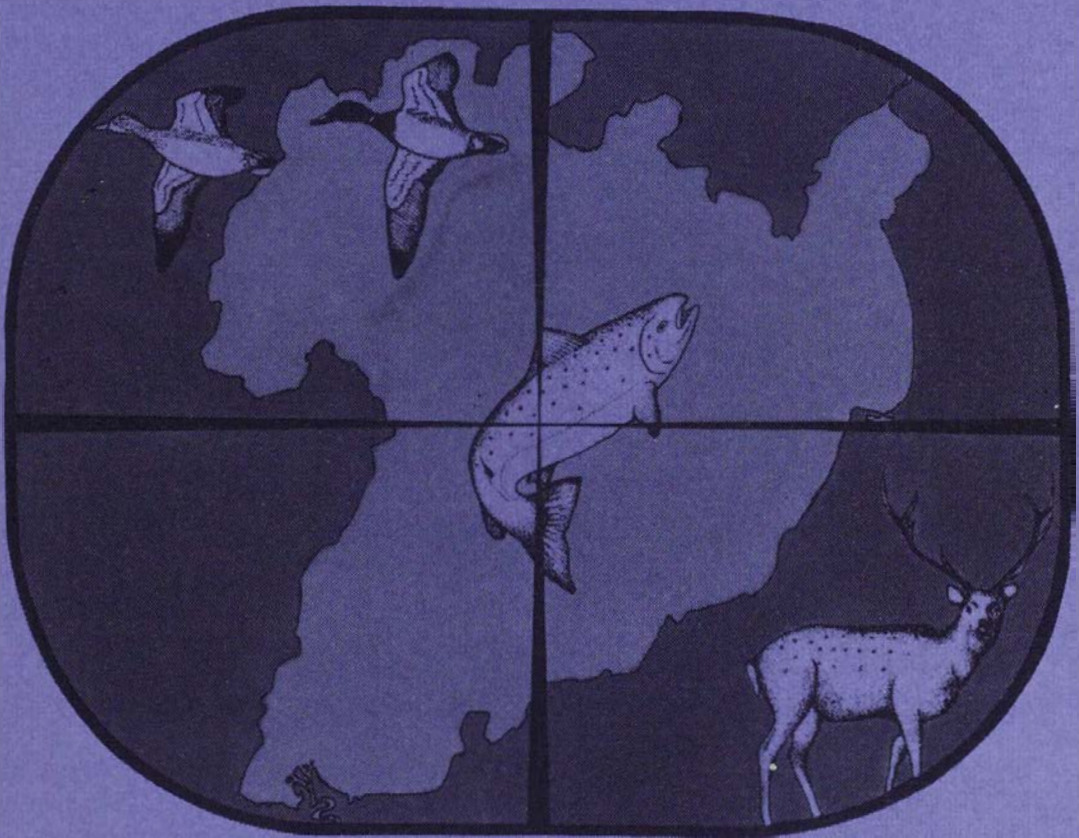


NOVEMBER 1993
ISSUE 14

TARGET AUPO

A Newsletter for Hunters and Anglers in the
Tongariro / Taupo Conservancy



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TARGET AUPO

**A Newsletter for Hunters and Anglers
in the Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy**

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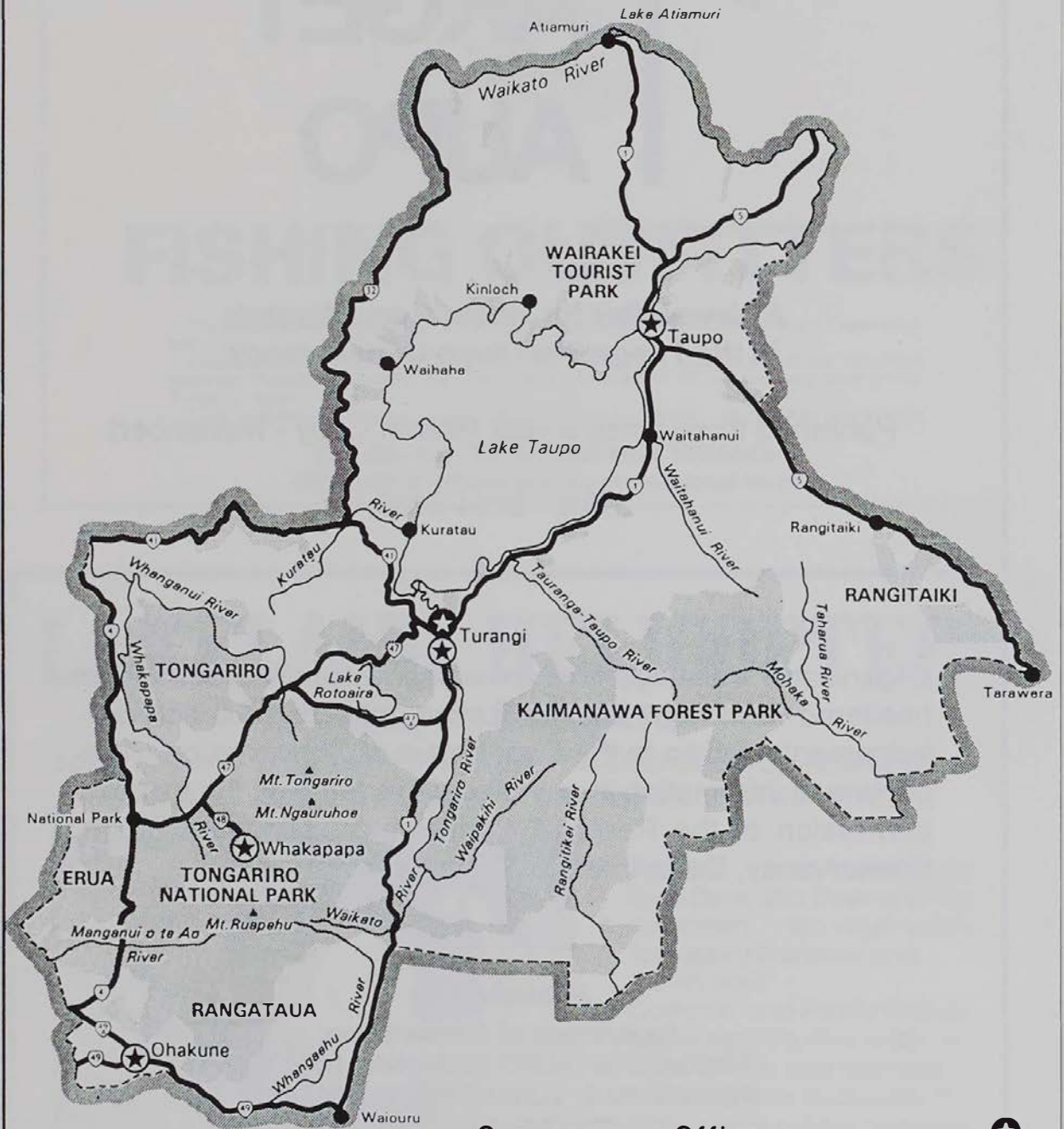
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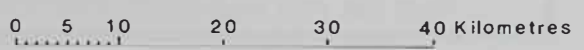
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Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy



★ Conservancy Office
 ★ Field Centre Office
 — Conservancy Boundary
 ■ Protected Areas





CONSERVATION
TE PAPA ATAWHAI

DEAR ANGLERS AND HUNTERS,

As the spring season arrives, many anglers will be reflecting on the fortunes of a winter typified by long dry spells and low, clear river flows. Many anglers struggled with these conditions and found the fishing hard. In spite of this, catch rates in the Tongariro and Tauranga-Taupo rivers are up on previous years. The size of the fish throughout the fishery is also up on previous years. The total numbers of adult trout in our surveyed spawning streams are the highest they have been since counts began in 1990. The fishery is in good heart.

On the down side, concerns about poor angler behaviour, litter and fish offal, overcrowding and vehicles on walking tracks seem to have been more prominent this winter than usual. The Department, in conjunction with the Taupo Fishery Advisory Committee, is currently looking at ways to resolve these difficulties but ultimately the solutions rest with anglers themselves. More on this later in this edition.

The first deer are being seen on the clearings even though the grass is only just starting to grow. The signs look good for productive spring and summer hunting. As always, be well prepared when going into the bush and **please** be sure that what you are shooting at is a game animal and not another hunter.

Response to our call for comment (in previous issues) on the potential use of downriggers in the Taupo fishery has been pleasing. We have received 750 written submissions to date. It is likely that a decision on whether or not to allow the use of downriggers will be made after the Christmas holiday period. This still leaves time to make your views known if you haven't already done so. We would appreciate receiving as wide a range of opinion as possible.

Enjoy your sport.

Rob McLay
Co-editor

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Information about illegal activities is only of use when it is passed on immediately.

Please contact compliance staff:

Wayne Boness, Taupo *Phone 378 3885 (work) 377 0112 (home)*

Bryan Taylor, Turangi *Phone 376 8607 (work) 386 6549 (home)*

Sid Puia, Turangi *Phone 386 8607 (work) 386 6700 (home)*

or Conservancy Duty Officer *Phone 386 8607 after hours.*

ANYTIME

YOUR VIEWS : Downriggers

Over recent months we have been seeking your opinions about whether downriggers should be permitted in the Taupo fishery. The response has been excellent and we will continue to seek comment through to Christmas to give as many people as possible the opportunity for input. Below are a series of quotes taken at random from some of the responses received. They give an idea of some of the different thoughts expressed.

“ ... ”

How would you police the depth? This leaves the door open for the unscrupulous angler to abuse the system. I believe the technology is far too weighted in favour of the angler.

Surely the whole idea of fishing is actually 'holding' a rod or fishing line; using a downrigger this doesn't occur.

To be able to fish at the depths talked about with mono instead of wire and lead would, to me, be marvellous.

There would be no fun or excitement in using a downrigger. Come on! Be fair to the fish. The only time we use rod holders in the boat is when a cuppa is had.

Any opportunity to catch and play fish on light gear is a real attraction.

If downriggers were legalised, why not legalise spears?

Have used downriggers in North America and in salt water fishing and found they can be quite productive at times.

I am reluctant to see people fishing with rod holders or other mechanical equipment. They take the skill away from an exciting sport.

A great help to the aged and arthritic.

Would like to give it a go, depending on the price of the gear.

Should downriggers such as this one, demonstrated by Fishery Manager John Gibbs, be permitted in the Taupo fishery?

Photo: Len Birch



" ... "

Trout are increasingly becoming the victims of technology and less the victims of skill.

Would greatly enhance the sporting side of trout fishing. Wire lead lines are a necessary evil to enable friends and visitors to catch a Taupo fish.

Not only will the trout harvest be higher but the mortality rate of released fish is too high which will result in less fish caught.

I have used downriggers on Lake Superior, USA, and am convinced their use would increase the sport and thrill of catching trout.

This lead line fishing is basically boring compared with light line fishing. The first fish I caught on lead line I didn't even know it was on! I'm into increased entertainment value, especially with the licence fee at \$46.00!

If downriggers were legalised I would like to see wireline fishing made illegal.

Downriggers in my opinion will be mostly to the advantage of the commercial fishermen and the well-off.

Downriggers are not necessary. The amount of fish landed at the moment is sufficient.

If introduced, I consider a maximum fishing depth of 35 metres impossible to police. The major benefits of downriggers are to 'commercial' operators who are only interested in filling clients 'bags' and their own pockets as quickly as possible.

Couldn't be bothered with this bulky gear.

Would like to see a further substantial improvement in fishing before the introduction of any new fishing methods.

High cost and potentially high harvest will disadvantage those with modest means as against the professional 'meat hunters'.

As an angler I feel that downriggers will make trolling more enjoyable and as you say the daily bag limit will ultimately restrict the total catch.

The harvest of trout from Lake Taupo is surely enough at the present time. This is simply another method to get a line deep to trout which may well remain too deep for normal trolling.

I think it would be great to be able to fish with light tackle all year round.

Only for use by private fishermen. Not for guides/tours, etc.

I like the idea of a sanctuary being provided for the fish in the deeper water. Commercial fishermen will exploit the situation to the detriment of continued good fishing on Taupo.

Good for the rich - not for the average fisherman.

Although I support the move, I feel that we are tending to make the catching of our great sporting fish too easy.

It's basically unsporting and will favour the rich who can afford expensive gear.

WINTER HUNTING SUMMARY

Compared to the previous two winters, 1993 was relatively mild in the central North Island. Although there were three periods of heavy snow storms through the winter months, temperatures on average were above those of 1991 and 1992, while rainfall was well down, Taupo recording its driest September since 1962.

Spring is now well underway in the region. While the growing season in the high country will not start until well into November, things look good for a better season this summer. However, the bush is unseasonably dry at present and we could do with a lot more rain yet!

Just over 1400 hunters obtained permits for the winter (June-September) period this year, down slightly on previous winters. As at 20 October, 350 hunters had returned diaries. Only 25% of these hunters recorded a kill and 30% reported 'no hunting done'. This trend follows similar patterns to other years, game being difficult to locate in winter and numerous hunting trips being cancelled due to weather.

The deer that were harvested were generally reported to be in good condition though little hunting effort was recorded from the higher altitude habitat. It is likely the milder winter has had greatest influence in these areas. Fawn survival is likely to have been a bit better this winter but we expect fawns/yearlings to remain on the small side again this spring. This was certainly the case last year. The number of barren hinds in the high country is likely to remain high due to another poor summer following the winter of 1992, especially hinds that have yearlings at foot. Raising a fawn in a poor growing season is very stressful on a breeding hind. Fawning rates and yearling size should remain good in the lower country.

