

Bringing back Kokako: Okahukura Valley pest control; Combining resources, science and passion

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Pirongia Restoration Society (Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society Inc.) is working collaboratively with the Department of Conservation (DOC) and tangata whenua to return North Island kokako (*Callaeas wilsoni*, At Risk – Recovering) to Pirongia Forest Park. As part of this project, a pest control initiative was proposed to help a significant population of kokako in Pureora Forest Park recover through targeted ongoing ground based pest control. As part of this, a bait station network was set up in the Okahukura Valley, Northern Pureora in order to reduce animal pest pressure on the present population. Contour following transects were used and the network was designed using ArcGIS software to ensure that the bait stations were spaced correctly. Tracks were cut into the forest covering an area of 1,040 ha in the Okahukura block over six months in 2015/2016. More than 1000 bait stations were installed using a 100 x 100 m grid where toxin is placed targeting rats and possums. Baseline animal pest, bird and bat surveys were also carried out as part of this project, showing the presence of long-tailed bats and bird species including kokako, falcon, kaka, kakariki, whio, whitehead and North Island robin. In the first year of operation, 80 community volunteers were attracted to the project and monitoring has shown a noticeable increase in kokako numbers present in the area. By working together collaboratively DOC staff, tangata whenua, contractors and the Pirongia Restoration Society were able to relatively rapidly and cost effectively instigate a large and complex pest control programme in remote terrain, supported by a scientifically robust monitoring programme. We examine the key requirements to successful community led restoration operations as well as the factors required to sustain these restoration and translocation projects.