Vision

The forests and beaches of Abel Tasman are once again filled with the birdsong that awakens and delights visitors.
Kia whakaoho te mauri o te Ata-hapara. Kia rongo, Kia Kite, Ki te reo koro tui o Te Tai tapu

Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust - Predator Control Report January - December 2025

By Mike Stringer

Overview

The **Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust** has objectives:

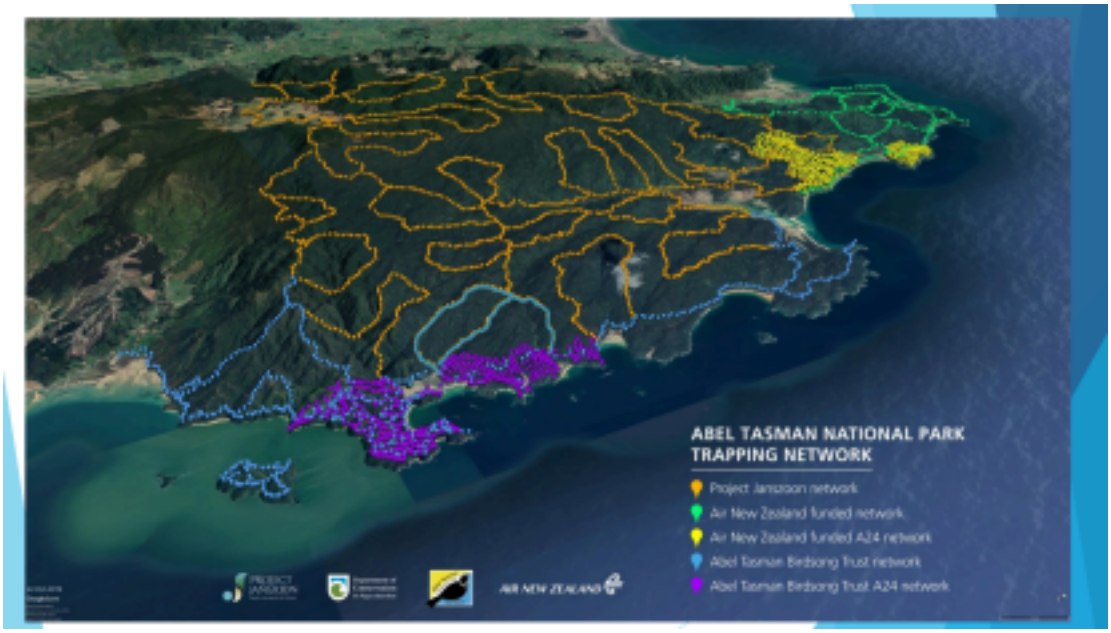
- ***To preserve native flora and fauna in Abel Tasman National Park.***
- ***To enhance the Abel Tasman National Park and its environs for recreation and enjoyment by residents and visitors now and in the future.***
- ***To generally promote the sustainable management of resources in the Park and its environs***

Securing the Coast

A key theme of the Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust's predator control work is "Securing the Coast". Predator control work of ATBT volunteers is predominantly along the coast. The coast is where most visitors to Park experience the birdsong and see rare bird species. The coast is where most of the tourism businesses operate.

Research by Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research has indicated that predators breed up their numbers in the lower coastal areas before invading the centre and high altitudes of the Park. It is in these higher altitudes of the Park where rat numbers are usually lower and sensitive species such as South Island robin/toutouwai stand a better chance of recovery.

As you can see from the image below, Project Janszoon has been funding the bulk of the predator control work in the Park, including aerial 1080 control (see Appendix 1 for details). With Project Janszoon now close to achieving its purpose to restore the ecological prospects of the Park, they will conclude the project in June 2026. DOC and Project Janszoon are working on what the future maintenance programme will look like. For ATBT, we continue to work with DOC, tourism operators and the community to achieve ecosystem restoration in the Abel Tasman.



The current trapping network in the Abel Tasman (Image: Project Janszoon)

Coverage

The total coverage area for predator control within the Abel Tasman National Park is approximately 4000 hectares.

ATBT uses approximately 732 DOC150/200 box traps for mustelid/rat control, and 833 Goodnature A24 traps for rat control. Approximately 50 Sentinel traps were active in the park up until late 2024, however these have been retired due to concerns about their potential impact on fledgling kākā and the ability of the Trust to maintain wide-spread possum control with our available resources.