The data obtained from the diaries received this winter is summarised in table 1. No one block stands out as having been particularly productive. Those who have a good knowledge of the areas they hunt tended to fare best and there were results from most areas for small numbers of hunters.

Reports suggest the northern Kaimanawas, away from the traditionally popular access provided by Clements and Kiko Roads, are holding good numbers of game at present.

TABLE 1

June-September 1993

Table 1 - Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy Recreational Hunting Summary

Area	Block	Days Hunted	Encounters				Kills				Kills/Day
			Sika	Red	Pig	Goat	Sika	Red	Pig	Goat	
Kaimanawa Recreational Hunting Area	All 1992 Figures	240.0	142	4	3	-	24	1	2	-	0.113
		343.0	236	11	5	-	54	1	1	-	0.163
Kaimanawa Forest Park (excluding RHA)	All 1992 Figures	179	99	20	9	-	31	10	2	-	0.240
		215	130	38	2	-	35	9	2	-	0.214
Tongariro National Park	All 1992 Figures	89.5	4	47	1	-	1	22	1	-	0.268
		105.5	8	46	3	-	4	16	-	-	0.190
Tongariro Forest	All 1992 Figures	129.5	-	31	2	181	-	11	2	*104	0.903
		103.5	-	53	4	34	-	18	3	12	0.319
Erua Forest	All 1992 Figures	19	-	5	1	30	-	3	1	10	0.737
		19.5	-	10	-	9	-	4	-	6	0.513
Rangitaiki Forest	All 1992 Figures	8.5	4	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	0.235
		11.0	1	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lakeshore Reserves	All	5	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	0.200
Unspecified Returns	Whole Conservancy	82.5	-	-	-	-	4	6	-	-	0.121
Totals	Whole Conservancy	753.0	-	-	-	-	61	54	9	114	0.316
	1992 Figures	887.0	-	-	-	-	93	59	6	18	0.198

(* includes kills from Taumarunui Rod Rifle and Gun Club shoot which was in October last year.)

Rangataua Forest, perhaps as a result of improved access, or due to disturbance by the logging activity in the area recently, has been one of the more productive areas to date this year.

Both these areas should provide plenty of venison over spring.

Winners of the diary prize draw for the June-September 1993 period were as follows:

AIR TRANSPORT WITH HELISIKA: John Twizell, Hamilton

AIR TRANSPORT WITH LAKELAND HELICOPTERS: Brett Pocock, Auckland

AIR TRANSPORT WITH AIR CHARTER, TAUPO: Graham Scanlen, Taupo

AMMO FROM NZ AMMUNITION CO.: Peter Hunn, Wellington

SPORTSGOODS FROM FLY & GUN SHOP, TAUPO: Gavin Dempsey, Taumarunui

ACCOMMODATION AT SIKA LODGE: Kurt Briggs, Auckland.

A further 10 hunters also receive free copies of this issue of Target Taupo.

Thanks to those hunters who so diligently provide feedback on their hunting via the hunter diary system. As well as helping to assess trends in game abundance and distribution, valuable information is obtained on hunting patterns and from your personal comments. Please keep this feedback up. It is important that we continue to receive your views on all aspects of conservation management.

To those hunters who are still awaiting results of analysis from jaws submitted earlier in the year, please bear with us - we are doing our best.

Thanks for your continued support and have a great summer! ■

DON'T TALK ABOUT IT - DO IT!

Get any group of anglers together, whether it be on the river bank or at the bar, and you will hear opinions expressed on all aspects of the Taupo fishery. Many of the opinions will be well thought out and put quite forcibly. A lot of the comment will be about what is wrong with the fishery and its management. However, do we, as fishery managers, ever receive this comment? Not very often.

There is a perception amongst many anglers that buying a licence absolves that person from any further responsibility as far as input into the management of their fishery. Well, if you're happy to let us make all the decisions which affect your fishery, including how the fishery caters for you, then we will. However don't then turn around and complain you aren't getting what you want. The general election provides a good analogy. If you don't exercise your right to vote then you have no right to criticise what you get.

Over recent years we have put more and more effort into trying to get information in front of anglers so that they are aware of what is happening in the fishery and what the opportunities are for input. We believe, on the basis of the ever growing response to such publications as 'Target Taupo', the annual newsletter and our special reports, that we are getting closer to this goal. However, despite our best efforts, some effort on the part of each individual angler will always be required to ensure that he or she is up to date with the latest information. Far too many expect to be spoonfed.

For example a lot of effort has gone into preparing the draft management plan which will provide a prescription for how the Taupo fishery will be managed over the next 10 years. We have really tried to make it a working document which defines what our policy will be on every issue, e.g., payment for access, controls for overcrowding. Despite advertising widely both the discussion paper and forthcoming draft plan, less than 0.2% of all licensed Taupo anglers have approached us for a copy.

This lack of interest must mean you are all totally happy with what we are doing??

About now some of you are probably ready to let us know what you're really thinking. Great, but how do you ensure we will take notice? A ranting tirade

may well make you feel better but it will struggle to get past the round file beside our desks.

A few simple rules will ensure your submissions always get our full consideration.

1 You don't let us get away with any sort of exaggeration or unsubstantiated claim, and rightly so. However, we expect the same in return. List facts to support your argument where you can and do not be afraid to acknowledge where you can't. Avoid claims like 'studies overseas prove...'. If you are aware of a study then cite it. For example, one of the first things we did when we started to look at the mortality of fish released after capture was a world-wide literature review. Countless studies have been done but with the exception of a current researcher in Canada nothing had been done on deep trolling methods as used at Taupo. When we then received several responses on downriggers, justifying their claims by using the above phrase, you can imagine our scepticism.

Similarly, claims like 'the fishery will be destroyed' or 'everyone agrees' should be avoided because they are just not true. Can you ever imagine all anglers agreeing on everything?

2 Try to be constructive in your comments. It is very easy just to be critical but what does that really achieve for the good of your resource?

3 Avoid personal or abusive attacks on the management team. We are putting the issues in front of you so that you have an opportunity for input. If you don't agree with a proposal that's what we want to know but we don't appreciate being abused for offering you the opportunity.

Taking time to put pen to paper or to pick up the phone is time that could be spent fishing but it all comes down to how much you really value involvement in the decisions which affect your fishery. ■

BITZ 'N' PIECES

TAUMARUNUI ROD & RIFLE CLUB - ANNUAL GOAT HUNT

Taumarunui Rod and Rifle Club has been holding an annual goat hunt in the Tongariro Forest for several years now with the Department of Conservation sponsoring the prizes. The hunt was held this year on the weekend of 25-26 September.

The main effort for the weekend was on Saturday with 38 hunters turning out including two DOC staff from Whakapapa. The weather was not ideal for goat hunting, being very cold with some light rain showers. However, 69 goats were shot and, for some hunters, the bonus of four deer. A barbecue was held at Owhango late in the day.

On the Sunday a few keen hunters continued to hunt in better weather getting another 11 goats in the morning.

The top prize for the Sporting Life trophy plus a \$20 sports shop voucher was won by Kerry Bell. There were another nine prizes of sports shop vouchers sponsored by the Department of Conservation.

The goat population in Tongariro Forest requires continual control measures by the Department of Conservation with staff, aerial shooting and recreational hunters all adding to the annual tally. A weekend such as this makes a good contribution towards the reduction of numbers. One of the advantages of the weekend is the chance for novices to spend some time with more experienced hunters.

KAIMANAWA WILD DOGS

Two dogs fitting the description of the dogs reported from the Tauranga-Taupo waterfall area in April this year were destroyed by a farmer some 18km away in August. The white bull terrier cross (dog) and brown foxy cross (bitch) were caught chasing domestic stock. Both were in excellent condition. This incident highlights the need for hunters to take care with dogs when hunting in the bush. These animals were loose for at least five months and their good condition suggests they were finding plenty of food. Unfortunately they were disposed of down an offal pit before their stomach contents could

be inspected (for feathers, fur, etc.). The ridgeback cross reported to have been with these two dogs originally is still unaccounted for so hunters are asked to report any stray dogs they encounter this spring/summer.

HELICOPTER DEER RECOVERY - KAIMANAWA FOREST PARK

A green and white Robinson R22 helicopter, registration ZK-HBW, ID letter 'S' (painted white on the black rotor turret) has been granted a three month permit to recover deer from steep wind-damaged terrain in the Waiotaka, Whitiakau and Waimarino catchments north of Waipakihi Hut this spring. The operation is aimed at assisting the recovery of the wind-damaged beech forest in this area. Between 5000 and 6000 hectares of Kaimanawa Forest Park are involved. No other helicopter hunting activity is permitted on conservation lands within the conservancy. If hunters observe any machines hunting outside of this area we encourage you to provide details to the Turangi office as soon as possible.

Further illegal activity is expected in the Tongariro Forest/Upper Wanganui area this season. Information passed on quickly will give enforcement staff a better chance of apprehending offenders.

PRIZE DRAW FOR SIKA AND RED DEER DIET STUDY

Since late 1992 all recreational hunters who provided rumen samples and jawbones for the comparative diet study of sika and red deer have been entered into a prize draw for Fairydown outdoor equipment. There were 89 valid entries when the prize draw was made in mid-September (58 from the Kawekas, 30 from the Kaimanawas, and one from the Ahimanawas). As expected, most samples came from sika deer (79 samples) since they are more numerous in the areas being studied.

The lucky winners of Fairydown equipment are:

- 1st (Cobra sleeping bag - value \$430) : Aaron Parkes, Auckland
- 2nd (Endeavour pack - value \$400) : Terry Christison, Napier
- 3rd (Polar fleece jacket - value \$150) : Joe Pearson, Napier.

Since 1989 when the study began recreational hunters have supplied a total of 398 samples; the table shows where the samples have come from.

Area	Sika deer	Red deer	Total
Kaimanawa	161	22	183
Kaweka	131	28	159
Ahimanawa	35	13	48
Area Unknown	8	0	8
Total	335	63	398

All 398 rumen samples have been sorted by plant species, each component dried and weighed (to standardise the results), and the data entered into a computer. Detailed analyses of this information are now underway to see what similarities and differences exist between the diets of sika and red deer in the central North Island.

There are still a few rumen sampling kits at DOC offices and back country huts, so if you are doing any spring hunting we would be grateful for any further samples.

Congratulations to the prize draw winners, and thanks again to all those hunters who have supported the study by supplying rumen samples and jawbones.

Wayne Fraser

Scientist

Landcare Research NZ Ltd.

WAIMARINO PIG HUNTERS' CLUB WEEKEND CLEAN-UP

On the weekend of the 14/15 August 1993 the Waimarino Pig Hunters' Club was invited by Winstone Pulp International to hunt Karioi Forest. The Department of Conservation gave permission for the hunters to also hunt the adjoining Rangataua Forest. This Winstone Pulp International initiative provided a unique opportunity for pig hunters to have a major impact on the feral pig population in these two forests. Twenty-four teams ranged over the area in search of pigs.

Feral pigs in this area are thought to have originated from several sources. About 1985, six pigs were released in Karioi Forest by some enterprising individuals, and sporadic escapes of domestic pigs from an adjoining farm

have helped to bolster the population. The present range of this population seems to have an upper limit of 950 metres above sea level and is confined by the Whangaehu River to the east, State Highway 49 to the south, and farmland surrounding Mangateitei Road to the west. The population has been slow to grow and factors which could be limiting the build up are:

Climate - the severe winters may be affecting the frequency at which a sow can breed and could contribute to a high mortality rate in the young;

Vegetation - the red beech/silver beech forest of Rangataua Forest does not appear to provide a year-round food source for the pigs. Because of this the pigs seem to favour the pine plantations of Karioi Forest with the occasional vagrant wandering into the sight of a deer hunter's rifle in Rangataua Forest.

A small number of pigs were taken from these forests over the weekend. Initial observations from the size and number of pigs caught indicate that the present population is still small and probably in the establishment stage.

The Waimarino Pig Hunters' Club was formed to promote the sport of pig hunting within the Waimarino area. The club is active in ensuring that the feral pig population in the Winstone Pulp International-controlled Waimarino Forest is managed on a sustainable basis for present and future generations of Waimarino residents.

The 84-member club is a family oriented organisation in which grandparents, parents and children all actively hunt. It has an organised hunt in the Waimarino Forest once a month, and provides a free service to farmers. Local farmers can contact the club to arrange for problem pigs to be removed from their properties.

Thirty to forty percent of the club's members are hunting at least twice a week with most of the pork being donated to different organisations. A 'Special Allocations Committee' distributes pork to local marae, senior citizens and sporting bodies.

Because of its reputation, the Waimarino Club probably has the most open access of all pig hunting clubs in New Zealand. Its main hunting area is the Mangapurua/ Mangatiti valleys of the Whanganui River and the Waimarino Forest.

If you live in the Waimarino area and are interested in gaining more information about the Waimarino Pig Hunters' Club, contact Robert Hawira of Raetihi.



Some of the pigs taken during the Waimarino Pighunters' Club weekend clean-up, 14-15 August.

If you need this level of track marking to avoid getting lost, stay out of the bush (story, page 20).





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BEDAZZLED!!

A unique bush system of regulating heavy traffic flows you may ask? No! Just another example of an unsightly impact by recreational users of our natural environment.

Education is slowly succeeding in terms of reducing the construction of bush bivvies and the incidence of unsightly rubbish filled campsites but the use of 'dazzle' spray paint (in an endless variety of colours) by hunters and trampers to mark routes through the bush is on the increase.

The photograph on page 18 was taken recently in the Little Waipa Catchment of the Kaimanawa Forest Park. Unfortunately this area is only one of many within the forest park to have suffered a similar fate and consequently it is difficult to go for a hunt or tramp off main tracks and not encounter this type of unsightly mess.

