

RESTORING BIRD-SONG TO UPPER HUTT

October 2018

Forest & Bird Upper Hutt is embarking on an ambitious project in your community, to get our valleys resonating with birdsong and bustling with native lizards! We will see tui and kereru weaving through our trees and flocking across our valleys, and hear the melodious call of bellbirds and the chatter of silvereyes. But currently, rats and stoats are killing and eating eggs and chicks in their nests, and rats and possums are eating the birds' food sources: native trees, fruits and seeds.



Predator Free 2050 is an ambitious goal to rid New Zealand of the introduced predators that most threaten our nation's natural taonga, economy and primary sector. Neighbourhoods around New Zealand are joining the predator-free movement. Going predator-free will bring a huge range of environmental, cultural, social and economic benefits.

Pest Free Upper Hutt is a community-led programme started by Forest & Bird and with financial and practical support from Upper Hutt City Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council and the Department of Conservation.

We have Coordinators in most suburbs. These are volunteers who help backyard trappers in their local neighbourhoods. Join us in eradicating rats, stoats and possums from *your* area.

Will you help restore our incredible wildlife?

We need the community's support and help with trapping in back yards, in local parks and reserves, alongside waterways and in other areas that need protection. Initially we are targeting rats but we can also help if you want to trap possums and/or mustelids (stoats, weasels and ferrets). We are not targeting cats although one day we may try to reduce feral cat numbers. We have no plan to target domestic cats.

Pest Free Upper Hutt has low-cost rat traps and tunnels available to project members (the tunnels prevent young children, dogs and cats from getting caught in the trap). Our Coordinators supply the traps and provide tuition and advice on how to get the best out of them. Contact us (see below) if you want to get a trap, and/or for advice. We ask for a koha (up to \$20) for each rat trap in a tunnel. The money will be used to buy more traps.

Your local Coordinator will sign you up to the trapping project in your area and show you how to record your trapping records on our database using our very simple website (www.trap.nz). If you live in an area not covered by a Coordinator then please be patient until someone (you?) steps forward who is willing to be a Coordinator for your area.



If you have a trap already we would still like you to join Pest Free Upper Hutt. Your local Coordinator will sign you up as a backyard trapper then every time you catch a pest you can add details to our database. The advantage for you is that you get to feel good about being part of a big pest-control effort. The advantage for us is that we get access to your data so we can better understand the patterns of pest distribution and movement.

We're working together to make Upper Hutt and New Zealand predator-free. Will you help? No matter where you live, you can help slow the destruction so that our native species can thrive.

How to contact us

We are on **Facebook: PestFreeUpperHutt**. If you are keen to help restore birdsong to Upper Hutt then contact us on pestfree.pinehaven@gmail.com and tell us your address, or at least your street and suburb. Your email will be forwarded to your local Coordinator. As at October 2018, about 40% of Upper Hutt is covered by Coordinators. If you got this flyer through a letterbox drop then that indicates there is a Coordinator active in your area.

If your area does not yet have a Coordinator, we will still reply to your email. When a Coordinator emerges for your area then they will contact you again to see if you want to be a trapper.

Forest & Bird: Chair: Graham Bellamy, Brown Owl; Pat van Berkel, Pinehaven; Chris Cosslett, Pinehaven.

Getting the best out of your Victor Professional rat trap and tunnel

Where to put your trap (and tunnel)

Rats won't feed where they feel unsafe. Don't put your trap in the open where cats or predatory birds could be a threat.

Rats like to run alongside walls and fences, and prefer to stop and feed under cover. If you have shrubs or low-growing trees against a wall of fence, put your trap under the cover. A prime location is on a stream bank because rats, mice and mustelids all like to travel alongside streams (but don't put your trap where it can be washed away in a flood). Look for a site on the bank that offers a bit of cover, such as under trees or shrubs. Another good place to try is on an animal trail through bush. Look for junctions: a place where an animal trail crosses a stream or meets another trail could be a hot spot. If you have a fence that meets a stream under trees, bingo!

If at first you don't succeed, move your trap around until it starts catching rats. Just moving it from one likely-looking spot to another close by, even just a few metres away, can make the difference between an empty trap and a dead rat. Once your catches start to drop off, try moving your trap to another likely location. Rats are curious about new things. Simply moving your trap a short distance could be enough to catch their attention.

Baiting and setting the trap

Peanut butter is very good bait, as are cheese and chocolate (e.g. Nutella). Special rodent lures are also available. Variation is good. When one bait stops catching rats, try switching to another bait to attract their attention. Put paste-type baits such as peanut butter in the little rectangular trough on your Victor Professional's yellow bait tab.

Always hold your trap, whether it is set or not, at the end away from the yellow bait tab. Bait and set the trap outside the tunnel then slide it bait-end first into the tunnel. Lastly, slide the mesh hatch closed behind the trap. Make sure the tunnel is firmly on the ground because a wobbly trap will scare away rats when they try to go inside.

Always put a little bit of bait just inside the door of the tunnel so that a curious rat can eat it without having to go inside. This will encourage them to go in to get the bait on your trap. Note that other animals such as possums and hedgehogs will eat this "free" bait if they find it so you might need to keep replacing it, or get yourself a Timms trap and trap possums as well (remember to register your Timms trap with your project and add dead possums to the database).

Check your trap as often as you like, preferably at least once a week. Replace your bait (including the "free" bait in the tunnel doorway) every week or fortnight, whether you have caught a rat or not. Fresh bait is more likely to catch the attention of a passing rat than old dry or mouldy bait.

Dealing with dead rats

When you pull the trap out of the tunnel the dead rat will be hanging from the other end. Lift up the striker bar and the rat will drop out. You can simply throw it away in the bush, put it in the compost or the rubbish bin, or bury it. Rats rot away quickly if left lying on the ground. Dead rats won't deter other rats from coming to your trap – quite the opposite!

There is plenty of advice on the Predator Free 2050 website - <https://predatorfreenz.org/>

For instructions on how to use a Victor Trap go to <https://www.wikihow.com/Set-a-Victor-Rat-Trap>

Also see <https://blog.doc.govt.nz/2017/10/15/how-to-trap-in-your-backyard/>

Your local Coordinator: Chris Cosslett. pestfree.pinehaven@gmail.com