Reporting

Unless otherwise stated, all reporting is for the period 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2025. Where relevant, reporting has used comparison data from the previous period to highlight seasonal trapping trends.

This report uses data in TrapNZ and the Goodnature dashboard. With data in two systems, it is not easy to provide one consolidated picture of all trapping activity and as a result, this report has separate sections for each system.

TrapNZ reporting

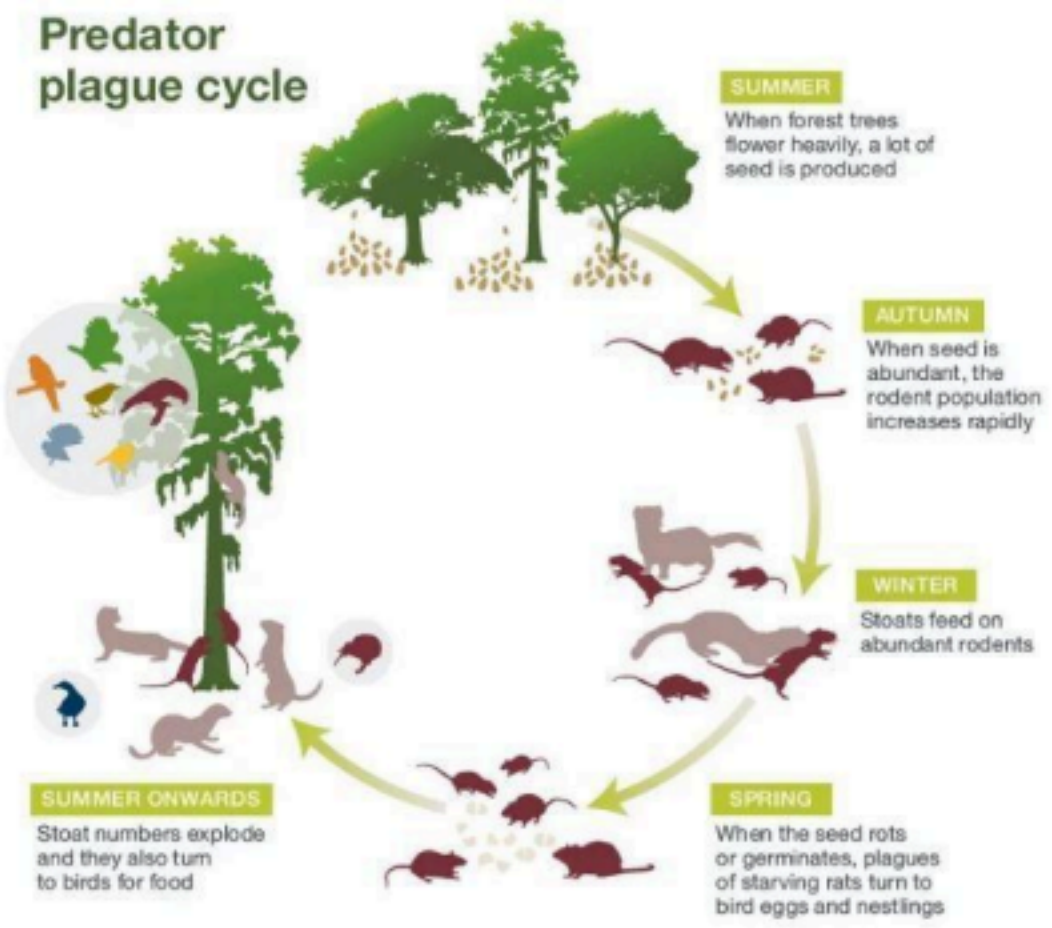
ATBT volunteers trapped a grand total of 615 mustelids and 15185 rats between October 2010 and December

2025.

What is the trend in predator (rat, stoat, and weasel) numbers trapped by ATBT volunteers?

The reason for discussing rat and mustelid trap catches together is because the abundance of stoats are linked to the abundance of rodents as depicted below.

The relationship between rodents and stoats means you might expect a relationship between where rats and stoats are trapped.

