



## Taranaki Taku Tūranga - Our Place

# Towards a Predator-Free Taranaki

### Predator Free School Guidelines

The Predator Free New Zealand Trust have kindly created this beginners guide to support schools who want to get involved in predator control. By reducing predator numbers (e.g., rats) in or around your school grounds you will be supporting your school's native biodiversity (increasing plant and animal life - the more native plants and animals the better).

Have a read through these guidelines to help with your planning. Once you are ready to get started, the Council can help with ongoing advice and support and help source the monitoring and trapping equipment required.

#### **Why do we need to control introduced predators?**

New Zealand has the highest rate of threatened species in the world. Around **81%** of our birds, **88%** of our reptiles and **72%** of our freshwater fish are endangered. Most of our native species are not found anywhere else in the world.

New Zealand has extraordinary native flora and fauna. It sustains us, it helps our tourism industry to thrive, and we identify with it. We even call ourselves Kiwis after our unique native bird.

However, every single decade more of our species are listed as endangered. DOC estimates that 25 million birds die per year through predation by mammalian pests. There are now billions of rats and millions of stoats and feral cats causing devastation around the country. We need to work together, all of us, to halt the decline.

There are already many people, often volunteers, working around NZ, including private landowners, schools, individuals and community groups, urban and rural, trapping predators and working to conserve native wildlife in their areas.

## 1. IDENTIFY what lives at your school

It's important to ensure you are clear on which predators you are targeting to ensure you choose the best trapping method for that predator.

Start by asking what you want to achieve by doing predator control in your school grounds. Do you want to see more birds nesting in your trees, get rid of the rat from the school compost bin, save the fruit trees in the school garden from the pesky possums or hear more birdsong?

Are there any native species such as birds, insects and lizards living on your school grounds? Consider whether they will benefit from predator control. Knowing what lives in your school grounds will help you to make decisions on what you want to protect, encourage or remove.

The following are great tools to assess what predators and native species you have on your school grounds:

- Chew Cards - an innovative way to detect the presence of a range of predators including, rats, mice, stoats, cats, possums and hedgehogs. [Appendix A](#) provides information on what these are and how to use chew cards.
- Tracking Tunnels - which help identify the presence of mice, rats and stoats, as well as lizards and insects on your school grounds. [Appendix B](#) provides more information about tracking tunnels and there is a form that you could use to record your results in [Appendix C](#).
- Garden Bird Survey - information on how to complete a Garden Bird Survey to help identify and count which birds are on your school grounds can be found in [Appendix D](#). The [Kiwi Call Count Survey](#) is also a great tool  
<https://www.kiwisforkiwi.org/resources/call-count-monitoring/>

## 2. TRAP - Use traps/devices that are humane

If you identified rats on your school grounds then you need to set a trap!

Rats were introduced to New Zealand and are harmful to our native animals and plants. As well as preying on native birds and their eggs, rats also eat the same food as the birds, so when there are lots of rats around there is less food for birds to eat. It's important to remove them in a humane way that avoids or minimizes pain, suffering and distress. We suggest using the Victor Pro Rat Trap & Tunnel. For instructions on how to use rat traps see [Appendix E](#).

If you want to know about trapping other target species, like stoats or possums, check out our [Trapping Best Practice](#) guide which is on our website: <https://predatorfreenz.org/tools-resources/trapping-best-practice/>

### 3. RECORD what you are doing

It's important to record what you are doing so that you have information to refer back to for monitoring your trapping progress.

Good record-keeping will also help your school year group pass on information of your predator control efforts over to future students. Detailed information will mean that your predator control success can be passed on and replicated.

We suggest you use the [Trapping data recording form \(Appendix F\)](https://www.kiwisforkiwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Trapping-Data-Recording-Sheet.pdf), which can also be found at: <https://www.kiwisforkiwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Trapping-Data-Recording-Sheet.pdf>

to record the following:

- What equipment you are using e.g., Victor Professional rat trap
- Where you've placed your equipment
- How often you check, clear and reset/rebait your equipment
- What lures/baits you are using.

If any of this changes through a season or year, record when, how and why.

Taking photos over time is a great way to record changes in plants. If you are trapping to support new growth on existing plants or to protect a planting programme in your school grounds it's a good idea to take a photo before you start trapping and a series of photos periodically afterwards.

### 4. MEASURE results

To know if your predator control programme is successful, measure the results of your predator control and the impacts it has had.

As well as counting the number of trap catches, it is important to know how many predators are remaining at your school.

