UNDERTAKING SIA AT AN ISLAND LEVEL

Predator Free Rakiura social impact assessment and baseline study

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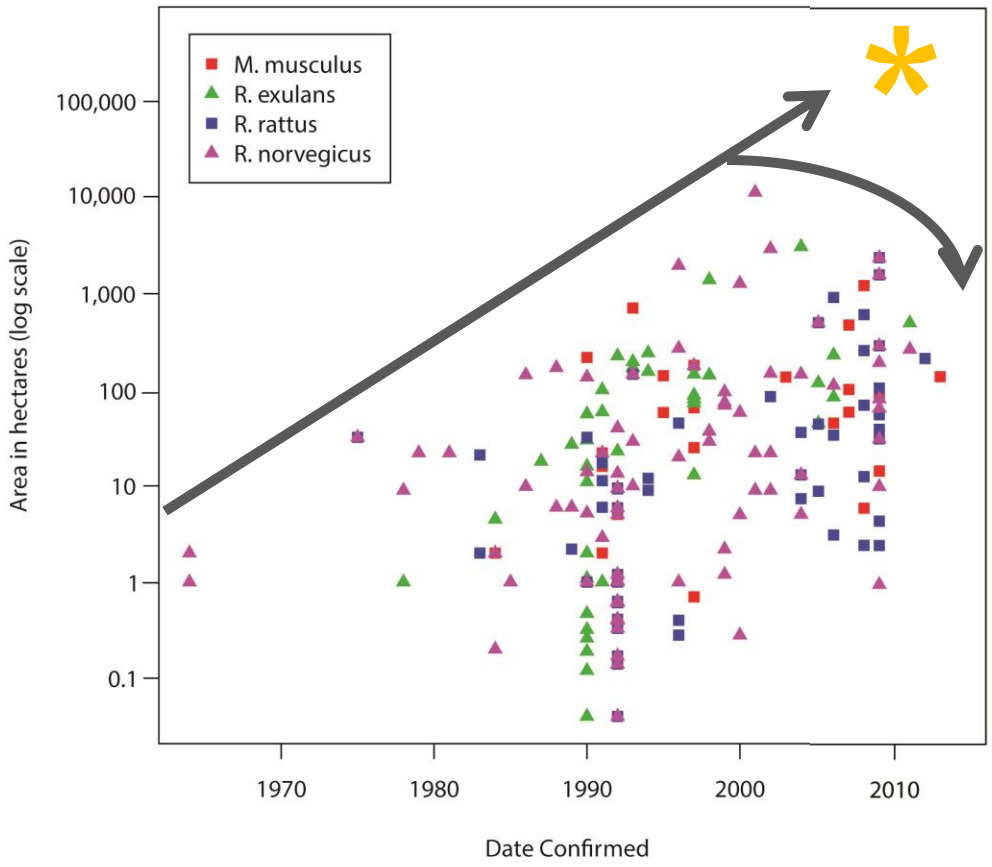
Background to predator eradications