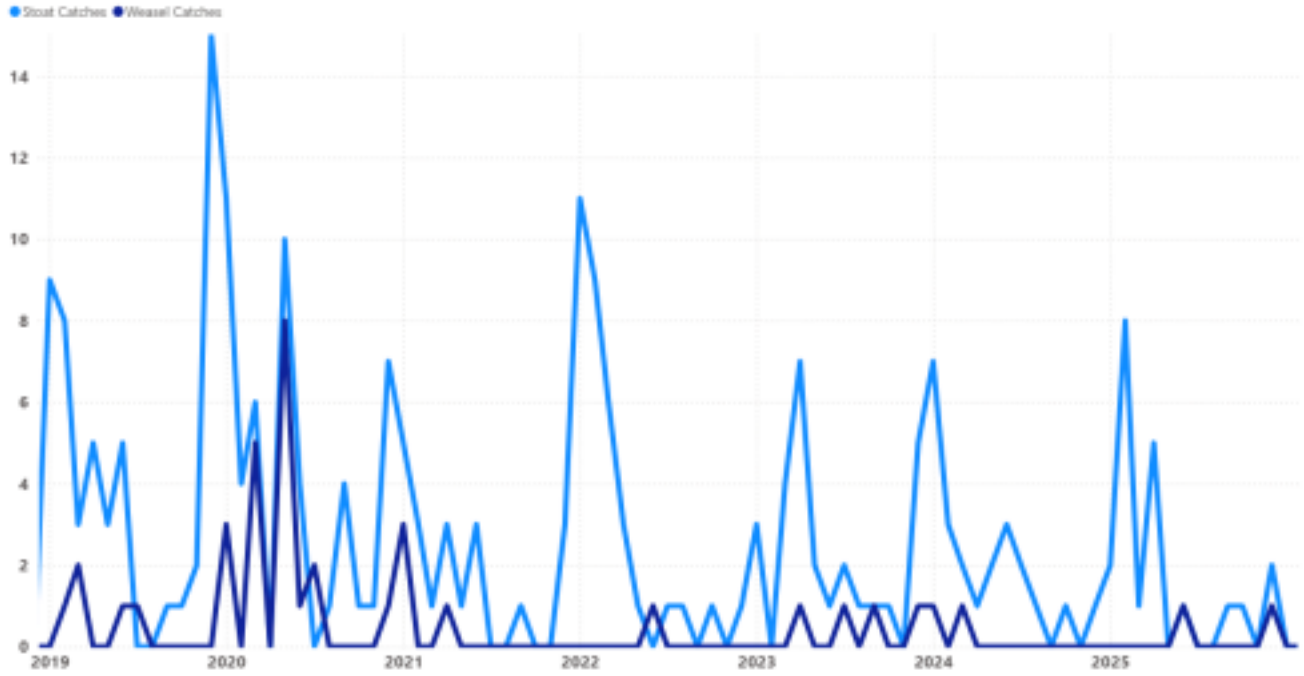


Total rats trapped per month from 1st January 2019 to 31st December 2025

We have again seen a peak in rats caught in the late summer months. It is likely this is influenced by lower trapping frequency during the holiday period.

The peak in 2019 was due to the beech mast when beech seeds feed a boom in the rat population.