Repeating your monitoring (Garden Bird Surveys, Tracking Tunnels, Chew Cards, etc) at regular intervals - about every 6 months - measures the changes to your school environment during/after trapping and can help you to make comparisons.

#### Want to do more?

- Let the birds know your school is a safe haven and [open up a bird cafe](#) or plant their favourite native plant food source. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMVjI4mp26E>
- Wētā numbers are likely to increase after predator trapping. [Build a wētā motel](#) and include wētā counts in your regular monitoring. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/conservation-activities/build-a-wētā-motel/>
- Check out the Predator Free NZ [school resources page](#) for games, presentations and in class learning. <https://predatorfreenz.org/tools-resources/school-resources/>

## **Appendix A: How to use chew cards**

It's possible to buy corflute ready to use chew cards or you can make your own (see [Chew Card Guidelines](#), prepared by Andrew Sinclair at Whakaupoko Landcare).

<https://www.naturespace.org.nz/sites/default/files/u4/82817287-Chew-Card-Landcare-Protocol-Feb-2012.pdf>

### **1. What are they used for?**

Chew cards are an innovative way to detect the presence of a range of predators including, rats, mice, stoats, cats, possums and hedgehogs.

### **2. Who can use them?**

Anyone. They are intended for domestic use as well as for professional pest control operations.

### **3. What's in them — do they contain poisons?**

Most often chew cards are baited with peanut butter but it's okay to experiment with other baits. You just want something spreadable that can be absorbed into the corflute. Ready to use bought chew cards are filled with Ferafeed 213 - a non-toxic and highly palatable formulation. For schools we recommend the peanut butter flavoured lure that contains no peanuts.

It may be a good idea to let your school know that there could be peanut butter or traces of nuts around the school which are a risk for those people with nut allergies.

### **4. How do I know where I should place them?**

Start by placing in areas where you have seen evidence of predators. Along a fence line, near compost or rubbish bins, at the base of trees are a good place to start. Animals will only investigate food in places where they feel safe, so not in an open space.

### **5. How do I install them?**

Attach to trees and fences. Instructions are generally provided with the product. If you require further assistance, check out the manufacturer's website for more detailed instructions or guidelines for making your own.

### **6. How long should I leave them out for?**

As a general rule the manufacturer of Chew Cards suggest 7 nights.

## 7. How do I read the results?

Unique bite or tooth mark impressions left behind on the Chew Card accurately indicate what you are dealing with. Instructions provided with the product (or on the manufacturer's website) will help you to identify what predators you have roaming in your school grounds. You can also use [CHEW-TRACK-CARDS A guide to the interpretation of animal tooth impressions](#) to help identify which animals have been chewing, this guide can be found at:

[https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/151598/chew-track-card-interpretation.pdf](https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/151598/chew-track-card-interpretation.pdf)

## Appendix B: Tracking cards and tunnels

### 1. What are they used for?

To help identify the animals in your school grounds or even your classroom. Tracking cards and tunnels are specifically designed for tracking small mammals such as mice, rats and stoats, as well as lizards and insects. They can be used before and after predator control occurs to show the effectiveness of your predator control.

### 2. How do they work?

They work by encouraging animals into a tunnel using a lure. The animals walk through the sticky ink on the tracking card to reach the lure and leave high definition foot (and sometimes body) prints on the absorbent/blank section of the card.

Prints on this section of the card do not smudge so you can compare them to the reference print sheet provided to identify what type of predator has been in your tunnel.

### 3. What are the tunnels made of?

Tracking tunnels can be made from plastic or cardboard. You can make your own or purchase ready-made tunnels. Black Trakka Tunnel's are a light, durable stand-alone design. They are made from robust plastic and come in flat sheets that need to be folded along crease lines to form the tunnel. Black Trakka Pre-Inked Monitoring Cards Tracking are for placing within the tunnels. If you want to make your own, here is a link to the Wild Eyes video to help you:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iT3E8FCq-Nk>.

### 4. What sort of lure (bait) should I use?

Different baits get different results.

- Peanut butter is the standard lure used to attract rats and mice.
- The lure for ferrets, stoats and hedgehogs is raw red meat or uncooked eggs.
- Lizards like banana, pear, and sometimes a blend of banana and honey.

### 5. Where do I place them?

Animals use regular pathways in the grass, along fence lines, near compost and waterways. These are all great places to place your tracking tunnels.

## **6. How long do I leave them out?**

As a general rule the manufacturer suggests leaving tunnels out for 3 weeks before setting the card for 1 night. This means that predators get a chance to familiarize themselves with the tunnels. If you don't get a result, try moving to a different position and leave out for another night.