Commercial possum hunters started the "track in a can" over ten years ago but it is hunters who are now the chief culprits. The Department of Conservation suggests that those hunters who have difficulty finding their way in the bush invest in a navigation course, a compass and the appropriate maps rather than resorting to a can of spray paint.

As with 'blazing' trees, the practice of spray painting trees is unsightly, unacceptable and illegal on the public conservation estate.

Hunters, please take a little more care of the unique resource which we should all be aiming to protect. We need to hand it on to subsequent generations in as unspoilt a state as possible.

HELICOPTER ACCESS, RANGITIKEI REMOTE EXPERIENCE ZONE

A total of 77 hunters from 20 hunting parties have booked an opportunity to hunt from three helipads in the Rangitikei Remote Experience Zone this spring, between 30 October and 12 December. This should result in an estimated 300 days of hunting effort and, at present harvest rates, account for some 100 deer. If the majority of hunters supply jaws from animals harvested, a good snapshot of the current status of the population will be obtained. Habitat data suggests the current population is having a major impact on the diversity of plant species growing in the understorey. The valley floor and adjacent terrace country is of particular concern where all palatable and semi-palatable plant species between 10cm and two metres tall have been browsed off.

TAUPO FIELD CENTRE UPDATE

No, we have not disappeared off the face of the earth in Taupo despite some confusion of late as to just where the field centre has ended up after the sale of the Taupo Native Plant Nursery.

Rest assured, we are still here and have now moved into our new office, still within the nursery grounds next to Fletcher Woodpanels, so it is business as usual. The new address and telephone numbers are as follows:

Taupo Field Centre
PO Box 528
TAUPO

Telephone (07) 378 3885
Facsimile (07) 378 3886

Pop in and say 'hi' if you're in town.

HUNTERS BEWARE!

Reports have been received recently of people spotlighting on Clements Road. This is a very dangerous practice and will lead to prosecution.

It is clearly stated on hunting permits that hunting after the hours of darkness is prohibited within DOC areas and it is an offence to hunt without a permit.

We urge every member of the hunting fraternity to ensure that you have the appropriate permits (most of you already do) and take the time to actually read the conditions printed on them.

Happy and safe hunting.

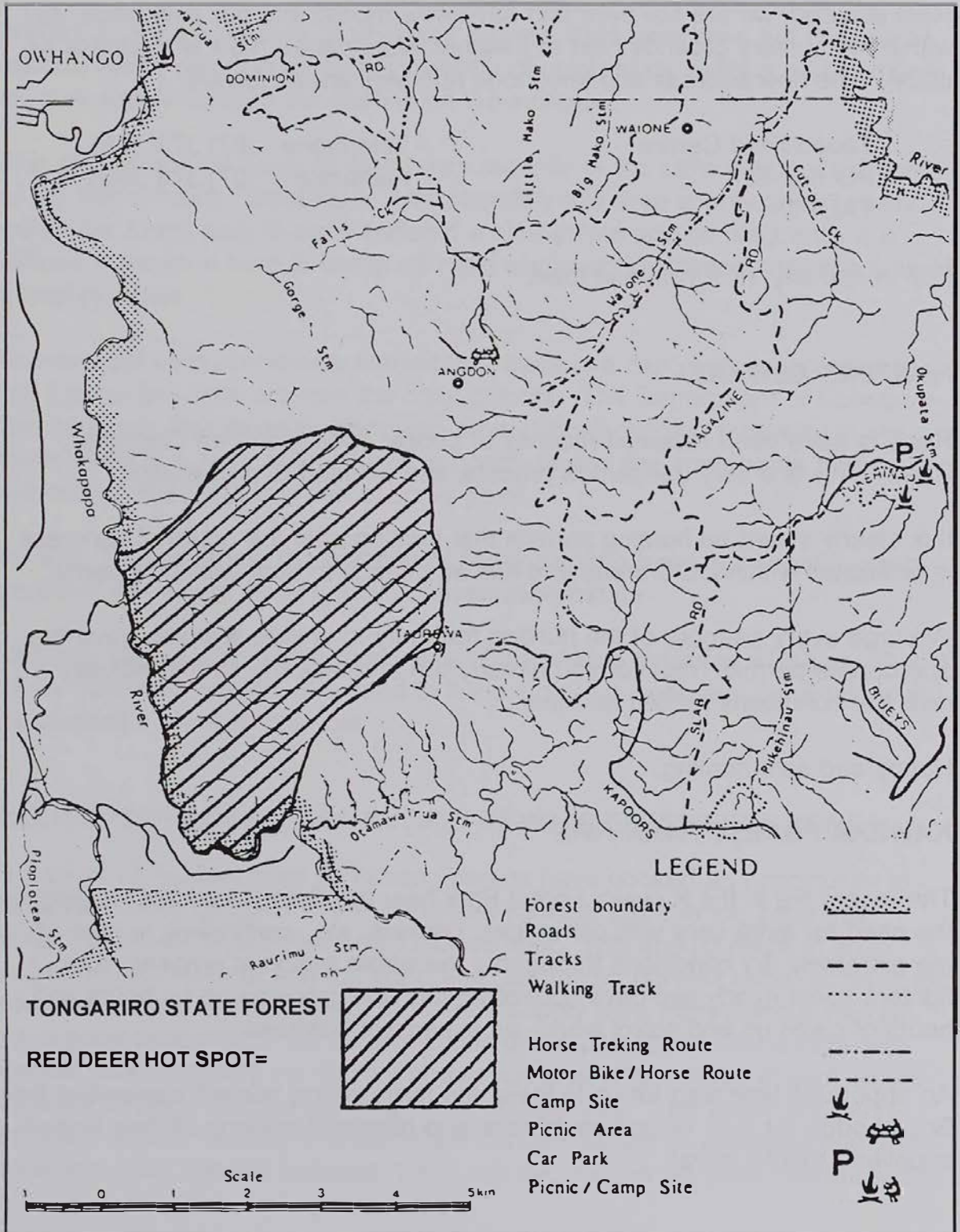
KAWEKA FOREST PARK FIRE

The recent fire in the Kaweka Forest Park near the Gold Creek area highlights the need for extra care with camp fires, cookers, etc., particularly in view of the extremely dry conditions throughout the whole region at present. Fire fighters spent nearly two days controlling this one, followed up by hours and hours of clean up and patrol work - an expensive business.

An opportune time also for us to thank the three young hunters camped at the Boyd Lodge for their valued assistance and generous sharing of their limited supplies - thanks guys!

RED DEER HOT SPOTS

Aerial goat control operations through the winter months have highlighted a build up of red deer on the western (Whakapapa River) side of "Blue Hill" in Tongariro Forest.



This area is forested in a mix of tawa, ponga and big podocarps, is very open in its understoreys and currently offers some of the best red deer hunting prospects in the conservancy. Access is difficult as private farmland protects the best routes into the area from the west, but the Kapoors Road Quarry does offer legal and unrestricted access from the east for the more adventurous. Goat numbers are still quite high in this area and small numbers of pigs also occur.

The Whakaroa peninsula between Kinloch and Whakaipo Bay on the northern shores of Lake Taupo offers some of the closest red deer hunting to the township of Taupo. A fifteen-minute drive to Whakaipo Bay and a five-minute jaunt in a small boat gives access to this land.

The terrain is generally very steep along the lakeshore but small guts feed up onto flat plateaus covered in five finger, bracken fern and manuka vegetation. The understorey is quite open in places and red deer and pigs occur in good numbers. Taupo Field Centre staff are hopeful that the feral goat problem in this area is now eliminated but would welcome any information from hunters who encounter goats or goat sign in this block.

SOUTHERN CONSERVANCY UPDATE

Recent heavy snowfalls have turned what was shaping up to be a relatively mild winter with a good outlook for spring hunting into another winter like the past two around Ohakune way. Very few hunters have ventured far after game this winter but those who have put in a little effort have generally been rewarded. When spring does finally arrive hunters should keep their wits about them as it is likely deer will be popping up in all sorts of strange places due to the lack of hunting pressure.

Over the past four years considerable effort has been put into reducing the feral goat population in southern Erua Forest and in particular the Makara Block. Various methods of control have been employed including the voluntary assistance of the Waimarino branch of the New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association, contract goat hunters, aerial control using helicopters, and DOC staff. The result is that now only a small population of goats remain in this block. Conservancy staff are about to trial the use of a Judas goat with a radio transmitting collar attached to it to facilitate easier location of the small remnant mobs left in this area.

A joint DOC/New Zealand Employment initiative has meant that four possum trappers will be employed full time over the next 12 months carrying out

protective trapping and poisoning operations in areas containing threatened species such as rata, mistletoe, and *Pittosporum turnerii*.

During this winter the remaining stand of *Pinus contorta* in Rangataua Forest was felled. Ground conditions have prevented the extraction of this timber. Later this spring-summer when ground conditions improve this timber will be transported out of the forest. Hunters using the lower half of Rangataua Forest are advised to use caution when travelling or hunting through this area.

POOR RESPONSE TO TONGARIRO FOREST HUNTER QUESTIONNAIRE

Over the last 12 months a hunter questionnaire has been included with over 6,500 hunting permits issued for the Tongariro-Taupo Conservancy. This questionnaire sought more detailed information on hunting patterns in Tongariro Forest. Specifically we needed information on target species, the most popular areas of the forest for hunting, access needs in terms of track and road maintenance requirements, and the use of dogs.

To date 147 completed questionnaires have been returned, most by visiting hunters.

We are aware that around 11% of the conservancy's recreational hunting effort of 25,000 hunter days is expended in this forest and that about one-third of this effort is by local hunters. Yet local hunters have generally not supported the questionnaire.

According to the questionnaire data obtained, dog use in the forest is negligible; if you are ever in the forest over a weekend, however, you will see any number of hunters with dogs.

If the Department of Conservation is to effectively manage Tongariro Forest, it needs accurate information on these issues.

If you hunt Tongariro Forest and have not completed a questionnaire over the past 12 months, please contact us so we can send you one.

If you don't take this opportunity there may be changes to the way hunting is managed in Tongariro Forest which do not reflect your views.

Apathy is no excuse! Management is only as good as the information it has to work with.

TAUPO TRACKS UPDATE

At the time of writing, Clements Road and the tracks in the RHA are all in good order and a full track inspection will be undertaken shortly to assess work needed for the coming months. New track markers are also in stock now, ready to replace old permalat markers.

A full upgrade of the Spa-Huka walkway will also commence mid to late November.

Other tracks in the Taupo Field Centre area are all in good nick with some surface work done on Kawakawa Bay track.

RHA MONITORING PROGRAMME

Continued support for our RHA monitoring programme by way of deer jaws, gut samples, etc., and numerous reports of blue duck, falcons and a host of other information supplied to us by users of the conservation estate is encouraging and welcome, and we would take this opportunity to thank you all and wish you happy tramping and hunting, or just being, and all the best for the coming Christmas and New Year. ■

CHANGES IN THE LOWER WAITAHANUI RIVER

This winter we have received a variety of comments suggesting a decline in the numbers of fish entering the Waitahanui River and expressing concern over current angling practices in the lower river. It is always good to get your opinions and several of these letters reflect a lot of thought put into the issue.

In terms of a decline in numbers of trout running up to spawn we cannot agree. Other anglers spoken to have suggested the runs have improved on recent seasons and it is the perception of several of our officers who spend a lot of time in the headwaters of the Waitahanui over winter that numbers are up on last year when numbers also appeared high. It is, though, not an easy river to assess numbers in. The headwaters are characterised by fast flowing water and heavily overgrown banks and large stretches of the river are totally inaccessible. While this makes counting trout difficult, it also provides many trout with a sanctuary to go about their business undisturbed. Huge numbers of fry each spring are evidence of the success of their spawning.

Obviously from the comments a number of anglers feel the fishing is getting worse, yet we believe that trout numbers have actually increased over the last couple of seasons. This apparent contradiction makes us wonder if the behaviour of the migrating trout in the lower river is changing, making them less accessible in some way to the anglers.

Several long-time Waitahanui anglers have noted that the spawning runs appeared to move through the lower river much quicker in recent seasons.

Fishing on the lower Waitahanui River is now quite different to how it was traditionally practised. Perhaps most significantly of all, anglers as a whole are now much more aware under just what conditions spawning trout can be expected to enter the river. A strong south-westerly crashing in on the river mouth at any time during the winter and we'll see anglers lined up, sometimes shoulder to shoulder in the lower pools, awaiting the next run. As a consequence nearly every wave of fish, at least during daylight, must run the gauntlet of extreme angling pressure over the first several hundred metres of their journey from the lake.

Secondly, like elsewhere in the Taupo fishery, nymph fishing has become the most favoured way of fishing. Instead of being chest deep in the river swimming their wetflies or lures downstream, anglers now fish from the bank using brightly coloured indicators and invariably a pair of large glowbugs. It's not everyone's cup of tea but it is effective. If it wasn't, most of the proponents would probably still be using the more traditional techniques. As a consequence the harvest is likely to be increased but it is still restricted to the daily bag limit of three. This limit appears sufficient to ensure large numbers of spawning fish still reach the upper river. We are well aware that the limit is occasionally exceeded despite our efforts but that is hardly the fault of the nymph technique as is sometimes suggested. Those same people restricted to using a wetfly would still try to do it.

One negative aspect associated with the increase in anglers nymph fishing is that they have worn very defined tracks along the banks and have accelerated the slumping of the banks into the stream. As a consequence it is planned to construct permanent walk tracks designed to withstand this traffic, perhaps even with very small casting platforms on the stretch of river below the state highway bridge.