Total mustelids trapped per month from 1st January 2019 to 31st December 2025



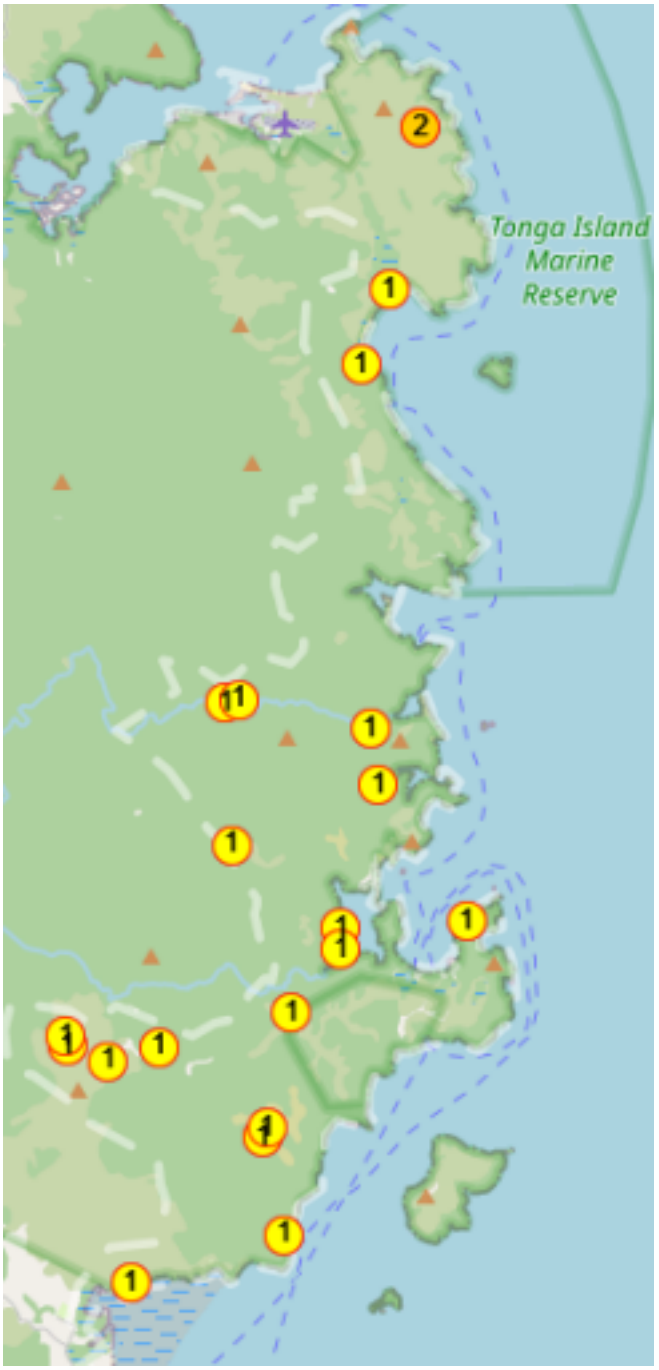
There is a consistent peak in stoat catches in the first few months of the year, driven both by the lagged response to the previous year's rodent abundance and by the seasonal dispersal of young stoats, which makes them more trap-prone.

Maps for the year 2025

TrapNZ has two ways to map trap data. One is a “heat map” for a quick visual, the other shows the actual number of rats or stoats trapped per trap box. For heat maps, the colour changes from blue to bright orange when there is a higher number of rats trapped in one or several nearby traps.

