



# Newsletter

Issue 96

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## I Line Renewal

*Our oldest trap line gets refreshed.*



Paulina poses with a stoat. Photo: Kristin Harrison



Smoko at Gridiron - Alan, Steve and Andy. Photo by Kristin



Dave Wilson weight tests a trap. Photo: Thomas Schwarenbach



The experts confer, Photo by Thomas

Many hands made light work as Friends of Flora volunteers and DOC staff put out 80 new stainless steel double-set DOC 150 traps along 8 km of I Line late last month. Thomas Schwarenbach at 13 was the youngest regular vollie present, while some of those pictured probably have 60 years or more on Thomas... The new traps replace aging and rusty single set 200s, many well past their use-by date. Made earlier in the year by the Waimea Menshed with materials and traps funded by Genesis Energy, each tunnel sports the "whio forever" logo. The new traps will provide an enhanced level of protection for the 5 or 6 resident pairs of whio along the adjacent stretch of the Flora Stream and Upper Takaka River. FoF's survey in December will reveal how many of these pairs have produced ducklings.

## Exotic Invasives

*Foreigners flock to the Flora.*

While we think of the Flora as a haven for native birds, several exotic (introduced) species have established themselves. The negative impacts of blackbirds and song thrushes are well known - they predate upon invertebrates and are a serious threat to juvenile *Powelliphanta* snails. The impact of other exotics - chaffinches and dunnocks (hedge sparrows) is less well understood. To the list I would add the skylark - I heard several performing their aerial singing antics along the Gordon's Pyramid route during a recent trap check of P Line. Very similar in appearance, but entirely unrelated, to the New Zealand pipit /pihoihoi (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*) skylarks are a 19th century introduction and are now established throughout the mainland and many offshore islands. It will be interesting to see if the skylarks (*Alauda arvensis*) continue to move further into the subalpine zone - currently very much the realm of the pipit



Skylark in flight. Pic: Thanks to [nzbirdsonline.org.nz](http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz)

## Kiwi Tales from the Flora.

*Follow them on Facebook say Robin and Sandy Toy*

The kiwi breeding season is well underway. There are now 6 pairs incubating in the Flora with the first chick due to hatch at the end of November. This year the nests have all been in tricky locations and it's been difficult to get the nest cameras positioned to get good video footage. However, we are getting some interesting clips and will be posting these regularly on FOF's Facebook page under the banner 'Kiwi Tales from the Flora'. Do check them out.

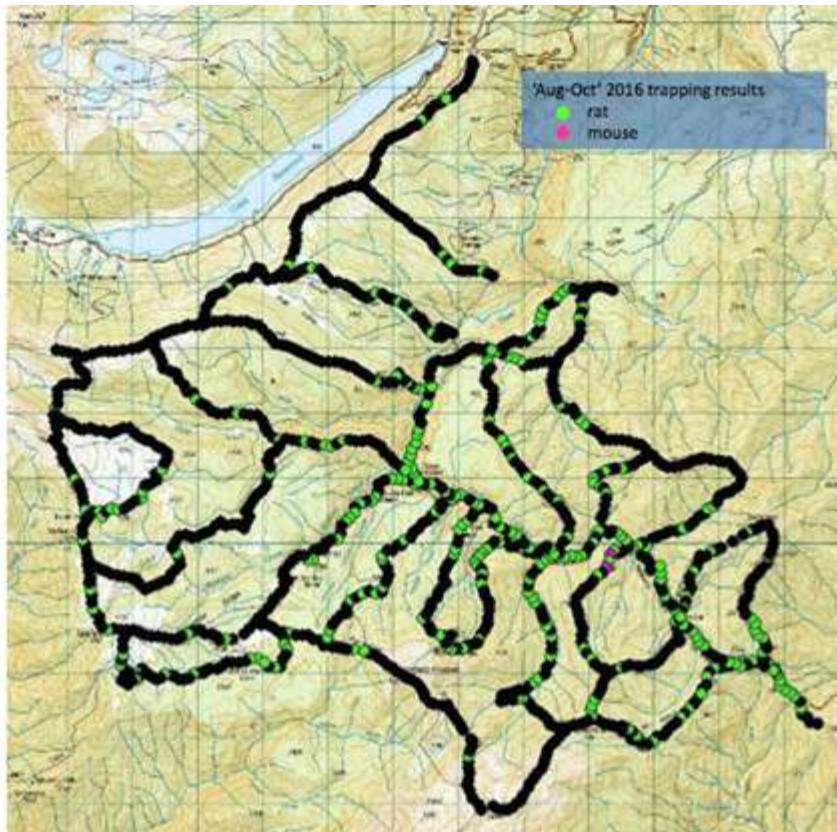
One of the kiwi brought into the Flora in April has paired up with a resident kiwi and is already breeding. Others are still wandering around checking out the area and keeping the kiwi monitoring team on its toes. Just when a kiwi seems to have settled in an area, it will suddenly disappear and turn up somewhere completely different...based on past experience it may take a couple of years before they work out where they want to live and who with.

## Battle for Our Birds Kahurangi update.

*Cobb complete at last*

At the time of writing the good news is that the remainder of the Cobb Operational block (which takes in the entirety of the Flora managed area) is having aerial 1080 bait applied. On completion, roughly 10% of Kahurangi National Park will have been treated. Most operations have taken place later than planned due to an exceptionally wet and windy Spring. The weather has allowed few suitable weather "windows" during which bait can be sown and have two or more fine nights to be available to the burgeoning ship rat population. A rapid knockdown of the rat population will allow familiar bush bird such as the robin/*toutouwai*, rifleman/*titipounamu* and bellbird/*korimako* a break from predation and give the extremely vulnerable rock wren the opportunity to breed during the remainder of Spring. *Powelliphanta* snails will also have the opportunity to recover. Stoat-vulnerable species in the Flora - whio, great spotted kiwi./*roroa* and kaka benefit from a reduction in the stoat population as the stoats scavenge poisoned rat carcasses.

Following the 2014 operation, so few possums have been trapped in the Flora that possum traps are now being removed.



The "heat map" of recent rodent catches (above) shows the need for action on rats. Thanks to Robin Toy for the map.



Wildlands students relax in warm conditions on Cobb Ridge. Sorry, last year's pic!

### **Wildlands Return:**

*A wet weekend did not deter these disappointed Democrats, led by FoF's Bill Rooke.* Wildlands Studies students returned to the Flora for the 8th consecutive year. 16 US college students, all studying ecology, and their tutors Adam and Mikey again rolled up their sleeves and in atrocious conditions managed to get some useful work done in the Flora this month. Several footprint tracking tunnel (FTT) lines were remarked, had new routes in and out made and had their descriptions revised. This will make the task of running FTT tunnels quicker and safer for FoF volunteers. Students also finished installing weka-excluders on the new I Line traps and checked the rifleman nest boxes (no nests, yet...). Well done, Wildlands! (and sorry about the US election....)