NZ island eradications 1964 to 2014

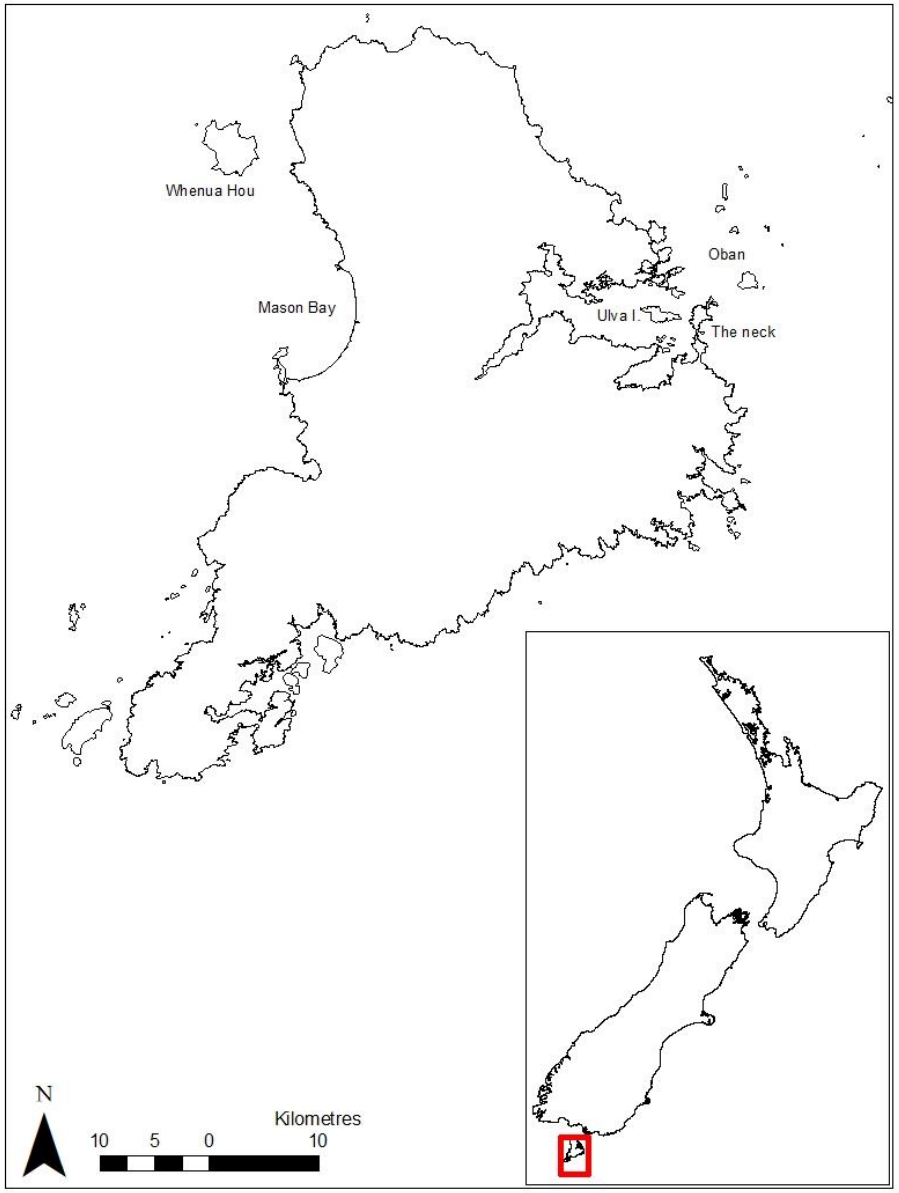


- NZ's unique species are vulnerable to mammal predators.
- NZ has a strong history of eradicating introduced mammals from uninhabited areas.
- Eradications on inhabited islands presents new challenges and opportunities.

Clout & Russell (2006) The eradication of mammals from New Zealand islands. In: *Assessment and Control of Biological Invasion Risks*