It is noticeable that in recent seasons anglers have cleared more and more of the overhanging vegetation in this stretch. Removing the blackberry does make it easier to fish, as if it isn't already easy enough, but this blackberry also serves to provide overhead cover for the resting fish.

Given the numbers of anglers standing on the banks silhouetted against the sky, continually casting brightly coloured lines and flies, it would not be surprising if the fish now feel very exposed and more reluctant to hold in the lower river than in the past.

Taupo trout, during their spawning migration, are extremely tolerant of disturbance compared to trout which spend their whole life in the river. One only has to look at the numbers of anglers passing through the more popular pools on the Tongariro and yet fish are still taken right through the day. Despite this there is a limit to what they will put up with.

It does seem plausible that the intense angling activity and lack of cover could be contributing to the fish moving through the lower river more quickly if that, in fact, is occurring.

Is this a problem?

Biologically we believe more fish could be taken on their migration up the Waitahanui River without threatening the sustainability of the fishery. A

number of anglers have suggested banning nymph fishing or glowbugs or similar in the lower river because they are catching too many fish! In reality what most mean is 'they are catching my fish'. The problem is not that the harvest is too great but that it is not shared more equitably through the river.

Can this be achieved?

Given the uncertainty over what changes, if any, have occurred in the way the trout run the lower river, any possible solutions should be kept at least initially quite simple. An obvious first step is to try and replace the overhanging cover in the lower river. If it was left undisturbed this would occur naturally very quickly and it is hoped by laying permanent tracks, perhaps with defined casting spots, that the rest of the banks will receive much less wear and damage.

Much of the damage, though, is deliberate and not confined to the Waitahanui either. We can put effort into trying to modify anglers' actions but unfortunately experience indicates many anglers couldn't care less. One option in the longer term could be to create overhead cover using permanent instream structures, e.g., overhanging banks laid on timber or iron and supported by piles.

Can we control the level of disturbance caused by the intense angling in the lower river? We are not sure there is a way or even that we want to do this. Regulating the number of people who can fish in the lower river at any one time would engender some interesting debate. Traditionally the approach has always been that within a set of constraints which apply to everyone all anglers holding current licences can go where and when they please.

Any change in this approach will require extensive debate by anglers. Before you inundate us with solutions think about the practicalities, including cost, of regulating when and where you can go to fish. It starts to get into some dangerous ground.

The recent popularity of nymph fishing hasn't gained favour with all Waitahanui anglers. Some have called for the method to be banned in the lower river. Things have certainly changed from 20 years ago when the late Budge Hintz and friends sought a regulation preventing anglers from wading below the bridge at all.

As discussed, calls to ban nymfing on the basis that the harvest by this method is too great cannot be supported. Another reason given is the danger to visitors in the car-park from anglers back casts. Such danger is hardly peculiar to nymph fishing. The car-park is there because people want to stop

and fish or watch the anglers. If angling were banned downstream of the bridge there would be no need for the car-park.

Whether an angler finds nymphing as practised at Taupo acceptable or not is a personal thing. This is one of those issues anglers need to debate amongst themselves, much like the use of glowbugs and the like. So long as there are no unacceptable biological impacts the use of the fishery has to reflect the aspirations and desires of the majority of anglers. These issues have stirred widespread debate over recent years but we are comfortable that most anglers at present believe that both nymph fishing and glowbugs have a place in the Taupo fishery.

The number of letters we have received about the lower Waitahanui River has certainly caused us to take a close look at what is happening there. We are comfortable about the numbers of fish passing through the river but changes in the time fish spend in the lower river may have occurred. Initially we intend to try to reduce the bankside damage and promote overhead cover. Depending on the success of this we may need to explore more complex solutions in the longer term. ■

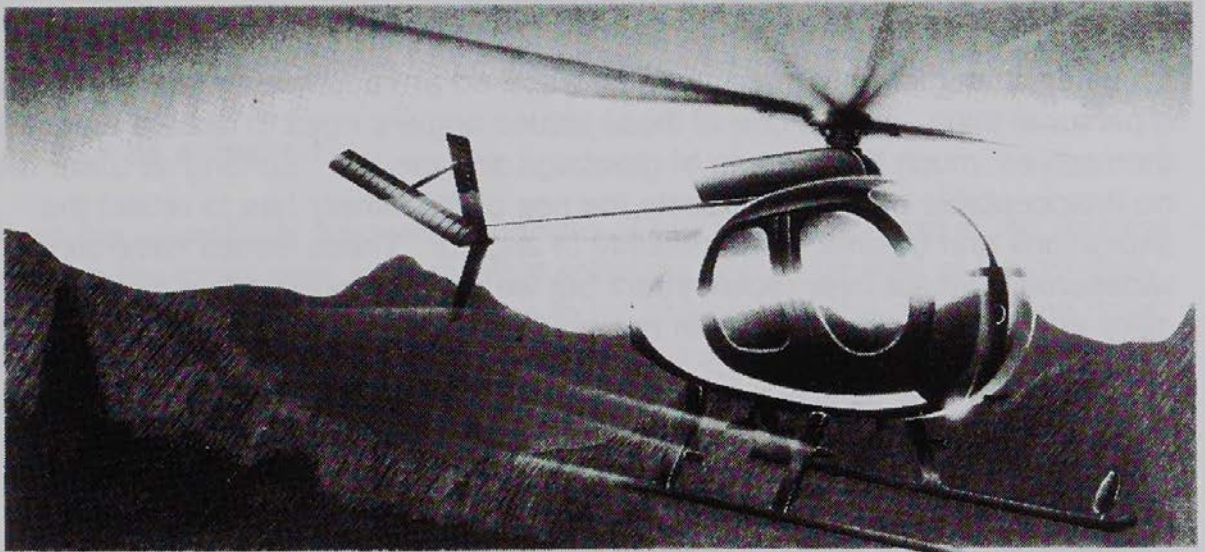
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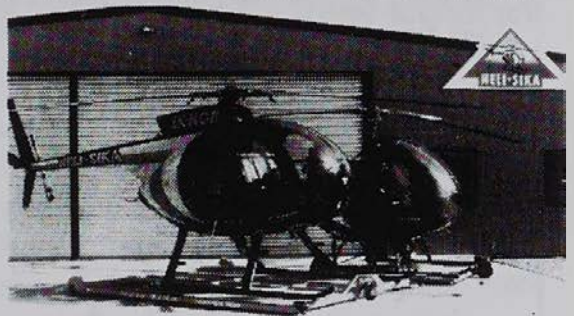
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RANGITIKEI

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RIPIA

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TAHARUA

– Brown trout, smaller fish, good numbers

TARUARUA

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SOMETHING FISHY

WINTER ANGLING SURVEYS

Many of you fishing on the Tongariro or Tauranga-Taupo rivers this winter may have been approached by a conservation officer and asked a series of questions about your angling experience. Such interviews are part of our annual angling survey designed to measure how satisfied you are with your resource and the opportunities it provides. This survey in its refined version is now into its third year and already some valuable information is coming from it. The results are summarised in table 1.

TABLE 1 Annual Angling Survey Data, 1991-93.

	TONGARIRO			TAURANGA-TAUPO	
	1991	1992	1993	1992	1993
CPUE (fish per hour)		0.27	0.3	0.32	0.41
RATING					
Size of fish		3.7	4.2	4	4.2
Quality of fish		3.8	4.3	4.1	4.3
Level of success		3.5	3.7	3.6	3.9
Level of enjoyment		4.3	4.8	4.8	4.8
DETRACTIONS (% of interviews)					
Overcrowding		8.5	29.4	21	9.9
Bad manners		6.9	12.1	3.5	3.3
Poor tracks		1.6	2	28	6
Lack of fish	18	1.6	0.8	7	1.6
Bag limit			0.8		0
Other		18	21.8	2	18.2
Nothing		65	32.7	38.5	59.4
Snags			0.4		1.6

Three hundred and thirty-one interviews were obtained on the Tongariro River and two hundred and sixty interviews on the Tauranga-Taupo River.

The average catch rate (number of fish caught per hour) is up slightly on last year despite the low clear conditions which prevailed this winter. Not since 1986 has the average catch rate reached 0.3 fish per hour in the Tongariro, plummeting to a low of 0.2 fish per hour in 1988. This improvement in the

fishery is reflected by anglers' ratings of the size and quality of the fish, their angling success and their enjoyment. Individual anglers were asked to rate each of these using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is terrible and 5 is excellent. These responses were then averaged and are also presented in table 1.

Apart from rating their level of success between 'Acceptable' (3) and 'Good' (4) the other criteria all rated between 'Good' (4) and 'Excellent' (5). The large size and excellent condition of the trout has been a feature of the spawning runs this season. Most pleasing is that Taupo anglers rate their enjoyment very highly. This is, after all, our ultimate management objective.

Anglers were also asked what, if anything, detracted from their angling experience. Table 1 indicates some interesting changes in recent seasons. Whereas 18% of anglers interviewed on the Tongariro in 1991 cited a lack of fish this was barely mentioned this year. However, overcrowding has become much more of a concern. Not since this mid-1980s have we seen such high numbers of anglers on the Tongariro, particularly early in the season (see article on angling behaviour on page 47).

Considering the success enjoyed on the Tauranga-Taupo angler numbers were not as high as we might have expected. We wonder if, while the regulars enjoyed good fishing, the very low clear conditions were too difficult for inexperienced anglers who chose to fish elsewhere. Quite a lot of adverse comment was received about people driving right to the Cliff Pool. While we don't encourage this, it is over private land and up to landowners to allow it or otherwise. From the comments several guides also appear to have got offside with many Tauranga-Taupo anglers. Simply having paying clients doesn't give you the right to push in ahead of other anglers.

This survey will be repeated on the lake over spring and summer. If you are approached by a conservation officer please give that person five minutes of your time.

TOILETS WITH A DIFFERENCE AT NATIONAL TROUT CENTRE

A two-place public toilet was completed at the Tongariro National Trout Centre earlier this year. Designed with an exterior to match the viewing chamber and set in bush near the entrance way, the toilets are fitted with two 3860-litre underground holding tanks which are pumped clean whenever they fill. The sewage is taken to the Turangi oxidation ponds. Besides bringing relief to thousands of visitors the design prevents the contamination of groundwater in this sensitive area.

In the first three months of operation around 9,000 people visited the centre and the single tank in operation was pumped out three times. If you work it out that's over 11,500 litres of it - quite a bit to be spread on or under the ground anywhere, let alone on the banks of important trout fishing and spawning waters.

The toilet block, with running water, lighting, easy-clean interior and a facility for the disabled has been hailed as a vast improvement over the previous dark hole adapted from an earlier fisherman's hut on the site. Its non-contaminating nature is seen as a big step in the right direction too - people who are compelled to leave more than a footprint can be reassured that they haven't!

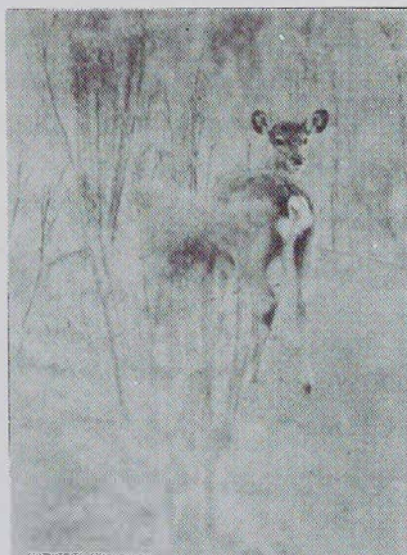
**DUCHESS
POOL ACCESS
TRACK**

The private road to the Duchess Pool has been closed by the landowners. To provide continued foot access to the Duchess Pool the Department has opened an anglers' walking track along the true left bank starting at Red Hut swingbridge. This walking track is within the 20 metres right of way and all licensed anglers are entitled to use it under the provisions of the 1926 Act.

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TAURANGA-TAUPO RIVER

The Department has received comments from anglers about people driving up past the Crescent to the Cliff Pool on the Tauranga-Taupo River. Anglers should be aware that the vehicle access is across private land and entirely at the discretion of the landowners. However, we take a dim view of vehicles being driven into or across the river. Under the Conservation Act it is an offence to disturb or damage spawning grounds and carries a penalty of up to \$10,000 or one year's imprisonment. We have not used this statute before in respect to damage by vehicles - don't become the first!

WAITAHANUI CLEAN UP

Department of Conservation field staff, along with fishing guides John Johnson, Richard Patchett and Ron Burgin, had a recent clean up on the Waitahanui River. The majority of rubbish collected was household refuse. It is good to note that anglers themselves are slowly beginning to practise "Pack it in, Pack it out".



Conservation Officer Adrian Ngamotu standing amongst household rubbish thrown into a gully next to the Waitahanui River.

TAUPO DISTRICT FISHING LICENCE SALES

Sales for the 1992/93 season were:

Adult Season	10,275	Down 2%
Child Season	5,316	Up 4%
Adult Month	1,060	Up 6%
Adult Week	9,235	Unchanged
Adult Day	34,997	Down 2%
Child Day	5,896	Down 20%

An overall total of 66,779 licences sold, a drop of 2,301 from the previous season.

The top six agencies, with a total of 20,641 sales, were Chris Jolly Boats, Kinloch Store, Omori Store, Punch's Fishing & Watersports, Taupo Launchmen's Association and Te Rangiita Store.

Total sales for the first three months of this current season show an overall drop of 1% in all categories except Adult Season, which have increased by 9% over the same period last season.

