



January 2025



Working towards a pest free Kawau Island

Kawau Island multi species eradication project

Wallaby and possum operation: supplier announcement

In July last year, we sent you an update about the procurement process for selecting suppliers and services for the removal of wallabies and possums from Kawau Island.

Since then, we have been undertaking a thorough and detailed assessment to determine which arrangement of suppliers would be most appropriate to carry out this work. We were pleased to receive interest from nine different suppliers. Four of those met the pre-qualification criteria and could work within our required time frames.

Each supplier / supplier consortium was interviewed by an evaluation panel, consisting of Auckland Council pest animal experts, the project lead and the Chair of the Kawau Island Community Forum group. In addition to the interview, each consortium proposal was subject to a rigorous evaluation process to determine their ability to deliver the ground-based operation.

We are pleased to announce that the successful supplier consortium is led by **Island Conservation** and **includes the Pohutukawa Trust, Cornerstone Conservation, Qualmons, Coastal Pest Solutions and Wildlife Contractors Ltd.**

This consortium represents a highly skilled team with a depth and breadth of experience that will be well-placed to confidently deliver the Kawau eradication project. Operations are yet to begin and we'll be keeping the community informed every step of the way.

As a charitable organisation, Island Conservation is not profit driven, instead motivated by the outcomes that the Kawau project will generate for biodiversity, livelihoods and New Zealand's aim to be predator free. Over the past four years, members of this team have successfully removed invasive species from dozens of islands, resulting in significant benefits to people and wildlife. Richard Griffiths, Island Conservation's Head of Operations for the Pacific region, brings many years' experience to this project, having led eradication projects on inhabited islands and playing a critical role in leading the Rangitoto/Motutapu multi species eradication and the removal of rats from Hauturu. The **Pohutukawa Trust** and **Island Conservation** have well established relationships with the Kawau community. **Pohutukawa Trust** having controlled wallabies and possums across many of the island's properties for decades and **Island Conservation** having led the property-by-property engagement process.

Cornerstone Conservation are rated alongside the best hunters and trappers in the country for professional pest animal management. They will work alongside the Pohutukawa Trust, benefiting from local knowledge and relationships.

The **Qualmons team** will focus primarily on the possum eradication and have proven expertise working in both the Auckland and Northland regions, utilising their detector dogs where possums are present in low numbers.

Further sub-contracted support will be provided by **Wildlife Contractors** including Guus Knopers who is an industry leader in conservation dog programmes, and Paul Keeling of **Coastal Pest Solutions** who has direct experience from the Rangitoto and Motutapu Island possum and wallaby eradication.

This consortium provides the full suite of required expertise and experience to work with community members in successfully removing possums and wallabies from Kawau Island in a safe and respectful manner for all residents and landowners.

Next steps

Operations are yet to begin. The consortium, led by Island Conservation, will begin site preparation work in February to get Kawau Island ready for the wallaby and possum eradication. This will include setting up infrastructure like a temporary wallaby fence and wildlife camera network, establishing a base, storage areas, safety measures, organising equipment and resources and refining the operational plan as required.

Change to where operations are starting

To accommodate site-specific conditions and enhance operational efficiency, the operations team have decided to start in the south of the island. The active operational work, such as hunting, will begin in the Kawau Historic Reserve and expand out to School House Bay and South Cove before progressing northward.

Preparations will ensure the operation proceeds in an organized, smooth, and safe manner, in close collaboration with landowners and the wider Kawau community. The project team will be in contact with you should any site preparation work need to take place on your property. If you have any questions, please contact the operations lead, Island Conservation by email: kawau@islandconservation.org or phone 027 266 8373.

Kiwi survey

As part of the Pest Free Kawau Island project, Auckland Council is partnering with Save the Kiwi to carry out kiwi survey work on Kawau Island. In mid-January, we were able to conduct the first of three site visits to carry out a survey of kiwi on the island, using trained kiwi detection dogs.

During their four days on the island, they found a total of 10 birds, and handled nine of them, recording key data and microchipping these birds for long-term tracking. DNA from these birds will also be processed so that we can further ascertain the origins of these kiwi.

The team reported that these birds were observed as being in a relatively poor condition, with short bill length and low weight (comparative to surveys conducted on the northland mainland)). These findings align with observations that because wallabies are consuming vast amounts of the forest understory, food availability is limited, particularly for younger kiwi. It is our hope that the work that we are undertaking on Kawau Island will lead to a healthier and thriving kiwi population in the future.

A Kiwi Call Count, led by the community, is also scheduled for May 2025. This annual survey invites the Kawau Island community to listen for and record kiwi calls during a specific time window. These counts, conducted nationally as part of the Kiwi Call Count Database, provide valuable data about kiwi activity and distribution. Save the Kiwi will offer training to help the community



Image credit: Tom Donovan, Jan 25

participate, and this work will complement the Kiwi Dog Survey, creating a fuller picture of the island's kiwi population. If you would like to take part in or help lead the Kawau Kiwi Call Count in 2025, please email us at kawauislandproject@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Sneezeweed

You may have come across a small, unassuming herb with delicate daisy-like flowers on the tracks and paths of Kawau. It's called sneezeweed (*Centipeda minima* subsp. *minima*) and is a native herb that thrives in seasonally wet or damp areas like the edges of ponds, tracks, gravel paths, and even a regularly mown lawn. It often makes a home in disturbed environments where competition from other plants is minimal, and it is a nationally threatened species.

To protect this plant, Auckland Council has set up permanent monitoring plots in the Department of Conservation reserve on Kawau Island, where they will be keeping a close eye on the sneezeweed, post pest animal eradication. These plots were set up in November 2024 and revisited in January 2025, and the annual monitoring will continue every January, gathering valuable data on the plant's health and growth in the absence of browsing animals. By tracking its progress year after year, botanists will be able to determine if any specialized interventions are needed to support the plant's survival as Kawau's ecosystem evolves.

Monitoring plots are accompanied by a small pink tag on a metal stake. Botanists are using these plots to collect essential information to protect this rare native herb. The measurements taken here are crucial—being repeated in the exact same spot each year to ensure that the data remains consistent and valuable.

Sneezeweed may be small, but is a vital piece of the puzzle when it comes to understanding the delicate balance of New Zealand's ecosystems. As we continue to monitor and support its survival, it's a reminder of how even the tiniest plants play a role in the environment.



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