing traps and bait stations in our international airport between 1am and 5am there have been some incredibly positive learning.



What have we learnt? People are amazing, without the community deciding that this is what they want for their neighbourhood, suburb and city this project wouldn't have happened. We put the goal out there and allowed people to be involved in the way they wished.

The commitment of community groups = incredible, our eyes and ears on the Peninsula – dog walkers checking traps for us, taking chewcards home to monitor compost bins, reports of rat sightings means we have an incredibly comprehensive detection network already in place – ultimately that is the long term success of the project 'shared responsibility to protect these hard fought gains'



What are we starting to see? This is the crunch time for New Zealand's biodiversity, amazing things are happening on the peninsula and across the whole of Wellington our work is built on a strong foundation of community effort, organisational leadership and support and of course our amazing Zealandia

Predator free efforts are working. **It's making a difference.** We're seeing the bounce back our native wildlife, our birds, lizards and insects are coming back. Monitoring supports this but what is even more incredible is people sharing their experiences and observations, facebook reach is tracking at something like 65,000 and these images are all from the public enthusiastically sharing – **a real sense of pride.**

Kaka – creating a ruckus in the grounds of parliament. **Raukawa Gecko** – that came in with washing from the clothes line on Miramar. **Kārearea** – our native Falcon, only 5,000 left perching on an office window sill in Boulcott St. And from last weekend a **shore plover** that turned up on Miramar Peninsula, less than 300 left in the world – that is like a takahe turning up on the beach!!

This is our capital city, this is incredible. We have a generation growing up now where kaka, kārearea and kakariki to name but a few are part of their lives that is the huge reward for this collective effort truly worth the effort.

Predator Free Wellington project director James Willcocks.

