

NPCA NEWS



National Pest Control Agencies Newsletter

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Editorial: the year ahead

I write this as the newly elected Chair of the NPCA Management Committee, taking over from Brent Rohloff, who stepped down at the AGM in November. Brent represented OPSRI on the management committee for five years and, on behalf of the committee, I thank him for his valuable input over that time. We look forward to working with Matt Hickson, who is replacing Brent as the OPSRI representative.



2015 is shaping up to be busy for the profession, with many regional councils reviewing their Pest Management Strategies and DOC and TBF free continuing their extensive pest control and monitoring programmes. Remember that the management committee is here to serve both practitioners and policy makers. We welcome your ideas on how we can do this better, so please feel free to contact us with suggestions.

As you know, NPCA has a respected track record with its best practice guidelines and protocols, which it has updated and expanded in recent years. In this coming year, we will continue these updates for the pest management profession and also start producing simplified guidelines for the growing number of community groups undertaking pest control. Together, these publications will provide a comprehensive library of best practice. The new Pest Detective website (see page 2) is part of this expanding reference library, albeit in a new online format designed for accessibility and easy updating in the digital age. Please take a look and tell any community groups working on pest animal projects in your area about it.

Under investigation is the possible expansion of NPCA's best practice library to also include pest plant resources and links. This follows NPCA's publication of the machine hygiene guideline for preventing the spread of pests and weeds.

An important aspect of best practice and industry standards is the ongoing project we have been working on for some time with Primary ITO and NZQA: the review of national pest management qualifications. As the current providers of pest animal monitoring training, we have worked to ensure those people holding current monitoring accreditations are able to cross credit these into the new qualification planned to be launched this year.

Lastly, while the next NETS conference may seem like a long way away, the call for abstracts is now open (see page 5). I encourage you to share your successes and failures with your peers - this way we can ensure good quality operations into the future.

Steve Ellis
NPCA Chairperson

NPCA provides a forum for agencies and stakeholders involved in vertebrate pest control to co-operatively address industry issues, share information, develop best practice and promote training / professional development.

Any individual or organisation engaged in the vertebrate pest control industry is eligible for membership.

The NPCA is run by a management committee of six people and a National Co-ordinator.

Management committee:

Steve Ellis (Chairperson), *Local Government New Zealand*

Matthew Hickson, *OSPRI New Zealand*

Bruce Warburton, *Landcare Research*

Martin Brenstrum, *Contractor*

Sherman Smith, *Ministry for Primary Industries*

Nick Poutu, *Department of Conservation*

National Coordinator:

Maurice Kennedy

Pest Detective launched



Three years in the making, NPCA's pest animal sign recognition website project was launched in late November, to assist 'pest detectives' recognise clues and detect culprits.

At the launch, representatives from a range of organisations in the animal pest control sector welcomed the initiative.

OSPRI New Zealand Chief Executive, William McCook, said OSPRI is pleased to be supporting the project and collaborating with NPCA as part of OSPRI's TB-free programme, which has recently expanded in focus beyond pure possum control to wider biodiversity outcomes.

Allan Ross, Manager Ecosystems and Species, Department of Conservation (DOC) congratulated NPCA on developing a "very practical tool" that was highly appropriate to DOC's future direction. "DOC is fostering partnership and community collaboration and looking for ways to lift our effectiveness and efficiency. NPCA is very good at pulling together science and operational requirements."

Pest Detective has been one of NPCA's more complex projects. Preliminary

feasibility scoping in early 2012 confirmed that it was a worthwhile project. Rather than the printed field guide initially envisaged, it was decided a website would be more easily updated and expanded. It then took another 18 months to secure the funding and appoint the project team, which began work in January 2014, on: developing the website as a custom-designed search tool; creating the 'Pest Detective' brand; compiling information; commissioning hand drawings of some field sign; and sourcing and seeking permissions to use the more than 300 photographs of the 19 species featured so far.

"It proved a bigger task than anticipated," says Maurice Kennedy, NPCA National Co-ordinator, "but the project has attracted enormous enthusiasm and energy from all who have contributed. That includes the numerous organisations and individuals who have helped with photographs as well as the project team – some of whom sponsored the

project through discounted work."

The project could not have happened without a substantial grant from the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board and the support of the project partners and sponsors (see opposite).

"Pest Detective has filled a gap by bringing together, in one place, easily accessible pest animal sign information for New Zealanders," Maurice says. "It's still in the early stages but feedback to date has been consistently positive.

"We're inviting feedback and more photographs. Feedback will assist us to improve the existing content and prioritise future development work,, such as adding more species."