KIDS' FISHING EVER POPULAR

Children's fishing days at the Tongariro National Trout Centre this year proved to be a strong attraction, although numbers overall were down by 2% on last year, following what appears to be a general trend in tourism in the area.

The fishing days are held once a month from May through September for children aged six to 14 years. Volunteers from the Tongariro and Lake Taupo Angling Club (TALTAC) and friends teach prospective anglers to handle a rod and cast a fly. Kids buy a licence if they don't already have one and are assisted (if necessary) to catch a trout from the pond. Children keep their catch and to mark the occasion are presented with a certificate recording its length and weight.

The pond is maintained and the trout are raised by Department of Conservation staff specifically for these occasions. This year the fish caught ranged from 200-950 grams and averaged 460g on the last day.

TALTAC organiser Bill Colston said this year's attendance was about average, ranging from 114 to 368. He was pleased with the support he received from

his band of volunteers, "...but it would be good to see a few younger ones coming through to ease some of the older backs," he said.

1994 dates set by TALTAC - all Sundays - are:

8 May	12 June
10 July	28 August
18 September.	

A TAUPO 'STAR FISH'

The award for the best television advertisement this year went to Saatchi and Saatchi for the Instant Kiwi advertisement in which a bungy jumper snatches a trout from the water next to two rather disdainful anglers.

The trout in the advertisement came from the Tokaanu Stream and the three-second glimpse of it being picked from the water took a lot of producing. Here's how it went. Flying Fish Films wanted a good male trout in Hamilton on a certain day at a certain time. Tongariro National Trout Centre staff obtained the trout and sent it north in an oxygenated tanker but half an hour after it had left someone from Flying Fish rang to say that they couldn't use it, could we bring one to Auckland in a few days time?

'Onward, upward and always at your service' is one of our mottos (and they said they would pay), so the first trout was returned to Tokaanu and the second was later caught and dispatched in a tanker full of water enough to carry 100 trout, and towed to Auckland where it spent the night.

Most of the next day was spent filming. To get the desired 'take' the trout had to be lightly anaesthetised to prevent it struggling and the water had to be coloured to approximate the outdoor scene. The hands had to be integrated with the bungy jumper's plunge.

After another night in Auckland the trout was returned to the Tokaanu Stream and released.

TONGARIRO TRAPPING

Trapping trials continued in the lower Tongariro during August and early September and resulted in 87 fish being tagged.

Of this total, 29 were tagged over 3 and 4 September, before a flood damaged the trap by scouring major holes under the bed logs in two places and shifting one bed log downstream half a metre. The holes have been slow in silting up and compacting, delaying reinstatement of the barrier and the fixing of another bed log to the true left bank.

However, we are slowly coping with the changes in flow and depth and improving the design. A third cage has been made up to enable trapping on both banks and in the centre and we are now more confident that we will eventually win.

The Whitikau trap is working well, capturing 1642 fish between 7 September and 11 October when the barrier was lowered to enable kelts to pass freely downstream. Six tags have been returned by anglers and three recovered at the Whitikau trap.

One trout tagged in the lower Tongariro site on the afternoon of 4 September was caught and released in the Fence pool on 30 September and recaptured in the Whitikau trap three days later.

The three fish recovered in the Whitikau trap were 32, 33, 34 days from tagging in the lower river. Of the angler-caught fish, the quickest return was 9 days, caught in the Swirl Pool, and the longest 41 days, caught in the Jones Pool still downstream of the main highway bridge.

TAUPO FISHERY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

At the recent annual general meeting of the Taupo Fishery Advisory Committee, John Davis of the Taupo Fishing Club stepped down from the chair, having served in this capacity since the committee was first established in 1991. John felt that it was time for some "new blood" at the helm and we thank him for his chairmanship over the past two years. John will continue in his role as a committee member and we look forward to his much valued input.

To replace John Davis the committee has elected Graham Pyatt to the chair. Graham is a resident of Turangi and represents the Turangi/Tongariro chapter of Trout Unlimited New Zealand. We congratulate Graham on his election to the chair of the Fishery Advisory Committee.

A reminder to anglers that the Taupo Fishery Advisory Committee has been established by the Minister of Conservation to represent your views in the formulation of policy and the planning of management activities. As such, the

TFAC is the principal communication link between the fishery managers and you, the anglers. You can influence the direction of fishery management and in turn receive first hand information on the fishery status simply by being a member of one of the groups represented on the committee.

The groups represented on TFAC are:

Ngati Tuwharetoa
Taupo Commercial Launchmen's Association
Taupo Fishing Club
Waitahanui Anglers' Association
Tongariro and Lake Taupo Anglers' Club
New Zealand Professional Fishing Guides' Association
Turangi/Tongariro Trout Unlimited.

In addition, there is an independent representative speaking for national fishery issues. A representative from the national office of the NZ Fish and Game Council also attends meetings. Meetings of the Taupo Fishery Advisory Committee are held bi-monthly and the public may attend.

HOLDING FISH IN TEMPORARY POOLS

Isolated examples of anglers catching trout and holding them in temporary pools have been noted this winter. At the end of the day the angler then selects the best three fish and releases the others. This practice is both highly detrimental to the held fish **and illegal**. It is an offence to hold trout in captivity without written authority from the Director-General of the Department of Conservation, and to take trout from any waters where trout are held in captivity. Once the fish are confined in a holding pool they are deemed to be taken and form part of the daily bag limit. If the angler removes the fish at the end of the day from the pool without using a rod and reel, they commit further offences. These offences are associated with taking fish by net or the like. It could get very expensive!

FISH SALVAGE IN THE TAURANGA-TAUPO RIVER

In August fisheries staff salvaged twenty trout from an old side channel of the Tauranga-Taupo River. These fish had entered the channel during an earlier fresh and became stranded when the river level fell. Staff used a generator electric fishing machine to stun the fish which remained in the small pool. The fish were then netted, transferred to the fish tanker by bucket and released at the mouth of the river. Strandings are not uncommon following

freshes and anglers are asked to advise the Department if they come across any.



Staff and volunteers rescue trout stranded in a side channel of the Tauranga-Taupo River, August 1993.

COMPLIANCE NEWS

Lake Otamangakau, Lake Kuratau and the Kuratau River (above the dam) opened on 1 October. Reports to hand indicate a very quiet day. The open season continues through to 30 June.

In response to requests from anglers the winter limit boundary on the Waiotaka River has been sited a further 150 metres upstream of the current crossing known as Hautu Ford. This can be identified by the new sign on the true right bank.

A number of spawning streams in the Taupo Fishing District have been included in the list of waters where fishing is prohibited. They are:

- the Whanganui, Tutaeaua, Otutira, Otaketake, Waitotara, Waipehi and Te Whaiu streams, including the Whanganui River diversion outfall;
- all tributaries of the Waiotaka River and Mangamutu Stream;
- all tributaries of the Waitahanui River, excluding the Mangamutu Stream.

The new winter upper boundary and the fishing prohibitions are effective from 1 October 1993.

Some time ago we made mention of the placement of 300-metre markers at river and stream mouths. This programme is now complete.

All the markers are highly visible ringed white, black and yellow posts. They indicate the position of the river or stream mouth from which trolling anglers must keep at least 300 metres away.



Compliance Officer Bryan Taylor erects another of the new 300-metre markers.

Over winter, compliance and law enforcement operations have been directed towards vulnerable spawning streams around the lake.

As a result of these operations several people are facing a variety of charges relating to spawning fish. If convicted, offenders are liable to a term of impris-

onment of up to one year, or to a fine not exceeding \$10,000. Most of these offences are pursuant to the Conservation Act 1987. In addition, two vehicles, several nets and illegal implements were seized.

At a recent court case one offender was convicted on three charges involving spawning fish. He was fined \$400 and \$95 costs on each offence and forfeited the hand net to the Crown.

We are grateful to all our staff and to the honorary warranted officers who gave so much of their time to help and be available when required.

INFRINGEMENT NOTICES

Consideration is being given by DOC and fish and game councils to simplifying the processing of some fisheries offences.

At present considerable delays and costs occur between the time an offence is detected and its final resolution in court. Both these features may be reduced by using a system of infringement notices, or "instant fines", for selected lesser offences.

The essential advantages of such a system are seen as a saving of time and money where common and relatively minor offences are detected. The costs of preparing and taking court action are avoided and resolution of these offences is expedited for both the offender and DOC or the fish and game council. Equally, there is a saving of time for the already overburdened courts.

Instant fines make a useful alternative to diversion as a penalty for admitted "minor" offences. There is a practical distinction between having paid an infringement fee and having been convicted in a court, which may flow on in other aspects of a person's life, e.g., in job applications.

In the interests of justice - natural and statutory - as well as administrative efficiency, there are some essential constraints which should be incorporated in such a system.

This means that a person apprehended for one of these offences would have the option of having the matter dealt with through the normal court process, with the legal rights and obligations this entails. Alternatively, they could choose to accept an infringement notice and pay a fixed monetary penalty within a stipulated time.

Infringement notices would probably only be issued where the person admits the offence at the time. Even if they changed their mind later they could then opt for the normal court process.

Such a system is commonly used for minor traffic and parking offences and for offences under the Litter Act.

Serious offences, such as blatant poaching, would continue to be dealt with as at present through the courts.

Discussions are continuing with our legal advisors and the NZ Fish and Game Council. Any change to an infringement notice system would require an amendment to the Conservation Act and would be subject to full Parliamentary scrutiny. The Taupo Fishery Advisory Committee has also endorsed the proposal in principle.

SPAWNING COUNTS

Despite the unusually low river conditions which existed over most of the winter, monthly counts of fish in selected stretches of the Whiti-kau, Waimarino and Hinemaiaia rivers are on a par with last year. Numbers last year were the highest recorded since counts began in 1990 and appeared more than satisfactory to fully utilise the available spawning areas.

Not surprisingly, counts in the Whiti-kau up to September were slightly lower than the corresponding period last year but the September count this year was the largest count ever. During trapping trials in the Whiti-kau it was apparent that fish were constantly trickling through despite the less than favourable conditions. A feature of the runs has been the large size and excellent condition of the trout. For example, the average length of 926 trout through the Whiti-kau trap in September was 55.2cm. A sample of these averaged 1.95kg in weight.

This year a large stretch of the Waiotaka River has also been counted each month by members of the Turangi Chapter of Trout Unlimited. In future years we will be able to compare numbers in this stream also.

It seems to have been a rather good spawning season and hopefully weather and flow conditions over spring and summer will favour the growth and survival of the resultant fry and fingerlings.

TONGARIRO POWER SCHEME UPDATE

Good progress has been made in the lead up to the resource consent applications for TPD. The Fishery Working Party has completed and submitted its list of research issues. Three of these projects have been accepted by the management group for funding in the first round.

The three projects relate to impacts of the power scheme on fisheries in the Tongariro River below Poutu Intake, in Lake Otamangakau and the Whakapapa-Whanganui headwaters.

A further three fishery projects have been considered for funding in subsequent years.

Discussions have continued with ECNZ about the implementation of the Whanganui summer minimum flows and the ways of minimising the negative impacts of this on the Lake Otamangakau trophy fishery. The corporation has been very co-operative and has engaged consultants to assess various lake management and storage options. Consideration is being given to dredging the Te Whaiau, Otamangakau and Wairehu canals. This may allow quicker transfer of flood flows and make it feasible to hold the lake at a higher level over summer.

Our summer water quality monitoring programme on Lake Otamangakau has also begun. Temperature and dissolved oxygen levels are still well within the desirable range for trout.

One area where progress has been less than favourable is in reaching agreement on an interim flow regime in the Tongariro River below Poutu Intake. As explained in the last issue, while ECNZ have been managing these flows within the bounds of their operating rules, they have deviated significantly from the normal flows that prevailed in previous years. This has meant much lower water releases from Poutu Intake and unnaturally high discharge from Lake Rotoaira down the Poutu River.

The Department of Conservation and anglers argue that this variation is not in keeping with an understanding that the status quo would apply to flow management throughout TPD during the consultation process. ■

LICENCE CHECKS: HOW MUCH EFFORT IS NEEDED?

The management of the Taupo fishery is solely funded by licence revenue. Every angler who buys a licence is contributing to the upkeep of the fishery. Those who fish without a licence are poaching, free-loading on everyone else.

As managers it is in our best interests to ensure the highest compliance levels possible so that the costs of management are shared equitably and sufficient revenue is obtained to undertake necessary work.

A 1991 NRB survey of recreational fishing in New Zealand estimated that 30% of all anglers who had fished for trout or salmon in freshwater had never ever held a licence. Every fish and game management agency in New Zealand would surely welcome the extra revenue which would have accrued had each of these anglers held a licence.

Taupo fishery management has chosen to spend a significant proportion of its annual budget on compliance and enforcement activity. This includes licence checking. In spite of this, we frequently get comments that the compliance effort is not sufficient. Comments such as *"I've only been checked once in 20 years"* or *"I never see a ranger"* are regularly heard.

Despite this perception, however, very few anglers are prepared to take the chance of fishing at Taupo without a licence. In recent seasons, from thousands of licence checks, only one to two percent of all anglers checked were found not to hold a current licence. For example, of 839 anglers checked over the 1992-93 Christmas/New Year period, only two did not hold a licence. This suggests that the current compliance effort may be about right.

Therefore, in terms of maximising the revenue available to be put back into the fishery, there is little to be gained by employing more staff to undertake licence checks. Indeed, there would be a cost, because the more money that was spent on compliance, the less there would be to spend on other management activities such as research or angling track maintenance.

The trend in the number of non-licensed anglers is closely monitored and obviously if the percentage of unlicensed anglers increases it will be necessary to put more effort into licence checks to ensure greater compliance.

