

Tautuku Restoration Project, Tautuku, Catlins



Old growth rimu/kamahi forest in the Fleming Valley, situated centrally within the Tautuku Restoration Project area, Catlins.

Native species monitoring trainee position – Job description

Project background

Our project, run as a Forest & Bird (F&B) National project supported by Dunedin, South Otago, and Southland F&B branches, covers a significant proportion of the largest remnant lowland native forest still found on the SE coast of the South Island. We work within F&B's largest reserve, the 550ha Lenz Reserve, and extend across the surrounding Public Conservation Land (PCL) managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). We work closely with DOC Murihiku and have a five-year Community Working arrangement which enables F&B to conduct activities on the PCL. Additionally, we hold a Wildlife Act permit for pekapeka, long-tailed bat, capture and handling.

The aim of our project is to conduct effective introduced mammal control (rodent, mustelid, possum, pig, deer, and goat) to enable this lowland forest and the native animal species within it to thrive. We hope to effectively enhance the continuous range of habitats that cover an area from the coast to the hills at the head waters of the two main river catchments (Fleming and Tautuku). The area we work in includes beach, coastal forest (podocarp/ southern rātā), wetlands, rivers, regenerating forest (predominantly kamahi), and old growth podocarp forest (rimu). Over the past five years we have established a ground trap network (double set DOC200s) for mustelid control that now covers approximately 3000ha (Figures 1 and 2), and we have initiated site focussed pig and deer control.

Concurrently we have conducted surveys to better understand the native species found in our project area and we are committed to monitoring key native species to evaluate the effect of our introduced

predator control and determine whether it is effective or requires adjustment. To date our key activities include: finding unknown populations of the threatened non-migratory *Galaxias gollumiodes* in the upper reaches of the Tautuku and Fleming Rivers, locating a significant population of the Nationally Critical Tautuku forest gecko (*Mokopirirakau* “southern forest”) deep within the forest, locating a pekapeka colony outside of the adjacent Beresford Range beech forest, nest monitoring of the Isas Creek kororā little blue penguin colony, and having recorded the presence of the Nationally Critical matuku hūrepo, Australasian bittern, across three wetlands. Additionally, in 2019 DOC included the MacLennan Range, which encompasses our project area, into their Tia Kina ngā Manu 1080 operations and for the first time the Tautuku and Fleming catchments were treated with 1080 targeted to control rodents and mustelids.

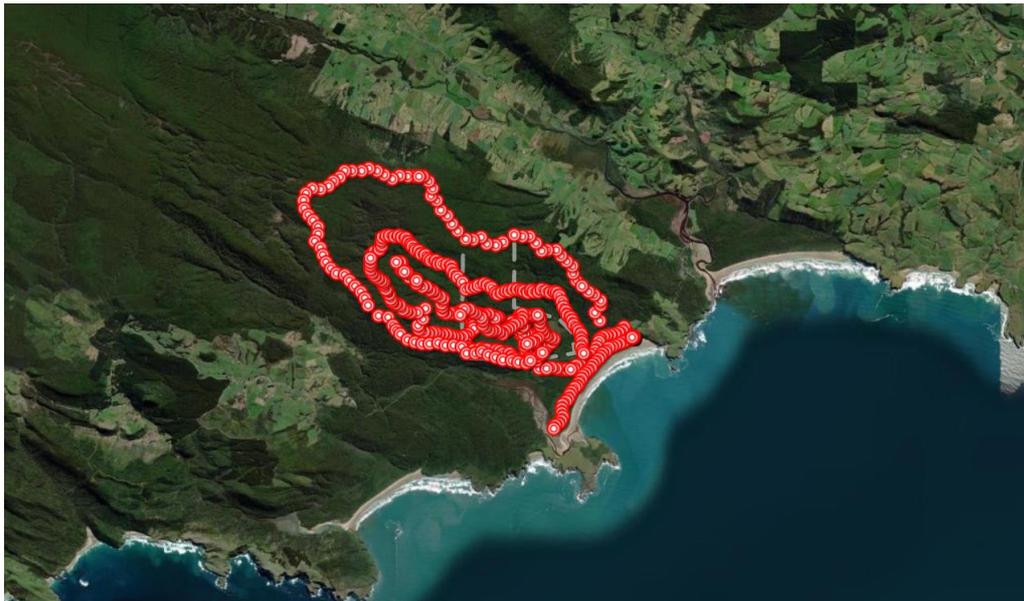


Figure 1: Tautuku Restoration Project, the current extent of our DOC200 trap network through the Fleming catchment, Tautuku, Catlins. F&B’s Lenz Reserve is outlined in grey with the surrounding forest being DOC managed PCL. *Source: TrapNZ*

