

08 September 2022



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 11 August 2022 in which you wrote:

*“Budget 2018 announced \$81.3 million, over four years, to boost landscape-scale predator control, which is vital for protecting threatened species and habitats. (<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/budget-backs-nature>)*

*The funding was targeted to suppress predators in priority ecosystems, which will contribute to improving the threat classification of some threatened species. It will also protect and increase biodiversity on offshore islands, official documentation says, and develop more effective and efficient predator control methods”.*

Specifically, you asked for:

*“Can DoC please provide the latest assessment of this spending, including, but not limited to, the total spent, what it was spent on, and whether the goals of improved threat classification for some species and increased protection and biodiversity on offshore islands was achieved”.*

For context, this Budget 2018 initiative funding was split across a number of projects designed to enhance the efforts to protect threatened species and ecosystems. Funds were split across two programmes of work;

- Enhancing biodiversity by controlling and eradicating predators; the research, development and improvement component.
- Landscape predator control operations.

The component parts of these programmes are listed below.

***Enhancing biodiversity by controlling and eradicating predators; research, development and improvement component***

This covered four relevant programmes of work:

- Tools to Market Funding,
- Programme Management of Predator Free 2050,
- Social science focussed on Predator Free 2050, and
- Predator Free 2050 science support.

***Landscape scale predator control operations 2018 -2022***

This covered two relevant component programmes of work:

- Battle for our Birds/Tiakina Ngā Manu (now titled the National Predator Control Programme), and

- Maukahuka/Auckland Islands eradication feasibility project

Your questions and our responses are listed below.

1. *What was the total spend of Budget 2018?*

The total funding received in Budget 2018 for predator control was \$81.28m over 4 years, from 2018/19 to 2021/22.

The actual spend is presented in the table below, broken down by area of spending:

	<b>4-year total (\$m)</b>
Tiakina Ngā Manu – Landscape predator control	63,398
Research and Innovation	6,687
Offshore and Auckland Islands pest eradication	1,703
Overhead costs as allocated	4,869
<b>Total</b>	<b>76,657</b>

Please note, we had an underspend of \$4.626m for this initiative on Budget 2018 allocation as at the end of 2021/22. Of this, \$1.6m has been transferred to 2022/23. The remaining underspend is due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in reduced revenue for us, and required reallocation of funds to support prioritised work through this period.

2. *What the Budget 2018 4-year funds were spent on:*

Tools to Market <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/predator-free-2050/goal-tactics-and-new-technology/tools-to-market/>

- Testing traps for animal welfare
- Development of an aerially deployed biodegradable rat trap
- Development of a new bait to control stoats using Para-aminopropiophenone (PAPP)
- Using drone technology to eradicate predators
- Developing a long-life multi-species lure
- Bringing long-life rat lures to market
- New methods to evaluate the vulnerability of native birds to PAPP
- Development of a rat-specific toxin (closed)
- Development of a pest identification sensor pad (closed)

Programme Management PF2050

- Development of 'Towards Predator Free 2050' Strategy
- Coordination of 5-year action plans through a collaborative process
- Development of 5-year investment plan
- The Predator Free summit 2021
- System co-ordination



#### Social Science PF2050

- Human-kea interaction report
- PF2050 Social Literature Overview, PF2050 developmental literature review, literature review on maintaining volunteer engagement in environmental community groups, and a literature review on volunteering and citizen science motivations for conservation.
- PF2050 Action-Attitude Gap
- PF2050 and Golf Course members – researching the reach of Auckland Golf course predator control policies on members' personal behaviours
- Ranger Experience survey - views on PF2050

#### Predator Free 2050 Science Support:

- Landscape Predator Control Research Projects: Cat baits
- Landscape Predator Control Research Projects: Mice Control
- Landscape Predator Control Research Projects: Predator guild shifts
- Optimal Forest rat control

#### Tiakina Ngā Manu/National Predator Control Programme 2018 - 2022

- The funding was spent on suppressing predators to protect threatened wildlife across approximately 2,033,000 hectares of priority ecosystems. Please note, this total only records the amount of predator control delivered directly by the Tiakina Ngā Manu programme. It does not include additional predator control work supported through Budget 2018 funding but delivered by other partners.
- For example, Budget 2018 also allowed the contribution of funding, or other resources, to support ZIP's predator eradication work in South Westland, the NEXT Foundation's Project Mouna in Taranaki, and the iwi-led Raukumara Pae Maunga restoration project in East Cape.
- A full list of sites which benefited from predator control through the Tiakina Ngā Manu programme between 2018 and 2022 (incorporating Budget 2018 funding) is attached as Appendix A.

#### Maukahuka/Auckland Islands Feasibility Study

- Large scale summer trials were conducted to test eradication tools and techniques ahead of concluding feasibility
  - A research and development programme was commenced including development and registration of a vertebrate toxic agent (VTA) for aerial distribution targeting cats; and baseline monitoring to assess outcomes
  - Completion of the design and initiation of the large-scale capital works (infrastructure) programme
  - A mouse population study
  - Cat bait trial/collar retrieval field trip to Auckland Island
  - A feasibility study report was undertaken and draft operational plans were published
3. *Were the goals of "improved threat classification for some species and increased protection and biodiversity on offshore islands" achieved?*

Yes, improved threat classification for some species and increased protection on offshore islands did occur as a result of Budget 2018 funding.