Marahau to Onetahuti Bay

Rat catches - heat map Stoat catches - number caught

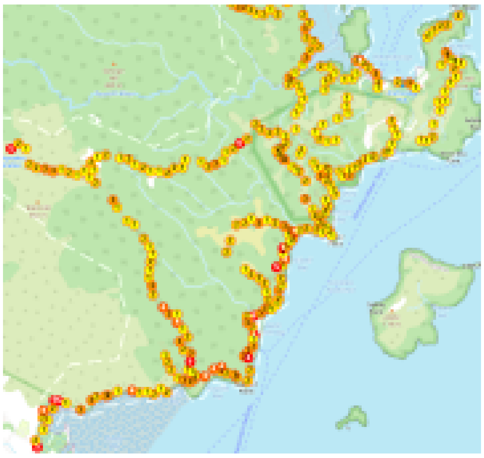


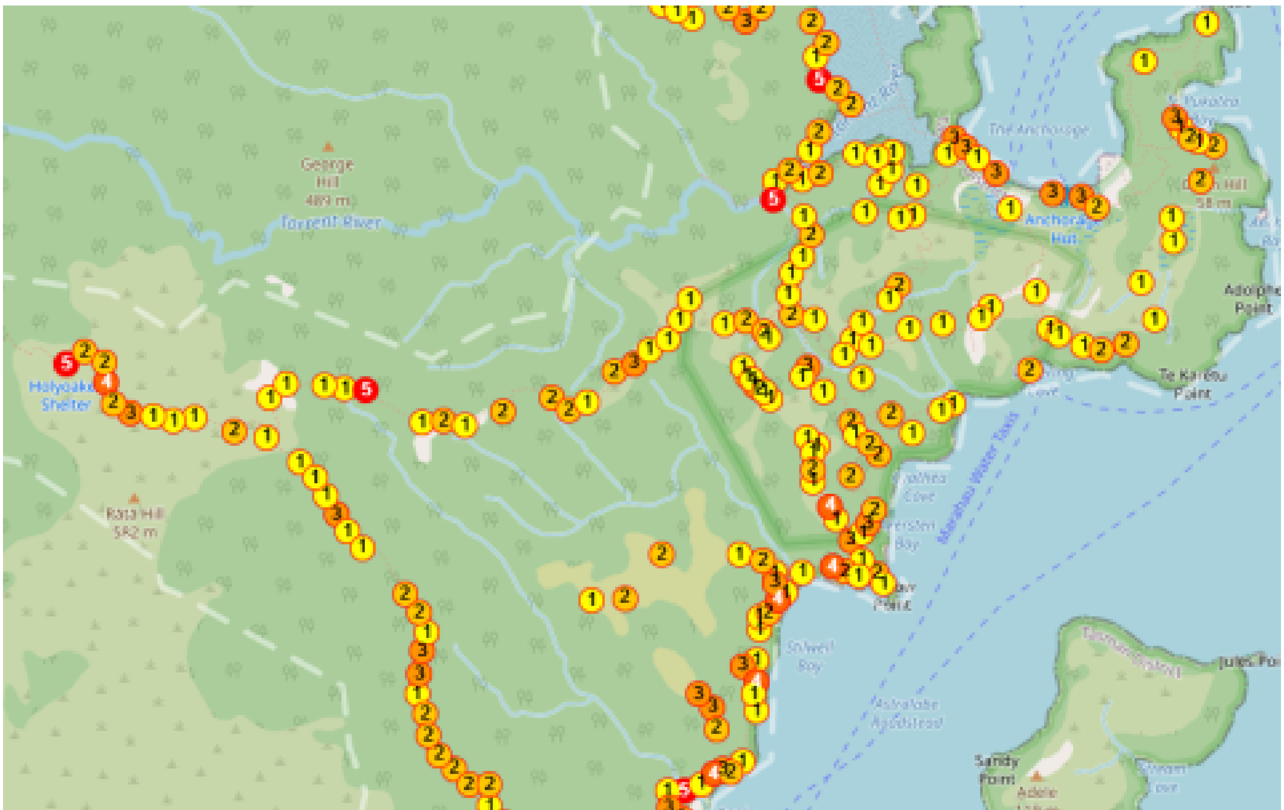
The pattern of stoat catches being predominantly in the south of the Park is a consistent pattern within our traplines.

Rat catches by area

The following maps show how the heat map above translates to numbers of rats trapped in each area of the Park.