One of the strongest deterrents to fishing without a licence is the knowledge that you will be prosecuted if caught. There are no options such as to go out and purchase a season licence immediately. Instead you are looking at a fine of \$300-400 and forfeiture of your gear. An interesting development being pursued at present by the Department of Conservation and the NZ Fish and Game Council is the instigation of infringement notices for fishing without a licence and similar offences. (See "Something Fishy" for further comment).

An argument for greater numbers of rangers undertaking licence checks is that being checked and being able to produce a licence makes many anglers feel good about following the rules. It is one of those quirks of human nature that many people like it to be known that they have done the right thing. Being able to hand a current licence over is one such example. It is something we need to remember as compliance officers.

There are always exceptions to the rule but many times we can tell from an angler's manner whether he or she has a licence even before we ask. The tendency is not to ask those who obviously have a licence but some anglers may feel disappointed by this. It is important not to dismiss this out of hand. Increased licence checking may not benefit the management of the Taupo fishery but if it does make anglers feel more satisfied about how they perceive their licence money being spent then perhaps some additional cost is justified.

A common perception among anglers is that the number of officers undertaking licence checks is the total enforcement effort. Well don't count on it! There are 16 fisheries staff, most of whom are involved in some compliance and enforcement. Staff who rarely undertake licence checks may put in several hundred hours each in a year in much more covert enforcement activity.

Most staff are also keen anglers and frequently fish in amongst other anglers without them ever being aware that they have a ranger in their midst. It can be quite amazing sometimes how open we can be and still people don't realise who we are. This makes for some interesting and occasionally very funny moments.

The level of enforcement and compliance activity is yet another policy anglers have the opportunity to comment on in the forthcoming draft management plan. For a copy of this plan, when it becomes available, please contact the fishery planner at the address on the title page of this issue. ■



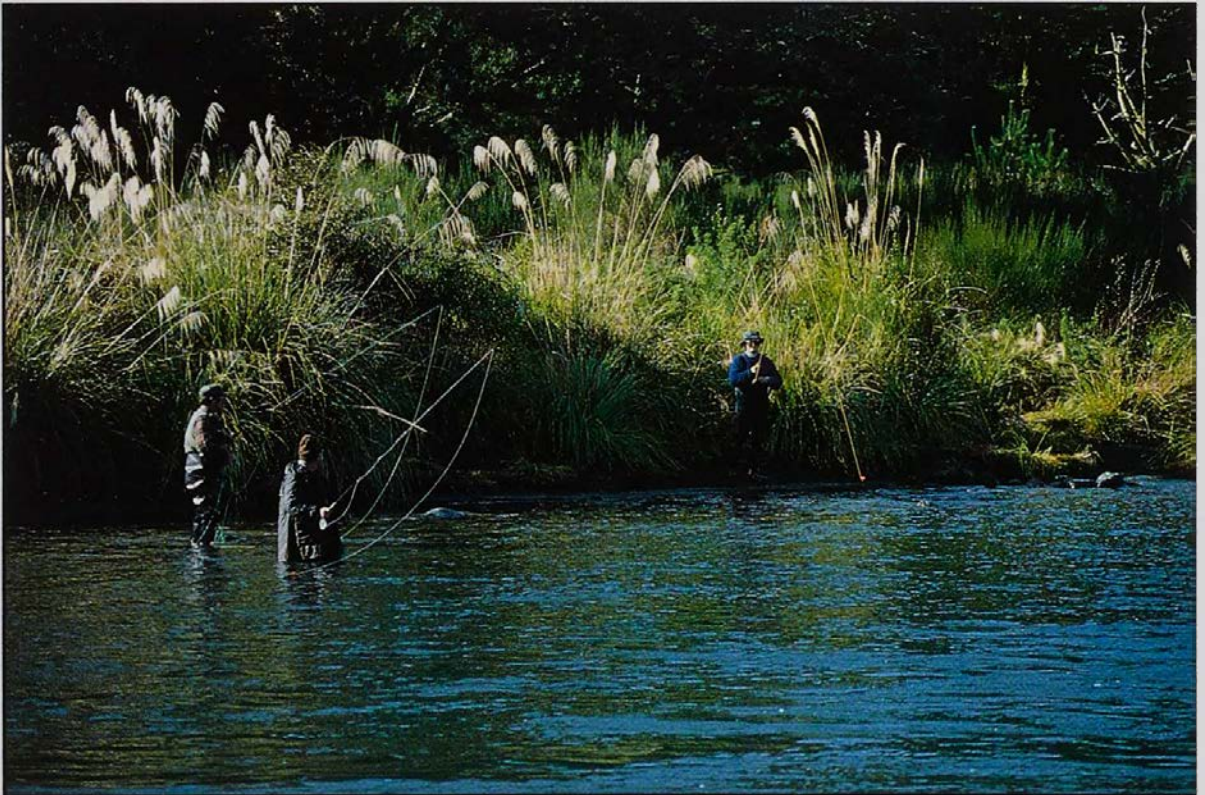
The cost of fishing without a licence can prove very expensive. The rod, reel and associated equipment may be forfeited and a substantial fine may be imposed. Photo: Len Birch

ANGLERS' BEHAVIOUR MUST IMPROVE

DOC staff interviewing anglers in the field have noted a large increase in the number of complaints about the lack of manners and other behaviour of some anglers. Those of us who fish consider that there is good reason for concern.

Most fair minded anglers throughout New Zealand would expect to be offered a long cold swim if they waded into water that someone else was fishing or crowded so close that they caught another's line with their own. Yet this type of behaviour has become a regular occurrence on Taupo rivers.

When the runs of large rainbows enter the rivers in winter anglers flock to the district in droves. Add to this the fact that the fish tend to rest up in groups in specific locations in the rivers and we have the perfect recipe for overcrowding. Once anglers learn where the fish are lying the word goes out and people congregate at these sites.



Common courtesies such as giving fellow anglers room to land their fish will increase everyone's enjoyment.

Photo: Len Birch

Under these circumstances it is necessary for each of us to be conscious of the effects of our behaviour on others. It is unacceptable for one angler to walk over the top of another or to be “breathing down another’s neck”. On a similar note, anglers who are fishing a spot should be aware that there are often many others waiting to take their turn. While there is no law which requires anglers to move, it is bad manners to hog the same spot indefinitely.

If people are prepared to talk to each other on the river and allow the rules of common courtesy to prevail, conflict situations will generally be avoided. It is worth considering that you should treat others in exactly the same way that you yourself would like to be treated. Because of the numbers of people involved, these points need more attention on Taupo rivers than perhaps anywhere else in the country.

An appropriate motto for Taupo rivers could be “Enjoy your fishing and help others to enjoy theirs”. The development of a spirit of co-operation and comradeship will minimise any potential conflicts that arise from the presence of large numbers of anglers.

Over to you, let’s all give each other a fair go. ■

THE EFFECT OF DEER POPULATION STRUCTURE ON FOREST CONSERVATION AND POTENTIAL DEER HARVEST

As a result of various processes which influence the Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy's deer herds, deer population structure is extremely variable from area-to-area.

Different population structures have varying impacts over time on habitat conservation, but more importantly from a hunter's perspective, population structure also plays a major role in determining both harvest and trophy potential.

This article looks at a range of deer population structures within the deer herds of the central North Island, the major influences responsible for such structures, and what can be expected from the various scenarios in terms of habitat conservation and harvest potential.

Deer population structure is generally influenced by three major factors and often these three factors are closely linked:

1 **Habitat Quality** - This has perhaps the most significant bearing on animal quality but it also has a major influence on fawn production and survival, and so plays a major role in determining the age structure of a population. Habitat quality varies considerably in the central North Island from harsh and hungry high altitude mountain beech forests on leached pumice soils to rich diverse lowland forest on fertile limestone country.

2 **Accessibility to Hunters** - The vulnerability of a deer population to harvest plays a major role in determining population structure. Different sectors of the population are vulnerable to harvest at different times of the year and the nature and distribution of the hunting effort will influence the survival of individuals.

3 **Population Size** - The size of a population, usually expressed in terms of animal density - or deer per square kilometre - relative to the carrying capacity of the habitat in which the herd lives, is the third major contributing factor to population structure. Animal quality declines when the population

increases beyond the carrying capacity of the habitat. This results in low conception rates, high fawn mortality and sometimes adult mortality as a result of disease or severe climate.

It is important to understand that all these influences are often related. For example, in an isolated mountain beech habitat in the central North Island where harvest is limited by difficult access or hunting conditions, a deer population could quickly expand to a level too great for this habitat type to sustain. Heavy winter snows or disease could cause mortality in very young and old year classes. This would have significant influence on population structure.

Deer populations are very dynamic and adapt quickly to changing influences in their environment. At any moment in time a deer population will be different to where it was at the same time last year, and different to where it will be at the same time next year. If a current New Zealand deer herd's annual progress was graphed it would show good years and bad years as a result of influences such as the size of the fawn crop each year, how harsh the winter was, how much money hunters had to spend on hunting trips, the price paid per kilogram for venison etc..

If the progress of a population released into suitable unstocked habitat were graphed and followed over time, in an unharmed situation, it would look something like figure 1.

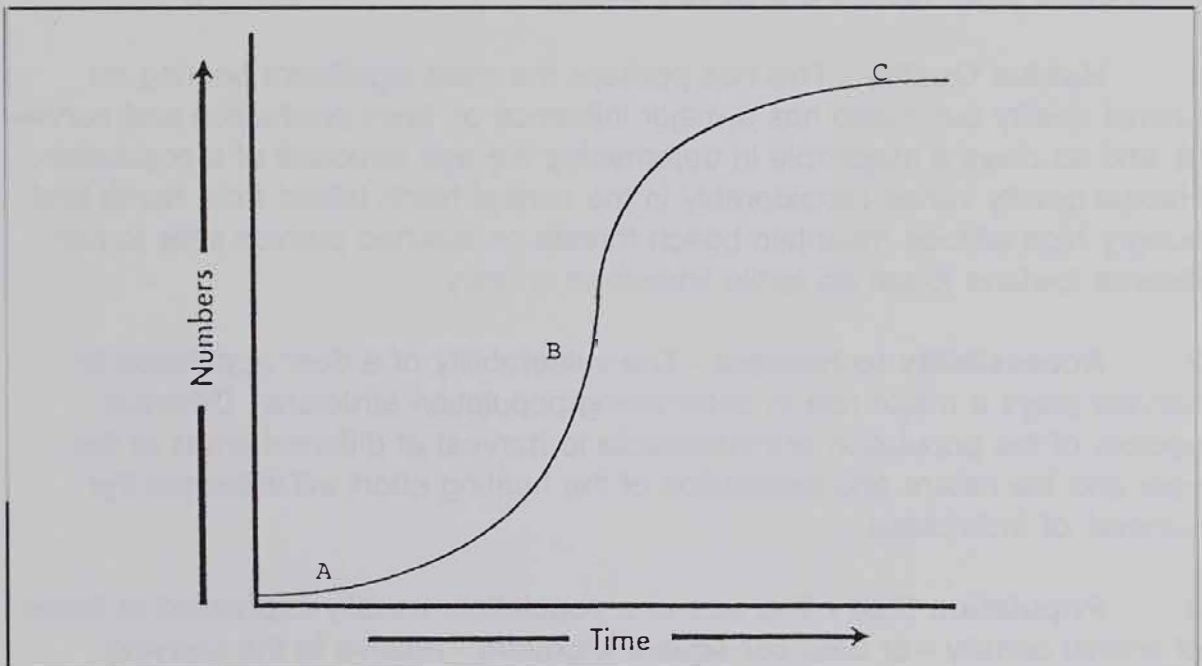


FIGURE 1 Population growth curve for a resource limited population.

At first the breeding base (number of females capable of breeding) is very low and the population grows slowly. This is represented by the gently sloping section (A) on the graph. Then as the breeding base begins to increase, the population starts to grow faster and faster. This is represented by the steep section (B) on the graph. The population grows to a point where it becomes limited by some resource necessary for the survival of individuals or successful breeding (e.g., food, nest sites, shelter). Growth slows and stops as reproduction is checked by a lack of the necessary resources. This situation is represented by the second flat section (C) on the graph.

This type of graph, usually called a sigmoid curve, is a standard biology textbook model for resource limited wildlife populations. The speed at which a wildlife population becomes resource limited and the timeframes in which this occurs depend on the organism's breeding strategy. Rabbits could become resource limited in a single season but for an un hunted deer population it takes about three to four years for the population to double. An increase of 35% per annum is considered high for wild deer.

While at any moment in time a deer population might be at any point on a sigmoid curve, deer population structures can generally be described in terms of the three categories A, B and C, shown on figure 1. Each situation offers different opportunities for hunters, and varying threats for native habitat conservation.

A Many hunters well know what deer populations falling into category A are like. While this structure is representative of New Zealand deer populations five to 10 years after release into the wild a hundred or so years ago, it also represents the herds that were commonplace in the late-1970s/early-1980s following a decade of commercialisation. A decade which saw every man and his dog and his horse, his helicopter and spotlight, out clobbering or catching every deer he could find. A decade that saw deer numbers throughout New Zealand drastically reduced, resulting in what I call the intensively harvested population age structure. Today many over-exploited deer populations have this structure. A hypothetical age structure of a deer population in this category is shown in figure 2, overleaf.

This type of deer population has one overwhelming feature. The deer are young. The hunting pressure is so great that very few deer escape to get past two or three years of age and seven or eight years can be considered a very old deer in such a situation - old age is not a contributing factor to deer mortality. But what does this mean for the hunter?