The conservation status of New Zealand's birds was reviewed in 2021. This can be found at the following link: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/science-and-technical/nztcs36entire.pdf>. This determined shifts in threat status of birds since the last review in 2016. The 2021 review has shown an improvement in the threat status of Haast tokoeka (from nationally critical to nationally vulnerable) and North Island brown kiwi (no longer classed as threatened). Increased predator control (funded through Budget 2018) is specifically identified as an important part of the recovery of these species.

In addition to the formal reclassification of two kiwi species, the condition of numerous other threatened species populations have shown measurable improvements through additional predator control from Budget 2018. Examples of this include:

- Landsborough Valley, South Westland: only 14 mohua remained in our study area in 1992 but these have increased to 517 birds in 2021. Although you have previously written on this work you may not be aware that now the species has gone from being the rarest to the most frequently counted forest bird in the valley. Mohua are vulnerable to rats and stoats and the species was predicted to go extinct without sustained management.
- Hurunui Valley, North Canterbury: orange-fronted kākārīki and mohua declined until 2013 but since then refinement of pest control techniques and more intensive management has led to encouraging increases. From a low of a small handful of birds in 2013 orange-fronted kākārīki have increased to about 275, and from a low of 7 birds in 2007 mohua have increased to more than 130.
- Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tāne Conservation Park, Eastern Bay of Plenty: the park has been jointly managed with Ngāti Whare since 2009. Kiwi call rates have doubled and who numbers have tripled since DOC and Ngāti Whare began large scale aerial 1080 operations in 2017, which are coordinated with OSPRI's adjacent TB vector control programme.

These gains are the result of sustained, long term predator control, usually coordinated with complementary work done by other stakeholders and agencies. Resources are targeted to the most significant sites nationally, and economies of scale are achieved by coordinating work with OSPRI, iwi, regional councils and community groups. Where predators are not controlled, the opposite trend is occurring.

In respect of protecting offshore islands, two island eradications managed by us occurred in the period of 2018 – 2022. These were Te Pākeka/Maud Island and Rakitu Island. The latter ensured protection of species including penguin/kororā, grey-faced petrel/oi, shags, kererū, tūī, North Island weka, bellbird/korimako, morepork/ruru, and shining cuckoo/pipiwaharo. A feasibility study was also completed for Maukahuka/Auckland Island. A categorised list of Aotearoa/New Zealand's offshore islands was produced during this period that will prioritise future investment in offshore island eradications.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā

Brent Beaven  
Director PF2050  
Department of Conservation



*Te Papa Atawhai*



**Appendix A: List of landscape predator control operations completed through Budget 2018 funding**

<b>Year treated</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Hectares Treated</b>
2022	Arthur's Pass OFK SOIK	50,419
2022	Project Kaka Western Site	32,793
2022	Copland	19,955
2022	Tongariro	20,153
2021	Hutiwai	29958
2021	Papakai Ecological Area	10959
2021	Project kaka	18430
2021	Frاند and Fox	28045
2021	Otahu Ecological Area	6701
2021	Mokaihaha	2009
2021	Tennyson Inlet	8667
2021	Moki-Makino	10272
2021	Punakaiki	43330
2021	Heaphy lowlands	23802
2021	Takitimu Mountains	36756
2021	Erua wetlands	10789
2021	Haast TL	9860
2021	Te Kopia	4060
2020	Mokihinui	45,181
2020	New Creek	64,230
2020	Waitaanga Plateau	19,029
2020	Rotoehu	2600



2020	Parininihi	1703
2020	Pouiatoa/Taramokou	5650
2020	Abel Tasman	8000
2020	Roaring Meg	11680
2020	Pirongia/Te Kauri	16028
2020	Hauraki Southern Forest	24104
2020	St Arnaud	31305
2020	Aorere	47995
2020	Wet Jacket	39707
2020	Waikaia	7014
2020	Eglinton 2	7500
2020	Waitutu	66197.5
2019	Whirinaki	32520.5
2019	Te Maruia	46206
2019	Northern Ruahine	31548.5
2019	Makarora	27196
2019	Matukituki	16562.5
2019	Landsborough	33785
2019	Kahurangi All	191195.5
2019	Kepler	18769.5
2019	Hollyford	24454.5
2019	Dart/Caples	16380
2019	Clinton/Eglinton	26822.5
2019	Catlins	22903.5



2019	Blue Mountains	7241
2019	Abbey Rocks	33365
2019	Arthur/Cleddau	18577.5
2019	Abel Tasman	10993.5
2019	Arthurs Pass All	98633.5
2019	Arthurs Pass OFP South	4919.5
2019	Arthurs Pass OFP Howden	23510
2019	Arawhata	29371
2018	Hope Cascade	28204
2018	Tangarakau	1000
2018	Moki Makino	13,584
2018	Rakitu Island Ship Rat Eradication	320
2018	Pihanga-Kakaramea	6000
2018	Mapara	1429
2018	Wilberforce	12212
2018	Southern Eyre Mountains	47700
2018	Mokaihaha	2083
2018	Russell Forest	6800
2018	Mangatawhiri-Vinings	1664
2018	Mataitai Forest	698





2018	Whanganui Mangapurua	31532
2018	Pūkaha Mt Bruce	942
2018	Heaphy	20490