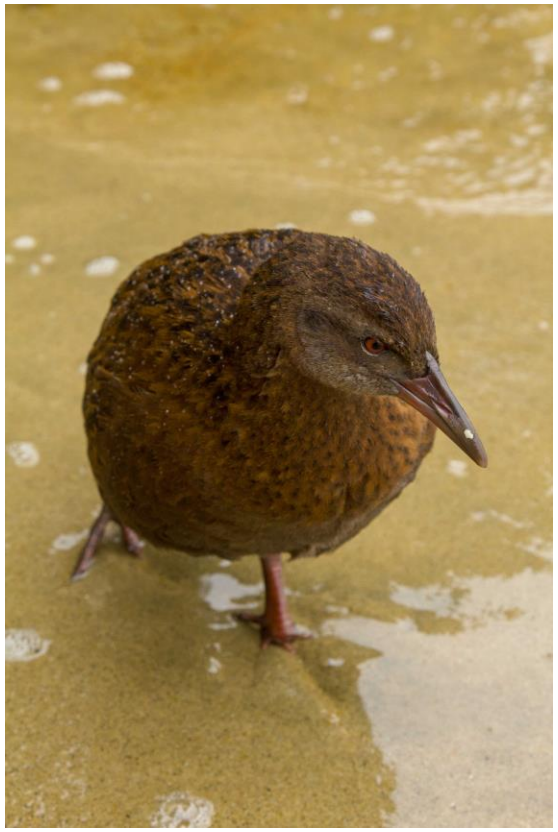
Rakiura

- Stewart Island/Rakiura is New Zealand's third largest island: population ~380 and ~36,500 tourism visits per year.
- 174 600 ha.
- Surrounded by >95 small islands including several that are predator free.
- Land ownership:
  - approx. 90% Department of Conservation administered incl. Rakiura National Park
  - 8% administered by the Rakiura Māori Lands Trust
  - 2% largely private land centred on the town of Oban in Halfmoon Bay.



Predator Free Rakiura

- Several technical studies of proposals (i.e. eradicating feral cats, rats, possums, hedgehogs).
- Complete eradication estimated at ~NZ$35–55m (2008). Assumed aerially distributed toxin with ground based methods around inhabited areas.
- Alternative proposals around Oban considered.
- In 2017 we undertook an SIA of different options to understand community views.



SIA Methods

- The interdisciplinary team (ecologists, sociologists, psychologists) investigated potential options, effects and implementation issues relating to Predator Free Rakiura.
- The scoping and baseline stages built a detailed social profile of the island using desktop research and input from key DOC staff.
- The assessment stage included engagement with the Rakiura community and key stakeholders, including:
  - one-on-one interviews
  - an open-house session
  - group discussions with particular interest groups.

The field research had human ethics approval 019877 from the University of Auckland.


START
HERE
YOUR
FEEDBACK

Baseline - demographics

	2001	2006	2013
Oban	303	294	276
Stewart Island	387	399	381

- Usually resident population (2013) was 381
- Population fluctuates but decreasing longer term. Most of the population (73%) lives in Oban.
- Nearly half the population (44%) aged between 40 and 64 years and 18% older than 65
- Predominantly European (91.9%) with 18.7% Māori*

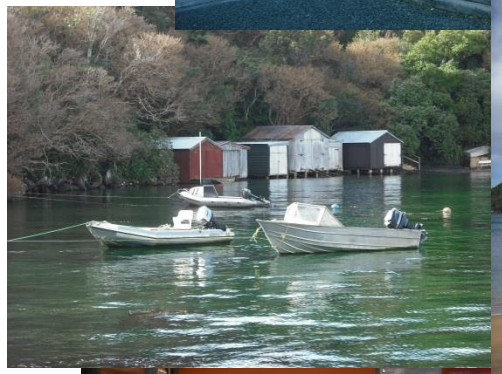
*Note in the census respondents can nominate more than one ethnicity

Baseline – employment and livelihoods

- Largest employment sectors: pubs/taverns; seafood processing; nature reserves/conservation parks operation; accommodation.
- Many people also employed in industries that service the community: supermarket, primary education, health and postal services.
- Access is via ferry or flights, or private charter. Freight also comes via barge.
- Hunting and fishing are recreational pursuits for locals and an important food source.

Baseline – tourism

- Tourists in the year to June 2017 was 36,654.
- Tourism declined after the GFC but grew in recent years.
- In 2012, tourism contributed 69 full time equivalent jobs.
- Tourism is very seasonal from end of October to Easter each year.
- Peaks with key holidays (e.g. New Years) and visiting cruise ships.
- $5 visitor levy per visitor contributes to tourism related infrastructure e.g. toilets, footpaths and free wifi.



Issues and effects – Predator Free Rakiura

- Social baseline found:
  - long-standing interest in conservation and predator control amongst islanders.
  - many people support the ecological benefits but question how feasible it is.
  - wide support for increased site-based predator control working towards a Predator Free Rakiura.
  - a strong do-it-yourself ethos.
  - a major concern about ongoing biosecurity – what will it look like, how will it affect us, how will it be maintained, and costs.