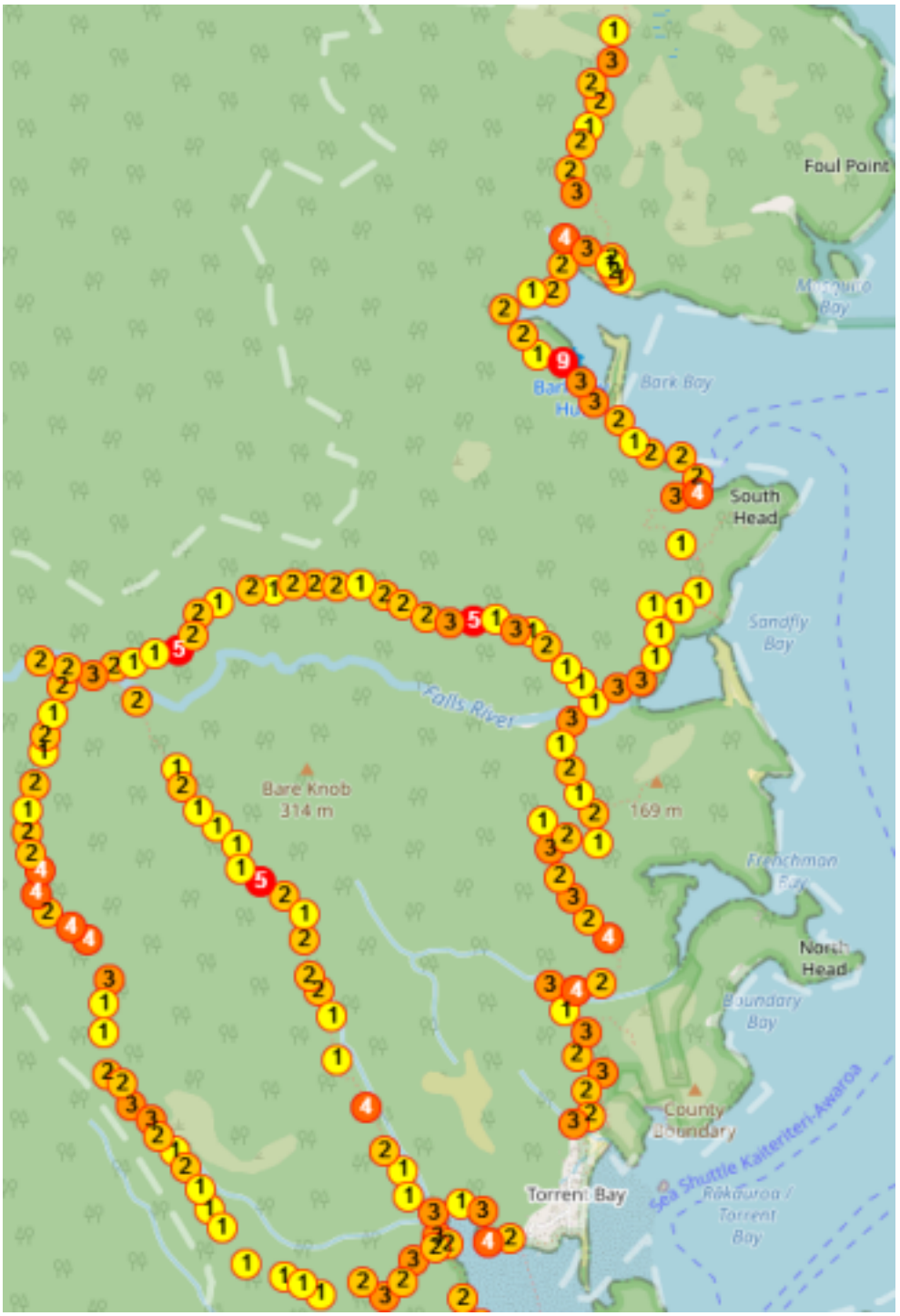
In all cases, the large image shows catches in 2025, with the smaller inset showing catches in 2024. **Marahau to Torrent Village**





George Hill
489 m
Torrent River
Holyoake Shelter
Rata Hill
582 m
The Anchorage
Anchorage Hut
Adolphe Point
Te Karetu Point
Sandy Point

As can be seen, there are numerous locations within the southern area of the Park that are reporting in excess of 3 rats caught per trap location per year. Whilst it is good to be removing these predators from the Park, the comparison between the last year and the previous year shows that the number of rats caught in this area does not seem to have significantly changed.


Foul Point
Bark Bay
South Head
Sandfly Bay
Falls River
Bare Knob
314 m
169 m
Frenchman Bay
North Head
Boundary Bay
County Boundary
Torrent Bay
Sea Shuttle Kaiteriteri-Awaroa
Torrent Bay

The catch data for 2025 shows that there has been an increase in rat catches in all areas of the Falls Loop traplines. However, catch rates have fallen in-between Bark Bay and South Head, as well as in the immediate proximity of Torrent Bay village.

Tonga to Awaroa

Here the comparison shows reduced catches in the Awaroa Head area, as well as in the southern area around Arch Point.

Goodnature A24 reporting

Of approximately 800 A24 Goodnature traps, 600 are deployed in

the Moncrieff/Pitt Head area protecting a project initiative area called the “Moncrieff Sanctuary”. See map opposite.

The Moncrieff Sanctuary is a key strategic project for ATBT for the outcome of securing and area for protection of native birdlife, particularly bird species susceptible to rat predation such as South Island robin/toutouwai and South Island tomtit/ngirungiru, and for protection of re-introduced species such as Kākā and Brown teal/pāteke.

The ability to report catch data for A24 traps is primarily through use of smart caps. These are very useful for measuring the performance of the A24 network as they measure number of kills, and the time and date of those kills. The number of A24 traps that
reported strikes through smart caps is summarised by project for the last two years.

The chart below uses data from Goodnature dashboard and shows
the reported kills per month for the A24 traps that have smart caps.

Due to concerns around an over-reporting problem, this data only reflects catch data where 3 or fewer catches have been reported per day. This issue has been largely resolved and should have less impact in the future.

As can be seen, apart from a winter spike in 2024, the catch rate in 2025 has marginally increased, despite fewer individual traps actively reporting catches.

Outcomes - Doing it for the birds!