## **7. How do I read prints from tracking tunnels?**

The tracking card and tunnel should come with a reference print sheet that shows the foot and body prints left by targeted species.

We also recommend you read [What made these tracks? A guide to identify footprints](http://www.rotokare.org.nz/uploaded_images/Education/Identifying-animal-tracks.pdf). This document has lots of good tips on using lures and placing tunnels too.  
[http://www.rotokare.org.nz/uploaded\\_images/Education/Identifying-animal-tracks.pdf](http://www.rotokare.org.nz/uploaded_images/Education/Identifying-animal-tracks.pdf)

Compare the prints from your tracking card with those on the reference sheet or guide to identify what animal has been in your tunnel.

## **8. Should I use these instead of chew cards?**

Chew cards and tracking cards and tunnels have a common purpose, to identify what type of animals you have. However the chew cards are most likely to identify mammals. Using different lures you can use tracking tunnels to detect the presence of lizards, wētā and other insects.

The tracking tunnel is also useful for ongoing monitoring to measure any changes in the school environment. Simply replace the tracking card and set new lures.

## **9. Now what do I do?**

Keep a record of your results. Use the tunnel tracking form (Appendix C) for writing down all the important information. Discuss the results with your classmates and use your results to influence your next steps.



## Appendix D: Bird Monitoring

### Equipment Needed

Clipboards, data sheets, pencils/ pens, blankets or chairs to sit on, hats and sunblock, raincoats (if necessary).

### Where to do the survey and when

A good spot for birdlife is a quiet area that has some trees. If your school has a bird feeder or water bath, watch that area because it is likely to have more birds than elsewhere in the school.

You can count birds from inside or outside the classroom. Inside is like being in a bird hide; the birds can't see you and continue to behave naturally. If you decide to sit outside keep quiet and still so you don't frighten the birds away.

You can do a bird survey at any time during the day. It is recommended that students observe birds for a one hour period. This can be split into 15 minute spells with 2-4 children in each group.

### What do students record?

Students record the HIGHEST number of each bird species seen at any ONE time. If they see two sparrows in the first minute and then later a group of six sparrows, they would record 6 (not 8) on their recording sheet.

Print this [tally sheet](#) to help you identify the birds you see and record the data from your one hour of monitoring.

[https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/120475/GBS-tally-sheet.pdf](https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/120475/GBS-tally-sheet.pdf)

Detailed instructions for teachers can be found on the [Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research Website](#) or within the [Experiencing birds in your green space resource](#).

<https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/science/plants-animals-fungi/animals/birds/garden-bird-surveys/activities-for-schools/teachers>

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/education-experiencingbirds>



## Appendix E: Where to place your rat traps

Use the Quick Trapping Guide and place traps in places where your monitoring identified the target species, around the perimeter of the school, near compost bins and remember not in open spaces. If you can, plan to set your rat traps in a grid pattern as closely as possible (set them on lines 100m apart with a trap every 50m).

# How to trap & kill rats

This quick guide is for anyone who is keen to help save NZ's native wildlife by setting and managing rat traps.

## Trapping at home



### Where should I put my rat traps?

Set up **2-3 per back yard** and place inside rat tunnels to protect kids and pets (see Predator Free NZ's resources link below for where to buy traps and tunnels).

Place them on a **flat surface near walls/compost or under cover**. If you're not getting results, try a different spot.

### What equipment will I need?

The **Victor professional snapback trap**. Watch DOC's video 'How to set and service a Victor rat trap' on YouTube.

If you don't want to handle dead rats, try **Goodnature's A24 self-resetting traps**.

### When should I check my traps?

**Preferably daily** until you're getting results and the catch rate goes down, then check **every 2-3 weeks**. The more rats in the area, the more checks you'll need to do.

### Lures/baits

Serve up some **peanut butter**, and refresh often.

For more information, visit  
[www.predatorfreenz.org/useful-resources](http://www.predatorfreenz.org/useful-resources)





## Useful websites

<https://www.trc.govt.nz/>

<https://www.trc.govt.nz/environment/working-together/schools-programme/>

<http://www.wildfortaranaki.nz/>

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/conservation-education/>

<http://www.enviroschools.org.nz/>

<http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-resources/Education-for-sustainability>

<https://predatorfreenz.org/tools-resources/school-resources/>

<https://predatorfreenz.org/kiwibank-communities/kiwibank-predator-free-schools/>

<http://www.rotokare.org.nz/Education/>

<http://www.papataiaoearthcare.nz/>

<https://www.wildeyes.co.nz/>

<https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/our-community/forest-bird-youth>

<http://kcc.org.nz/>

<https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/home>