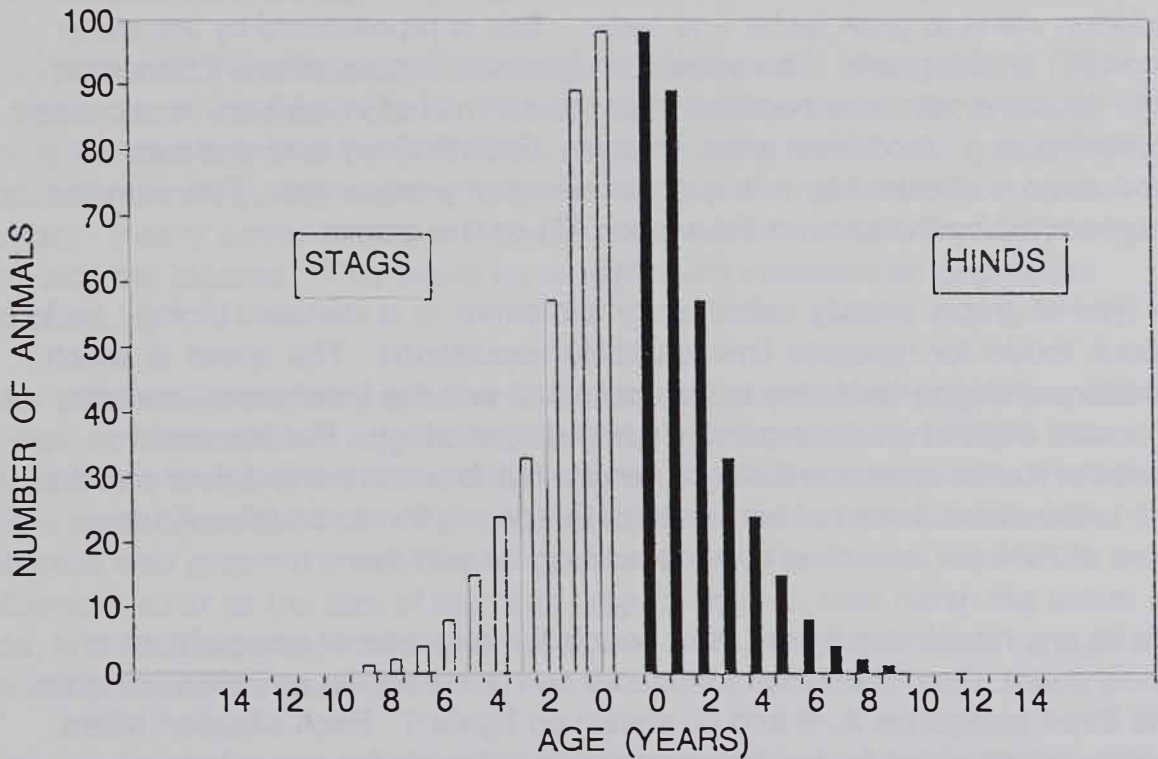


FIGURE 2 A hypothetical population structure of a developing/heavily exploited deer population.

Firstly, deer are in low density so are difficult to find. A knowledge of seasonal deer habits will result in small harvests by better hunters but younger or inexperienced hunters tend to struggle in this situation. Trophies are rare due to the young average age of the population. Normally stags don't reach their full trophy potential until six to nine years - an age difficult to attain under an intensive harvest regime.

On the plus side deer condition is excellent. Habitat quality remains high because numbers are low, which has very positive outcomes for conservation.

To compensate for such high mortality and as a result of the high quality of nutrition to be found by the herd, hinds generally mature and begin to breed early, many at just two years (i.e., hinds are recruited into the breeding base and serviced by the stag at just 18 months of age). This results in a very productive herd which produces the maximum possible fawn crop each year.

A real life example of red deer population in this category occurs on the western side of the Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy. This herd, which occupies the western flanks of Mount Ruapehu, Tongariro and Erua forests, is very accessible to hunters and is heavily exploited by intensive recreational hunting pressure, spot lighting and illegal helicopter harvest. Jawbones from over 450 deer have been collected from this population since 1987 allowing the age structure of harvested deer to be graphed (figure 3).

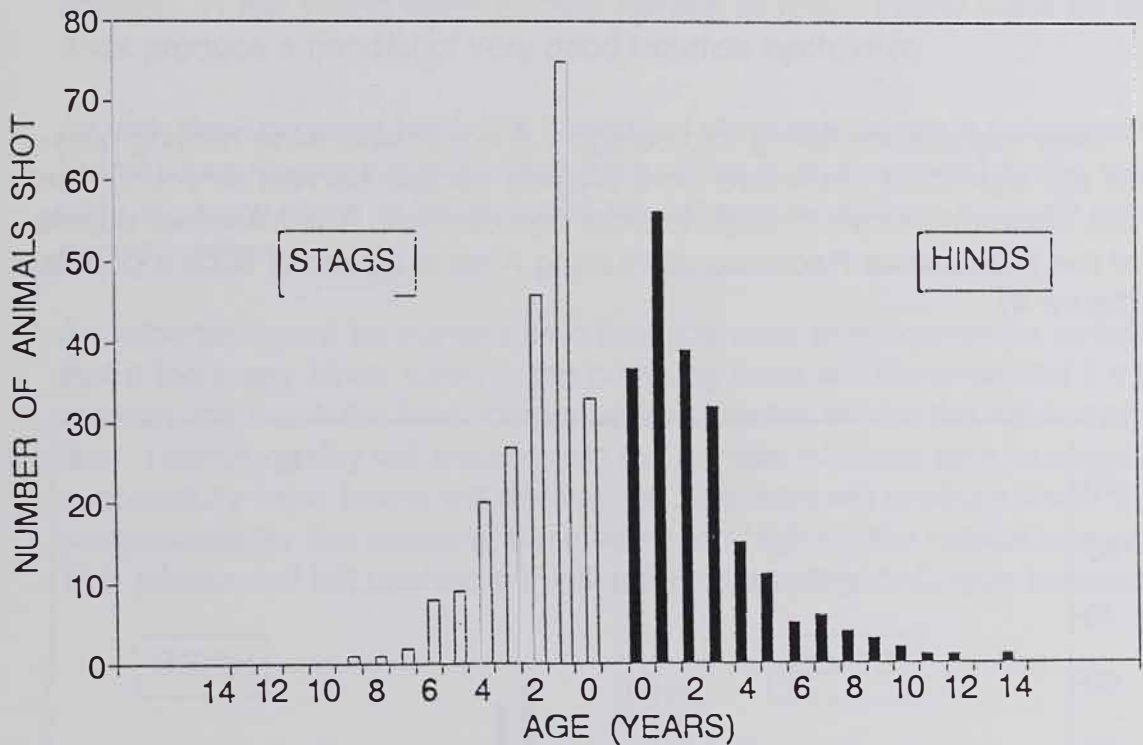


FIGURE 3 A sample of red deer harvest from the Tongariro herds, 1988-1993.

Fawns appear in low proportions on the harvest sample because they are no more vulnerable to harvest than their mothers and because some hunters are unwilling to admit to shooting fawns by returning fawn jawbones. The remainder of the sample is likely to reflect proportions of each age class in the wild population.

The graph shows the characteristic age structure of a young population under heavy harvest pressure - especially the stags. The hinds appear to fare a little better for two possible reasons; firstly, spikers are independent at an earlier age and hence more vulnerable to harvest, and secondly, hinds are passed up by some of the better hunters who are responsible for a significant proportion of the harvest so a type of private game management is protecting these animals.

Habitat monitoring in the red deer habitats of western Tongariro suggests that deer populations are not having a major impact on habitat conservation at other than localised sites. This suggests the current hunting regime has significant conservation benefits.

B Deer populations falling into category B occur where the hunting pressure is still significant but where more animals escape harvest as young deer and are allowed to move through to older age classes. The sika deer population of the Kaimanawa Recreational Hunting Area is typical of such a population (figure 4).

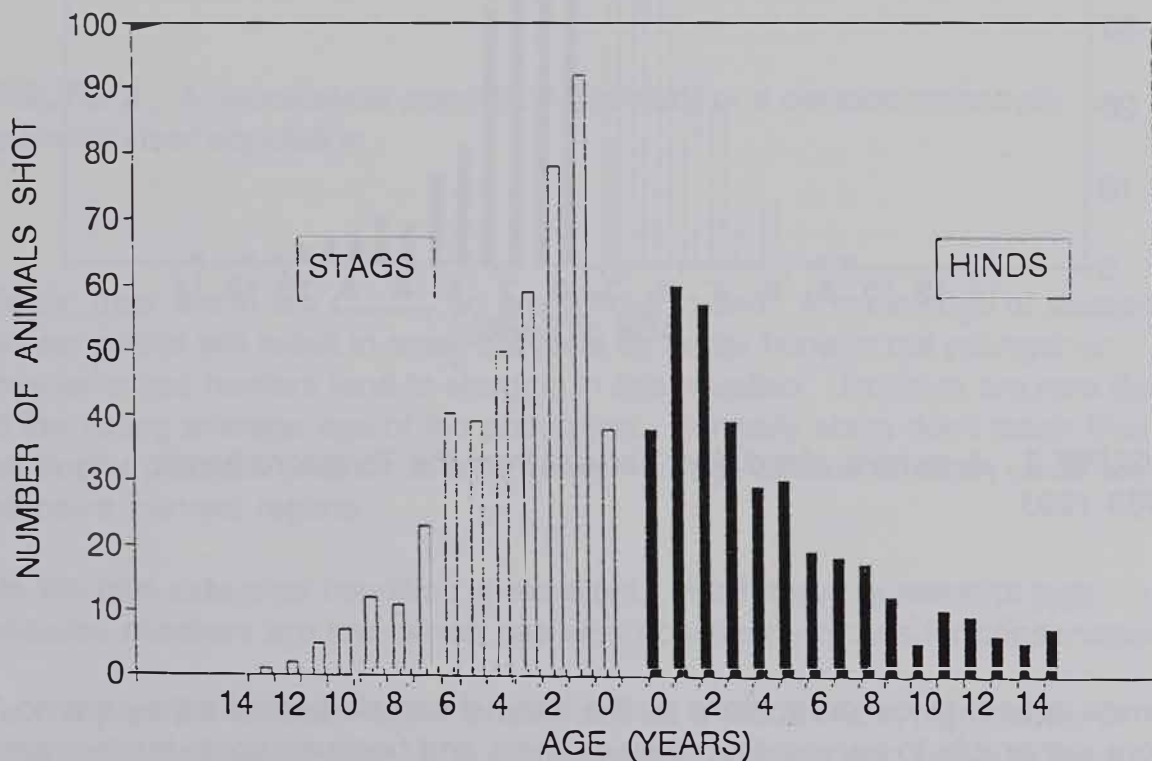


FIGURE 4 A sample of sika deer harvest from the Kaimanawa Recreational Hunting Area, 1987-1993.

The main point to note about a population falling into category B on the sigmoid curve (figure 1) is that the average age is a little higher (in the Kaimanawa Recreational Hunting Area it is three to four years). Some deer even die of old age although this is rare.

The breeding base is also a little higher which has a greater impact on habitat condition. While habitat quality is not as good as a category A situation and therefore less desirable from a habitat conservation perspective, by utilising litter fall and other food supplies (e.g., snow break, mushrooms) outside the growing season, most hinds aged three to 10 years are able to produce a fawn each year. This allows such a population to sustain a very high annual harvest year after year - a very desirable situation for hunters of all ages and abilities. A few young stags escape harvest to reach trophy class so this herd does produce a handful of very good trophies each year.

As with the Tongariro herd, the harvest of stags and hinds is not equal in the Kaimanawa Recreational Hunting Area. This is again related to the vulnerability of young stags to harvest and the protection of hinds by more experienced hunters.

An important point for hunters who practice such philosophies to remember is that if too many hinds survive, the breeding base will increase and if it increases too much the fawn crop may become too big for the habitat to sustain. Habitat quality will decline and the number of hinds able to conceive or successfully raise fawns will decline, i.e., the herd will produce fewer deer to compensate for the breeding base being too high for the habitat to sustain. This situation, if left unchecked, will result in a category C type scenario.

C Category C deer population structures are a result of under harvesting which allows the survival of too many breeding hinds which in turn results in high fawn production, population growth and eventually severe habitat damage. Average age is high, pulled up by the lower proportion of young deer able to be raised in sub-optimal habitat. Such a situation results in poor animal quality, poor trophy potential, and significant habitat damage. A hypothetical population structure of a category C deer herd is shown in figure 5. From both a hunter's perspective and a habitat conservation viewpoint this is an undesirable situation.

