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Te Marua o Ruatahuna

Tena koutou

Ko te tumanako kai te pai katoa koutou i roto i Te Tau Hou nei...

This is the latest update for you on our projects in the New Year.

Blackberry Eradication

We have finished spraying the blackberry for this season. Although not funded to do this work extensively across the marua, we put in some of our own time and effort to try and tidy up at least roadside areas. We managed to spray blackberry on the side of the road from Te Tahora (end of Mataatua Road) to Rauwiri bridge, and from Owharona to Omakoi along the main road.

We also sprayed some selected areas like the access to the urupa at Tatahoata, about Mataatua Marae and around some of the homes of our kaumatua. We didn't spray the road to the school for fear that our tamariki might eat the poisoned berries. Hopefully this can be done next season in the time before berries develop.

Meanwhile we have got a number of people interested in killing more of the blackberry around Ruatahuna. For example, we understand the Farm is now keen to do some of their blackberry so this is great! We have also assisted Tom Ata o do some of the blackberry at Ohau. We're hoping everyone able will pick up a back pack and spray the black berry around our papakainga and our homes - wherever you see it. We can advise on the best type of spray, how to apply it and when you should spray - just check out our trustees or the office at 166.

Deer Recovery

Deer numbers are growing in our bush and throughout the Urewera. All hunters know that, this summer, in a night spotting or a trip down-river hunting it is becoming common to see a dozen or more deer. With high numbers of deer, they graze hard, knocking back seedlings and shrubs in our bush, and competing for food.

We have commissioned a chopper operation to do a trial cull of the deer on the back areas of the Tuawhenua blocks. The trial will be run for only one to two weeks, and the chopper will be based mainly Mataatua during this period. The chopper will also be recovering deer under permit from DOC-owned areas in this region.

We are asking key hunters throughout the marua to indicate where they don't want the chopper to go for deer recovery. The chopper will be instructed not to go to into these areas. If you see the chopper hunting areas that should be left for local hunters, then please let any of the trustees or the office know at 166.

Any proceeds from the deer will go to supporting other Tuawhenua projects.

Honey

Further to our honey feasibility study, we have successfully negotiated support from a honey producer and exporter who is keen to help us achieve our goals for Ruatahuna in this area. We have only had one person signal that they are interested in being a part of this project, so we will be working with that person to get them trained and ready to run a trial in honey and hive production later this year.

Tawa Manipulation & Podocarp Restoration

We will soon be running a trial in tawa extraction as part of our podocarp restoration project. As part of this exercise we will provide some help to Ngati Manunui in their project for some timber extraction to be used for their dining hall project.

Further, in the coming months we will be working in our ngahere to further the restoration of our podocarps – transplanting seedlings and looking after those we transplanted last year. Ngati Tawhaki and Ngati Manunui hapu will be involved in this project.

Land Capability Assessment

We have been successful in engaging the Bay of Plenty Regional Council (BOPRC – used to be known as EBOP) to support us in doing an assessment of the capability of the Tuawhenua lands for use and management options. This is an important step in thinking about environmental issues and what the land might potentially be used for in the future. The BOPRC will engage a consultant at no cost to us to do the first report on land capability.

We have offered this opportunity to the Tuhoe Trust Board and Ruatahuna Farm as well, and look forward to working together with these organisations for this purpose.

Strategic Plan

We have been doing some strategic planning and have identified these as our key goals in the medium term:

<i>People and the Land</i>	Make good and lasting use of our resources in a way that involves and supports our people
<i>Protection and Enhancement</i>	Protect and enhance what's special on our lands and in our forests and rivers
<i>Contribution</i>	Contribute our expertise and support where we can locally and to the world

Our key issue is that we don't have a trust fund to support the trust's activities so we have to find funding for our projects and activities. It is only so long before funding opportunities run out. We are considering commercial options for the trust so we are able to sustain our activities and can support our strategies in protection and enhancement ourselves.

Possum Research

We continue this year with Landcare in a research project that looks at the economics of possumming and elements of possum behaviour. Landcare will be here this week doing interviews with some of our possumers.

Landcare is also bringing in Bruce Warburton, an expert in possum behaviour, to talk about "everything you ever wanted to know about" possums. The hui is at Trust office, Mataatua at 9.30 am, Wednesday 9 March. If you're a possumer or interested in possums then please join us. Also take a look at the material over the page that comes from

Conclusion

We have made some progress on our projects early this year and have a busy time in front of us. If you are interested in any way in our activities or projects then please let our trustees or the office know.

A, kati...

Na nga Kaitiaki o Te Tuawhenua

Do you know this about Possums....?



Possums are nocturnal. Daytime dens are usually under cover, either above or below ground. Many dens are used, but only a few are used repeatedly, and dens may occasionally be shared by up to five possums. Den sites may be a limiting resource in some habitats.

Possums are usually active from about 30 minutes after sunset, returning to their dens just before dawn in summer but much earlier in winter. Rain at dusk may delay emergence and reduce time spent out of the den during the night. Possums spend about 1-2 hours per night feeding in two or three separate sessions, both on the ground and in trees. The rest of the time is spent grooming, sitting, or moving about.

Home ranges are typically about 1-4 ha in area in forested areas in New Zealand, overlap each other extensively, with males having larger ranges than females, and ranges being larger in late summer/early autumn than in other seasons. Possums living in pastoral grazing areas or merging from forest to feed on pasture may have much larger home ranges (up to 60 ha) or "dumbbell-shaped" ranges. Once established, possum home ranges are largely stable in both space and time.

Females born in an area mostly take up home ranges that largely overlap those of their mothers, thus effectively "inheriting" their mothers' home ranges. Male possums gradually shift their ranges away from those of their mothers.

Removal of possums by control results in some rearrangement of the home ranges of immediately adjacent possums, but mostly only those within one to two range lengths of the controlled area. Use by possums of seasonal food sources and bait stations is largely restricted to animals from within a radius of 300-500 m around the food source or bait station.

Juvenile possums, particularly males, disperse about the time of sexual maturity. The average dispersal distance is about 5 km, with the longest record being 41 km. Dispersing possums may move 3 km or more in a night. Juvenile possums disperse from their natal areas even when densities have been reduced by more than 90%.

Possums are capable of homing over distances of three or more kilometres. How they do that is unknown.

Improved management of possum dispersal is an urgent need because of the contribution of dispersal to the spread of bovine Tb and to the recovery of possum numbers after control.