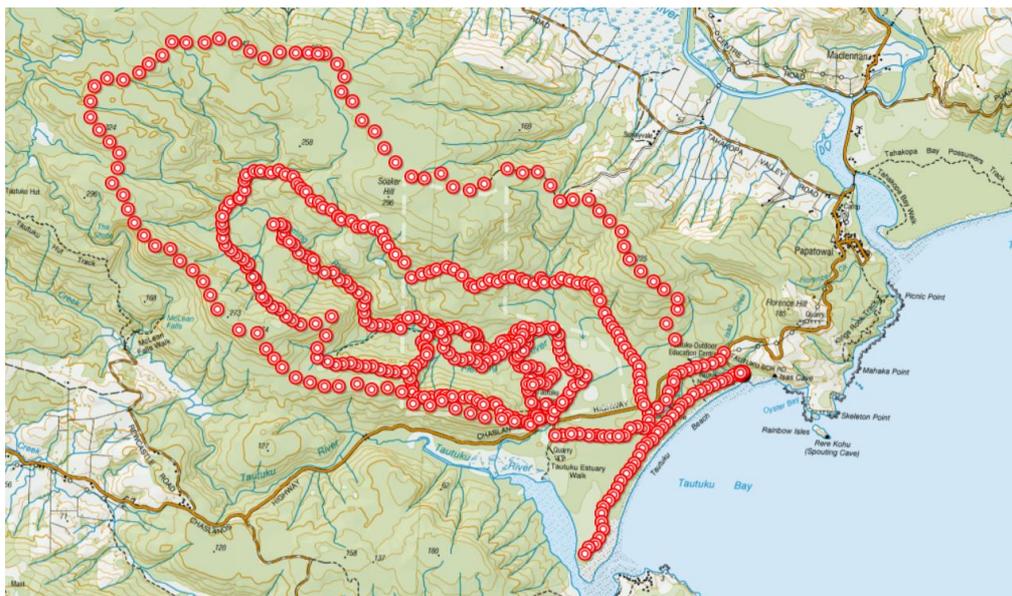


Figure 2: Topographic map showing the extent of the DOC200 trap network, Fleming catchment, Tautuku, Catlins. F&B’s Lenz reserve boundary is marked in white. *Source: TrapNZ*

Mahi mō te Taiao, Jobs for Nature funding

Recently obtained funding through DOC Mahi mō te Taiao, Jobs for Nature, will enable us to significantly increase both our introduced species control and native species monitoring for the next three years. Our current trapping operator will become full time and additional seasonal roles have been secured for track cutting and maintenance, deer and pig control, and native species (bird and bat) monitoring.

Introduced mammal control will increase to cover a further 1000ha of mustelid control, initiate site focussed feral cat control, site focussed possum control (in the areas outside of the 1080 treatment area), and wide ranging deer, pig, and goat control.

Native species monitoring will increase to include more thorough nest success monitoring of kororā, titipounamu, rifleman, and mātātā, SI fernbird, in addition to determining whether matuku hūrepo are resident in our project area, and better estimating the population size and trends of the surrounding pekapeka colonies.

We will also establish intensive rodent (rat, and mouse) control across 400ha at the forested site with the aim of better protecting the Tautuku forest gecko. The extremely cryptic nature of this species, especially when found living within the forest, make monitoring for any effect of increased rodent control a challenge. However, in collaboration with Jo Monks (DOC lizard Technical Advisory Group) and Carey Knox (Wildlands consultants) increased monitoring of the Tautuku forest gecko will be undertaken.

Native species monitoring trainee position

We are able to offer a seven week paid position during late spring/early summer, for a native species monitoring trainee. No prior experience with native bird monitoring is required with our being to provide field experience and learning opportunity.

The work will be entirely field based focussing on nest success monitoring of titipounamu, rifleman, and mātātā, SI fernbird. The trainee will work alongside two other people to observe the birds' behaviour, find nests, and conduct nest success monitoring (observations and trail cameras). The field work will take place in the Fleming and Tautuku valley forest for titipounamu, and in the Fleming wetland for mātātā.

We are looking for someone to join our team who is keen to gain experience in hands on native bird monitoring, happy to spend their time in the cold forest and wetlands. No prior experience with bird monitoring is needed, just a willingness to learn, comfortable in the outdoors, and patience is helpful – nest finding can be difficult and especially since titipounamu are already fairly scarce in our project area, we expect it will take a long time to identify pairs, their territories, and find nests – especially this first season without any prior knowledge of the exact breeding season dates of the birds in our area of interest.

F&B's Tautuku Restoration Project can provide the following:

Paid employment at \$25 an hour for 40 hours over seven weeks = \$1000 per week, \$7000 total.

Shared group accommodation at F&B's Lenz Reserve or Papatowai. A link to F&B's accommodation is provided: <https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/our-community/lodges/tautuku-forest-cabins>

Field gear: binoculars, personal locator beacon, GPS, field notebook, first aid kit

Trainee will provide:

Food

Bedding (sleeping bag)

Field clothing and gear (warm and rain proof clothing for use in the field, sturdy footwear, large day pack, torch)

If possible - Transport to and from Papatowai/Lenz Reserve

Timing

Dates are yet to be secured but the work will likely take place for four to five weeks prior to Christmas, starting in November, and commence again in January 2022. We will aim to work consistently throughout these dates but extended periods of bad weather may mean our monitoring trips are broken up. If the weather is unworkable for several days we would return home during these periods.

Contact

If you are interested in this position and would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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