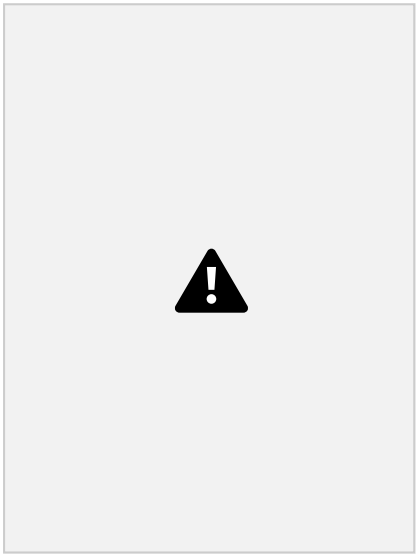
The desired outcome of ATBT's predator control is securing areas for protection of native birdlife that residents and visitors can enjoy now and in the future. Particularly bird species susceptible to rat predation such as South Island robin/toutouwai and South Island tomtit/ngirungiru.

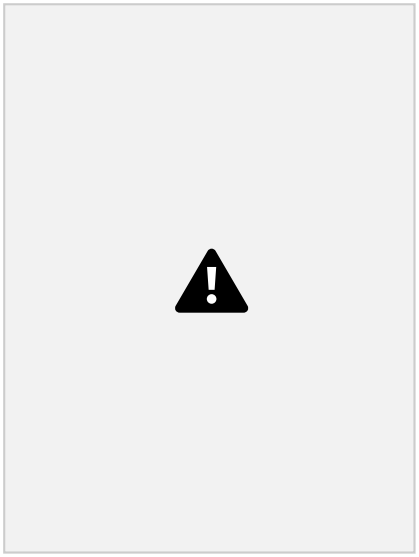
Here is a selection of photos taken by volunteers:

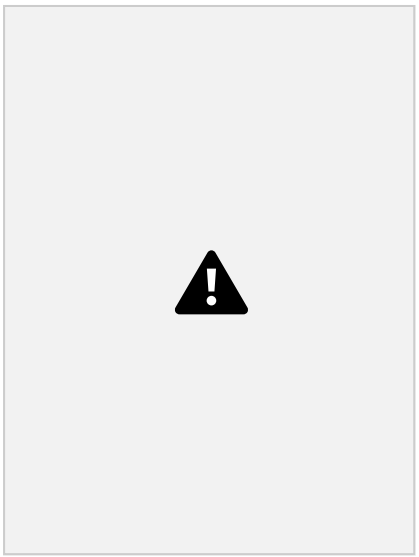
Left - An inquisitive South Island robin/toutouwai around Observation Beach (B Kitson) Middle -

White heron/kotuku spotted snacking on silvereye/tauhou at Awaroa (A Langmuir)

Right - Camouflaged fernbird/mātātā on the edge of the wetland at the northern end of Onetahuti Beach (M Forward)

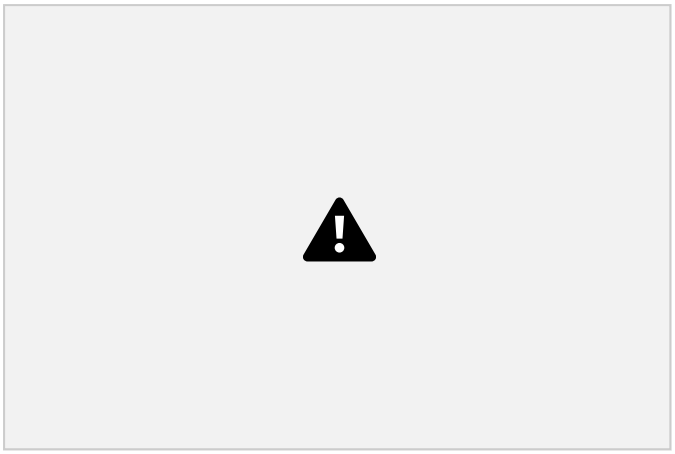


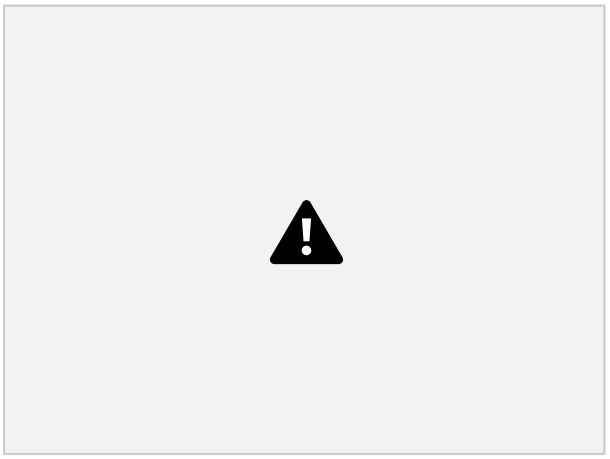




Left - Kereru in the dappled light (M Forward)