At the launch (left to right): Maurice Kennedy, NPCA National Co-ordinator; Sarah Meakin and Samantha Garcia, website developers from Signify; Shona McCahon, project manager; Astrid van Meeuwen-Dijkgraaf, project writer from Wildlands Consultants; Bruce Warbuton, NPCA Management Committee and Landcare Research; William McCook, CEO, OSPRI; and Allan Ross, Manager, Ecosystems and Species, Department of Conservation.

Photo by: Earp-Jones Originals Ltd

Q & A

Where did the idea originate?

From DOC, where various pieces of work on aspects of sign identification had been done. NPCA stepped in to take the idea into a single pest animal sign recognition guide.

How many species are covered so far?

Nineteen (see list at right.)

What species are to be added in future?

There are numerous contenders. At this stage, however, we are simply inviting suggestions.

Is the website accessible on mobile devices?

Yes, within network areas. No special app is required: the content automatically wraps to fit the screen size and maintain legibility. Offline access for use in areas out of network range is on

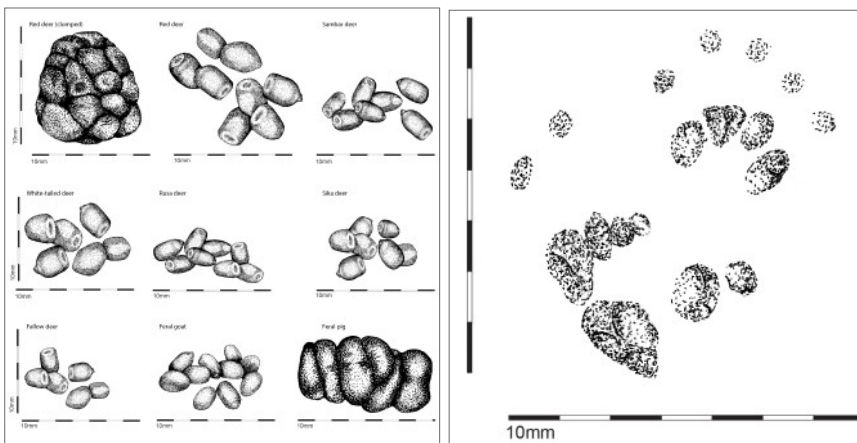
the wish list for the future.

Why are there blank image spaces on the website?

Photographs of some animal sign have proved elusive to find, especially of our preferred New Zealand examples. We ask people to take their cameras with them into the field to record species-typical examples they encounter, to help fill the gaps (see list at right). Please upload via the [Pest Detective](#) online submission form.

Who is the target audience?

We hope a broad audience including pest control practitioners, landowners, land managers, community conservation groups and volunteers, students and interested members of the public. Site usage analysis will provide useful audience information in due course.



Drawings of culprits' droppings and footprints were commissioned to provide consistent starting-point illustrations of these two basic clues, backed up by photographed examples. Left: comparison of ungulate (hoofed mammal) droppings. Right: possum hind and fore footprint. All drawings are by Sonia Frimmel

Project team

Project management: Shona McCahon

Website development: Signify Ltd

Content writing & image selection: Wildlands Consultants

Branding & graphic design: Station Creative

Drawings: by Sonia Frimmel of What's the Story?

Peer review: Landcare Research.

Project supporters

Thanks to our project partners and sponsors :

- New Zealand Lottery Grants Board
- Department of Conservation
- OSPRI New Zealand,
- Local Government New Zealand
- Ministry for Primary Industries
- Wildlands Consultants
- Signify Ltd
- Shona McCahon

Photographs needed

Mouse: droppings; fore & hind paw prints; fruit & flower damage; bird & invertebrate kill.

Kiore: droppings; footprints; nest; invertebrate & egg kill.

Ship rat: footprints; vertebrate & invertebrate kill.

Norway rat: tracks to show gait; trail; burrow; fruit, flower & bark damage; bird & egg kill.

Possum: droppings showing prey remains; older dry droppings; footprints in sand & soft sediment; den; eye shine.

Rabbit: footprints; tracks showing gait; tree bark damage.

Goat: prints showing typical inward curve of hoof tips.

Fallow deer: scattered & clumped droppings; play ring; understorey, bark, leaf & seedling damage, preferably on plants that fallow deer prefer.

Sika deer: trail; bark damage from antler rubbing.

Rusa deer: droppings; footprints; trail; wallow; bedding site; understorey, bark & leaf damage.

White-tailed deer: droppings; footprints on various surfaces; footprints showing size male/female/fawn size difference.

Sambar deer: footprints; wallow; understorey damage; antler rubbing bark damage.

Red deer: droppings, clumped & old/dry; walking pace track; wallow; bark damage from antler rubbing; browse on coppiced broadleaf shoots.

Pig: wallow; vertebrate, invertebrate & egg kill or scavenging.