Issues and effects – workforce

- Support for an island based project workforce
- Early planning and engagement on workforce
- Major issue of accommodation capacity – good planning an opportunity to deliver new accommodation options to community (e.g. converting project accommodation to elderly 65+ units post-project).
- Encouraging long-term workers to bring families and settle on the island for benefits to school enrolments, community integration and services.

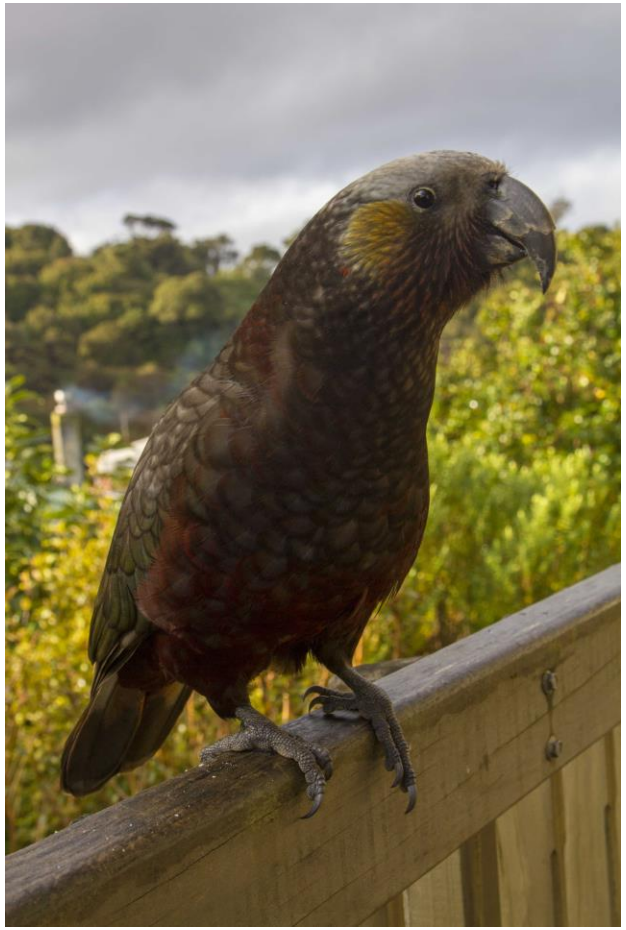
Issues and effects – tourism

- Potential for Predator Free Rakiura to support growth in tourism.
- Well-managed tourism would be beneficial to community **if** within social and infrastructure limits.
- Major capacity constraints need to be addressed, especially tourism accommodation, seasonal worker accommodation and restaurant options.
- Need to ensure tourism is the right fit for maximum net social benefit (e.g. avoid mass tourism, host resistance).

"We don't want to be like Queenstown".

Issues and effects – strategic direction

- Need to have clear governance, leadership and strategy
- Engage and involve community, including silent voices.
- Many concerns around methods e.g. aerial poison and environmental impacts, e.g. on water
- Deer are a pest and used for hunting and food – need to consider as part of any predator control programme.
- Raise further awareness in community and among visitors of domestic cat and dog behaviour.



The next stage

- Situating Predator Free Rakiura within a long-term environmental, economic and social vision for the island.
- Recognise and build on community efforts to date.
- Leverage other initiatives such as Predator Free New Zealand.
- Develop an understanding of how biosecurity should be managed.
- Provide regular communication to the community and stakeholders.
- Ensure ongoing engagement that speaks to all the island residents and stakeholders, including 'silent voices'.
- Employ a person on-island to coordinate activities and planning.

Final comment

- SIA on islands requires a clear understanding of the local context via baseline studies to inform engagement and develop project steps.
- Evolution or Revolution?
  - The Rakiua SIA team was interdisciplinary and developed a human-ecological approach that considers the social and ecological perspectives of "islandness", e.g. migration
  - Opportunity to better utilise SIA in wildlife management.

Questions?

- Russell KJ, Taylor CN, Balanovic JX, Aley JP, Harbrow MA, Russell JC 2017. Predator Free Rakiura Social Impact Assessment. A report for the Department of Conservation. University of Auckland, Auckland. https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/predator-free-rakiura

Presentation photos by Nick Taylor and James Russell