Right - Kākā checking out the visitors at Bark Bay (Thomas C)





Acknowledgements

A special thanks to all the Birdsong Trust volunteers for giving their time checking traps and managing trapping teams (and acting as impromptu visitor advisers and promoters of Birdsong Trust work).

Thanks to Kim Hawkes for assisting with data input.

Abby McCall (Operations Manager and adviser), assisted by Fran Forsey.

Tourism concessionaires whose Birdsong Levy component of the Environmental Access Fee (EAF) contributes to the funding of Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust operations.

Sponsors and donors for their contributions.

Marahau Pledge

Chris Golding and Jim Livingstone and other Motueka and Takaka staff (DOC partners and

advisers). Geoff Button and team (Project Janszoon partners and advisers)

Water taxi companies for carrying volunteers into the Park.

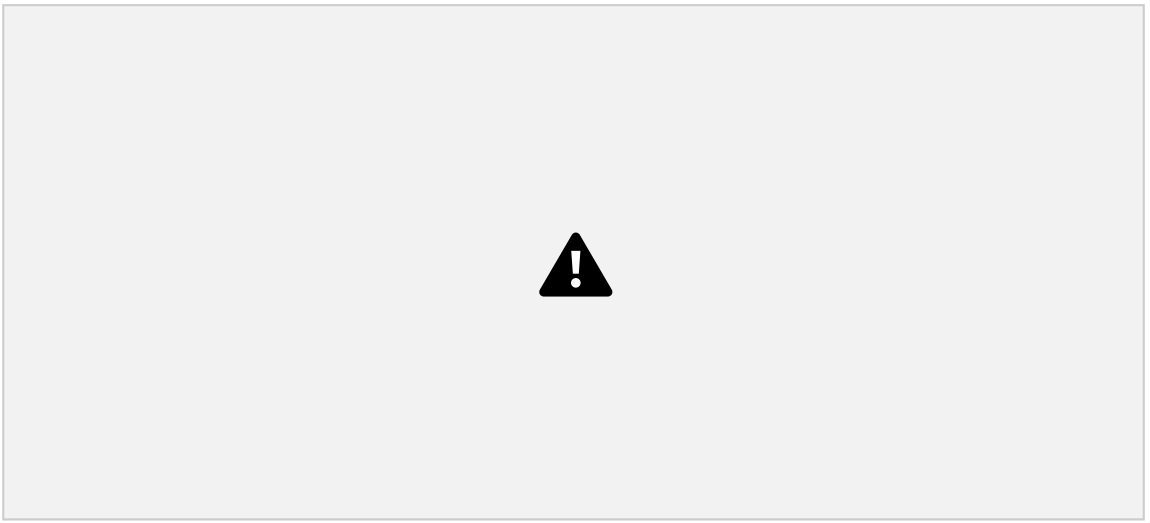
Abel Tasman Kayaks who host the Marahau shed and Bruce Reid who hosts the Motueka shed.

Pic Picot and Pics Peanut Butter for supplying peanut butter for A24 trap lure.

Goodnature for providing advice and support for our A24 network.

Finally, to all the Park visitors who show interest and support for all the work of the Abel Tasman Birdsong

Trust. A special thanks to those that catch water taxis into the Park and contribute part of their taxi fare to ATBT's conservation efforts.



Happy volunteers about to embark on a trip into the Park.

Appendix 1: Aerial 1080 Treatment Area

Below is a map that shows the area in the Park that was treated with 1080 in September 2025. The aerial treatment of 1080 was organised by Project Janszoon and included the 16,000 of the 22,000 ha of the Abel Tasman. This treatment was triggered by high rat numbers in the southern part of the park and high possum numbers in the north.