Hedgehog: tracks showing gait; footprints showing foot pads; nest; any vegetation damage; vertebrate, invertebrate & egg kill.

Cat: fore & hind footprints; trail; den; lizard & egg kill.

Weasel: separate & clumped droppings; kill sign.

Stoat: kill sign.

Ferret: tracking tunnel footprints; invertebrate & egg kill.

Management Committee updates

2015 MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The 2015 NPCA Management Committee is confirmed as follows: Steve Ellis, Chairman (Local Government), Nick Poutu (DOC), Matt Hickson (OSPRI) Bruce Warbuton (elected, Landcare Research), Martin Brenstrum (elected, representing contractors) and Sherman Smith (MPI). See online [profiles](#).

At the AGM, the Management Committee reported on their member organisations' activities in the preceding year. A brief summary follows.

Member organisation reports

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

2014 was DOC's first year operating under the new delivery structure. An implementation review in September / October led to adjustments in decision-making processes, goals and alignment of strategic work.

The Battle For Our Birds programme, consequent on a large beech mast event during the year, was a major pest control initiative for many staff teams (see NPCA newsletter #31, p.4.)

A focus for DOC, in its objective of growing conservation, was working with external partners and agencies. In the animal pest area this included working with the Morgan Foundation under the Future of Predator Control programme, to investigate the feasibility of a predator-free Stewart Island; ongoing work with the Janszoon Trust to restore the ecology of Abel Tasman National Park; and working with the NEXT Foundation to advance proposals for big, transformational ecological restoration projects.

Self-setting traps and improved lures were trialled at an operational scale and will be further tested for medium / long-term reliability.

DOC's animal pest framework and SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) are being reviewed with the intention to reduce to two documents the SOPs for conservation partners and non-DOC operations.

OSPRI

During OSPRI's first year in existence, TBFree and NAIT (National Animal Identification and Tracing) programmes remained core activity areas.

The TBFree New Zealand programme is on track to meet the 2026 target (to

eliminate the disease from wild animals over 2.5 million hectares).

Health and safety became a high priority. The Contractors' Health & Safety Forum was formed, with regular meetings happening. A formal H&S Strategy was completed and two additional staff appointed to support the H&S Manager and help implement the strategy. Annual H&S training days were introduced to support contractors implement H&S with their own teams. There was a 40% reduction in accidents.

OSPRI partnered with DOC in sharing resources where the Battle for Our Birds and TBFree projects coincided. This ensured maximum benefit from the aerial operations and made for efficient use of resources, with cost savings tangibly demonstrating the benefits of collaboration.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Over the past 12 months, many regions have been working through Pest Management Plan reviews in anticipation of the publication of the National Policy Direction in mid-2015. Councils are looking to work together to ensure consistency of plans, rules and, where appropriate, operational programmes.

Councils encourage the NPCA, as the repository of national pest management practice guides, protocols and monitoring training, to widen its focus to include pest plant and policy guidelines. NPCA provides an excellent vehicle for Councils to work collectively with other stakeholder to produce, store and maintain relevant, researched and accepted resources for the pest management industry. Councils support ongoing work with MPI, OSPRI, DOC and contractors to kick-start the national toolbox project early in 2015 and believe NPCA is a logical starting place for the project.

Regional Biosecurity Managers are pleased with the progress of NPCA on monitoring and training projects and look forward to directing our communities to the new Pest Detective website.

MINISTRY FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Initial implementation of the Pest Management Toolbox is planned for 2015 and MPI will be working closely with NPCA to plan how best to align NPCA and the Toolbox.

Good progress has been made by Landcare Research on improved aerial bait application methods. NPCA and the Rabbit Coordination Group will need to consider how best to incorporate the results into best practice information.

The interim unwanted organism status of wallabies has been extended and glue board traps for rodents prohibited (see more, page 6).

The Animal Welfare Amendment Bill 2013 is expected to go to its second reading in the first half of 2015 and will include clarification of offences for acts of ill-treatment in the hunting and killing of animals in the wild state.

CONTRACTORS

The possum control / maintenance contracting has been going well in the 2014-2015 financial year. The new TBFree / OSPRI tendering process worked satisfactorily and contractors appreciate the OSPRI teams' efforts in managing the programmes. However, contractors would like to see more opportunity in the process to demonstrate their detailed knowledge of the blocks they are tendering for. They are also finding the increased complexity in managing pest control work is resulting in increased cost. This has implications, particularly for experienced companies supporting large staff numbers and a

lot of equipment, when competing with smaller operators for contracts.

In terms of training, PestNET is looking towards coordinating training days with OSPRI to replace its conference-related training.