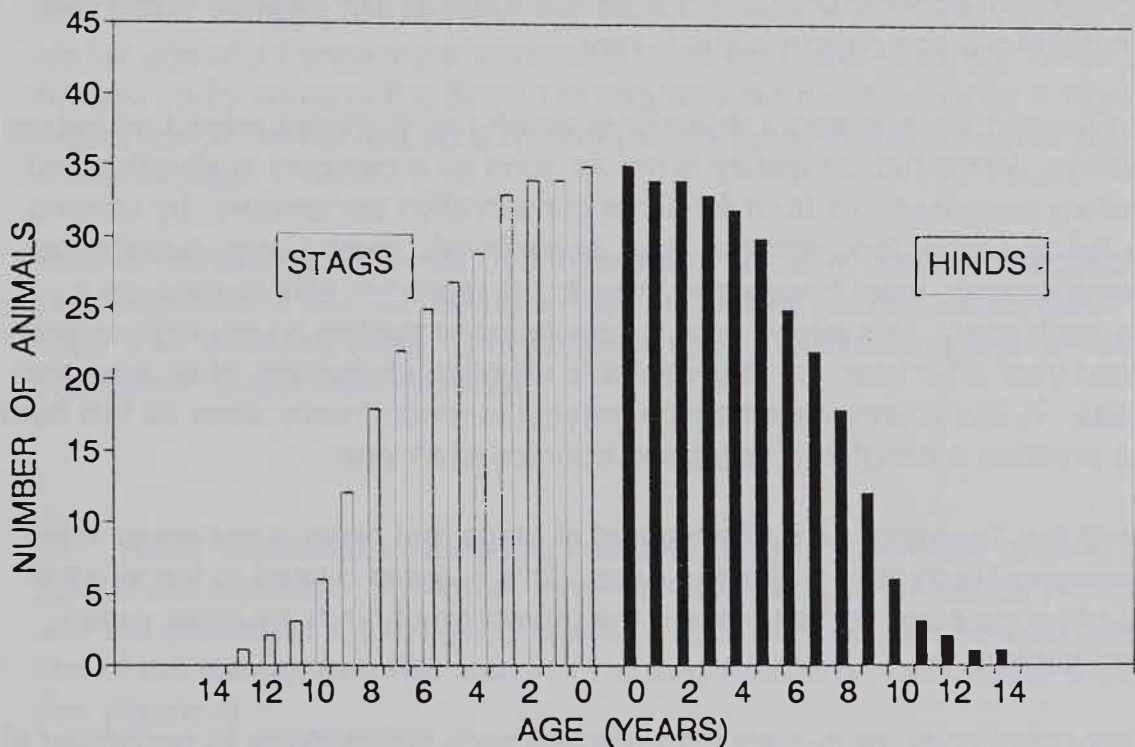


FIGURE 5 A hypothetical population structure of a deer population which has had inadequate harvest pressure for the last four to five years.

Deer in this situation begin to strip out the habitat which impacts on the many native species dependent on the same habitats for their survival.

Such a situation has occurred in parts of the central North Island in recent times. As a responsible resource manager the Department of Conservation has attempted to decrease the base population in such areas through increased harvest (e.g., publication of areas of concern, new helpads, even small aerial harvests). Some of these management activities may seem to be designed to deny hunters their sport but they are in fact attempts to reduce the base population to levels that can be better sustained by the habitat - habitat that must also support a wide range of other native species.

Summary

From the perspective of a conservationist, concerned at the protection of habitat values in native ecosystems, the low densities of a suppressed deer population are most desirable but such situations are only attainable where a large, effective hunting effort maintains the necessary pressure on the population.

From the perspective of a hunter, concerned with the opportunity to harvest quality venison for the freezer on a regular basis and perhaps with the chance at a trophy stag during autumn, a situation more in line with that occurring in the Kaimanawa Recreational Hunting Area is most desirable.

Neither perspective is catered for by a deer population which has expanded to a level at which severe habitat damage occurs.

The three categories described are three points on a continuum which extends from habitat which has no or few deer at one end, to habitat which might be best considered as having too many deer at the other. Different habitats can sustain different population densities with varying degrees of habitat impact, but generally hunters can determine the status of a deer population by observing details such as animal quality (body weight, fat content etc.), whether or not most hinds are either pregnant or in milk when shot, the abundance of favoured foods in the browse tier of the habitat, the average age of animals harvested and so on. By making such observations hunters will begin to understand the processes influencing the populations they are hunting and hence be able to make informed decisions about harvesting hinds.

Most hunters do not care what is shot - if any deer is prepared to stand around long enough, then it will be harvested - but for a number of experienced and competent hunters this is not the case. It is my opinion that hinds should only be passed up in a situation where the population is heavily suppressed by hunting pressure. This *will* have a tangible result for herd expansion, but in many areas of the central North Island control of the base population is as important to protecting the hunting resource as it is to forest conservation.

In areas such as the Kaimanawa Recreational Hunting Area hunters who wish to practice private game management by selectively harvesting the deer they encounter should consider allowing spikers and young stags to escape in preference to passing up hinds. Practising this approach will allow more stags to move into trophy age classes while still maintaining control of the base population (proportion of breeding hinds) whose influence on herd growth can have significant impacts on habitat quality and hence the quality of the herd. A higher stag to hind ratio will have positive benefits for autumn hunting also, since greater numbers of stags competing for mates will produce more intensive rutting behaviour, increasing the quality of hunting at this very popular time of year. Food for thought? ■

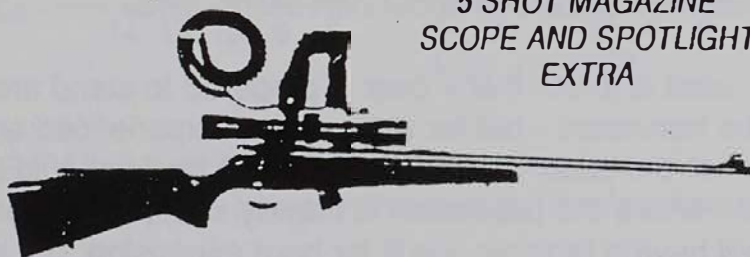
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OUR TIPS FOR YOUR SUMMER ANGLING

Several anglers have commented to us that despite our optimism over the improvement in the fishery they still struggle to catch a fish or two. They have asked if we can pass on tips to improve their success. In forthcoming issues we will cover some of the proven techniques used by local anglers and guides.

HARLING

Fish the large sandy bays such as Stump Bay, Waitahanui, Kawakawa Bay, Waihaha and Whanganui. Huge shoals of smelt move into these shallow areas in spring to spawn, attracting large numbers of feeding trout.

Harling is most consistent during the first and last hour of daylight. Make the effort to be on the water at first light, the action may well be over shortly after sunrise.

On overcast or rough days the harling may remain productive right through the day. If you see several fish splashing on the surface at any time of the day it is always worth trying a harling run or two.

Use long monofilament leaders (5-15 metres) attached to a fast sinking flyline or 1 to 2 colours of lead line with monofilament backing.

Use two flies a metre or so apart and of different colours until it becomes clear what is working best. Successful harling flies tend to be more colourful than the smelt they imitate. Shades of yellow, brown or green are good colours to begin with. Many anglers swear by a touch of red beard hackle or a tuft of red under the tail.

Many harling flies are tied on size 2 and 4 hooks. However, when conditions are calm or the fish taking short, use smaller flies tied on size 6 or 8 hooks.

To gauge the right speed when harling, look over the side and imagine you are walking at a steady pace on the surface of the water beside the boat. If you're having to break into a jog to keep up with the boat your speed is too fast.

The more line you put out the deeper the fly will be (up to a point). In the half light of dawn or dusk try a short line near the surface, lengthening the line as the day brightens and the fish move a little deeper.

As the day brightens move further off the beach. While there may be a lot of action close to the beach often these fish are mending kelts as opposed to prime maiden fish a little further out.

On the strike let the fish run against the drag of the reel only. Once the initial run is over the fish can be fought more firmly but trying to slow the first run often causes the hook to pull out.

Often after the initial run the trout will swim quickly towards the boat and the angler must wind fast to keep the line tight. However, as the trout nears the boat it will suddenly take fright and the angler should be prepared to let it run again.

At many of the more popular areas such as Waitahanui it is common for thirty or forty small boats to be harling. There is plenty of room for everyone so long as all the boats follow a similar circuit. If the boats are running parallel to the shore then do likewise unless you are keen to be told your pedigree.

Harling from small boats at daylight is very popular and successful. At this time of day the lake is usually calm and dinghies can be launched directly from the beach, five minutes from many of the hot spots.

Photo: Len Birch



DEEP TROLLING

As the sun comes up the trout will head out off the dropoff into deeper water. Use 100 to 200 metres of lead line and look for the quieter corners around the lake. Water skiers, wetbikes and the like don't usually help the fishing.

During hot, still days spend the middle of the day swimming or sleeping. Look to fish during the first and last couple of hours of the day.

Trailing 100 metres of leadline will put the lure approximately 10 metres deep and 200 metres of line will put the lure down approximately 15 metres. Troll

along the dropoff following the depth contour slightly deeper than your lure. If you don't have a depth sounder a useful tip is to assume the bottom profile follows that of the shore. If the land is gently sloping towards the lake it is likely the bottom is shallow for a distance off shore. Similarly, against sheer vertical cliffs such as along the Western Bays the water is invariably 100 metres or more deep.

The most favoured lures on Taupo are Cobras and Tasmanian Devils. As a start try a 'spotty gold' or fluorescent pink lure. These work best when trolled quickly enough to make the rod tip vibrate steadily (assuming the rod is flexible enough to vibrate). If the tip stops vibrating check the lure for weed or adjust your speed. Success will improve if a harling fly is tied on to a dropper about one metre in front of the lure. This seems to act as an additional attraction.

Where there is one trout there are usually others. If you get a strike make another run through the same spot. This applies equally to harling.

If you are not having success mix things up. Change lures and alter the depth they are fishing at. If you are running two or more lines at different depths always turn to the side of the deeper line to avoid tangles.

If the lake is glassy flat look for localised areas of breeze. The ripple created often seems to improve the fishing.

Alter the speed or steer a zigzag occasionally to throw some variation into the action of the lure. This will often stimulate a strike from fish which may have been following the lure for quite a long way.

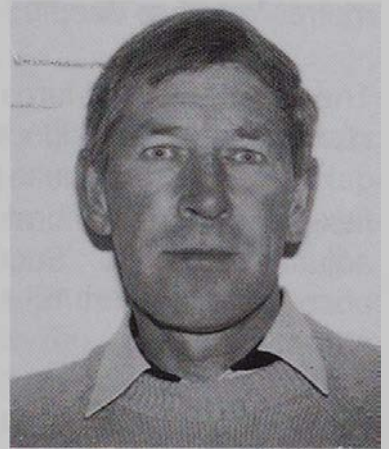
As a variation try bouncing a flatfish along a sandy bottom. This can be very effective but also expensive should you hang several flatfish up. Use leaders of 10 to 15kg breaking strain to maximise your chances of retrieving any snagged lures.

ANGLERS NOTE: Landmark posts (white, yellow and black ringed posts) have been erected at all the stream mouths around the lake. These are highly visible from many hundreds of metres away and signify the location of the stream mouth. It is an offence to troll within 300 metres of such stream mouths.

MANAGER PROFILE

GORDON McKENZIE

Gordon, based in Turangi as a Field Officer, is part of the enhancement section of the fisheries team and monitors and maintains anglers' access and undertakes willow eradication. For most of Gordon's career he has been involved with exotic forests, spending 25 years running his own logging contract business, later spending four years as a Security Officer at the Ohaaki Power Station before joining the Department of Conservation. With his past experience Gordon has brought a wealth of practical knowledge to the fisheries and plays a key role in access and willow maintenance. As a member of the Royal Forest and Bird Society and Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club, Gordon enjoys most outdoor activities.



HENRY REIHANA

Of Ngati Tuwharetoa descent Henry is originally from Turangi. After leaving school and spending a year training in horticulture at Tauranga he moved to Christchurch for three years and gained his Diploma in Parks and Recreation. Returning to Taupo he started work with the Wairakei Tourist Park before becoming a Field Officer for the fisheries team. Since being here Henry has gained skills in drift diving, fish surveys, angler surveys, fish trap construction and maintenance.



Henry's duties also include access maintenance and willow eradication. A keen angler and sports person, Henry is a volunteer fire fighter for the Taupo Fire Brigade.

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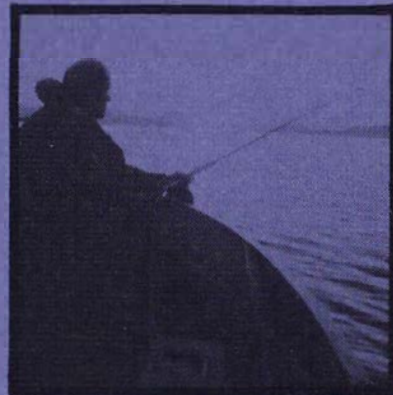
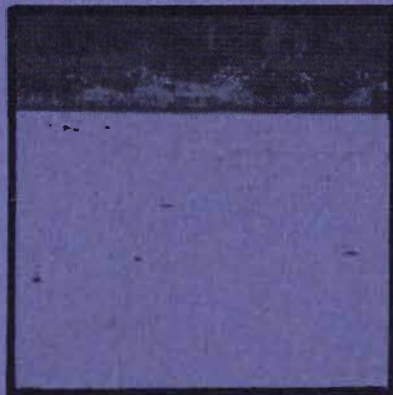
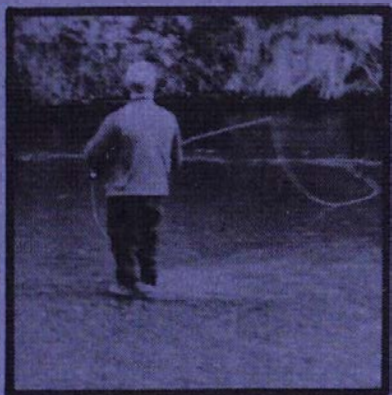
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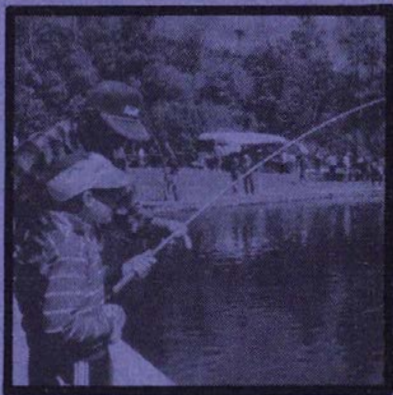
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