LANDCARE RESEARCH

Over the past 12 months, New Zealand's research environment has been dominated by the new National Science Challenges implemented by Minister Joyce. One of the first of ten challenges to be established is the Bioheritage National Science Challenge that has a mission to: *"reverse the decline of New Zealand's biological heritage, through a national partnership to deliver a step change in research innovation, globally leading technologies and community and sector action."* The 10-year research programme has a wide-range of key stakeholders including: DOC, regional councils, MPI, OSPRI, Predator Free NZ, iwi and museums, and covers many aspects of pre and post-border biosecurity. CRIs and universities are currently considering how to harness their aligned funding. The programme should provide material for agencies such as the NPCA to update or develop new best practice documentation.

Landcare Research updated several best practice pest-monitoring documents for DOC including spotlight counting of rabbits, waxtags for possums, and the draft protocol for monitoring possums with chewcards.

The development of a Bovine TB Proof-of-Freedom tool by Landcare Research and its implementation by TBfree NZ has resulted in 800,000 ha being declared free of TB. This is a significant step toward achieving the outcomes of the Bovine National Pest Management Plan (NPMP).

Tools and toxins at various stages of development include zinc phosphide, sodium nitrite, rattus-specific toxin, spit-fire toxin delivery system, and low-cost stoat and rat traps.

Matt Hickson: new OSPRI rep on committee

Matt is the Programme Manager for the TBfree New Zealand programme in the northern South Island.

He is based in Christchurch. In this role, he provides management and direction to contracted vector control and monitoring operations. He has worked for TBfree New Zealand since 2012. Prior to that he was Programme Manager Biodiversity for the southern portion the Department of Conservation's Te Urewera area.

Matt has been associated with the animal pest control industry for nearly 20 years in roles that have included undertaking field operations, supervising field operations and providing technical support. He has a working knowledge of the techniques that can be used to control most forms of animal pest.

NETS 2015

NOTE YOUR DIARIES NOW

Dates: 26 - 28 August 2015 **Venue:** Otago University, Dunedin

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Abstracts for NETS2015 presentations are open until the end of February 2015. In planning their presentation topics and content, submitters are asked to work around the theme, 'The Learning Never Stops'.

Presentation options are:

- 20-minute presentations;
- 3 or 5-minute GEMS, with or without a poster to present as part of the GEM.

Please submit your abstracts online at http://biosecurity.org.nz/application-form/nets2015_abstracts



The Centre for Innovation, one of the interesting features on the Otago campus. Photo: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/about/keybuildings.html>

2015 Possum monitoring courses

Plan training needs for you and your staff now.

Date	Course type	Course number	Location
3 - 4 March	Field Operative	275	Turangi
28 - 29 April	Field Operative	276	TBC
30 June - 1 July	Field Operative	277	Mosgiel
18 - 19 August	Designer	278	BC
13 -14 October	Field Operative	279	Turangi
10 - 11 November	Field Operative	280	Richmond, Nelson

To [register](#) your interest, [email](#) NPCA or phone 04-499-7559. Check NPCA website for registration information and form.

Rodent glue board traps prohibited

The prohibition of glue board traps for rodents took effect on 1 January 2015 on animal welfare grounds.

There is, however, provision for Ministerial approval where there is public interest and no viable alternatives.



A working group has been established with pest management commercial service providers, suppliers, Department of Conservation, researchers and regulators to continue investigating alternative approaches that don't rely on glue boards.

Deer recorded in Wellington city

University of Victoria researchers were surprised to 'capture' a young deer on night-time cameras set up near the Zealandia Sanctuary in Wellington last winter: - an unexpected inhabitant of the city area.

Forty cameras were set up within a kilometre of the sanctuary as part of a larger project aimed at identifying the range of pests present around the sanctuary and their impacts on the birds that are spreading out from the safe zone within the sanctuary into surrounding areas

Some 66,000 photographs taken during the autumn/winter day and night-time camera operation have been put online in sets of three images, taken in quick succession. Members of the public are invited to log in and identify what animals they see. The researchers are verifying the results to better understand the reliability of 'citizen science.'

Next, cameras will be placed around Zealandia again, alongside birdsong recorders to gather more information.

Try out the online identification game at <http://identifyanimals.co.nz/> - it's addictive!

Read more at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/news/2014/help-researchers-identify-wellingtons-wildlife/>.



The young deer was recorded on a night-time camera set up near the Brooklyn wind turbine on Wellington's outer green belt, within one kilometre of the Zealandia wildlife sanctuary.

Wallaby status extended

Wallabies have been deemed an unwanted organism by MPI for an extended period until 19 September 2016 to provide sufficient time for councils to adopt wallaby management rules within their regional pest management plans. In the interim, MPI will be working with the Bay of Plenty and Canterbury Regional Councils to commission an assessment of the potential distribution of wallabies and the inferences for biodiversity and primary industries.

It is hoped this work will help inform future decisions on wallaby management.

