

#### Where we are

Maungataniwha Forest in the Far North of Aotearoa New Zealand is one of our last northern native rainforests left. It has become a significant and visionary rewilding project to restore the health, abundance and mauri of an ancient forest ecosystem.

Historically logged, this forest had little pest continual control since possums arrived in the 1960s and had been left to slide into collapse. Introduced animals killed wildlife and ancient trees. But today the forest is the headwaters and heart of ecological restoration, which will eventually be linked with projects from mountains to sea.

The boundaries of three great iwi meet at Maungataniwha. These tribes are Te Rarawa, Ngāti Kahu and Ngāpuhi.



The dark green patches show the remaining native rainforests in Northland.



## **Highlights & Uniqueness**

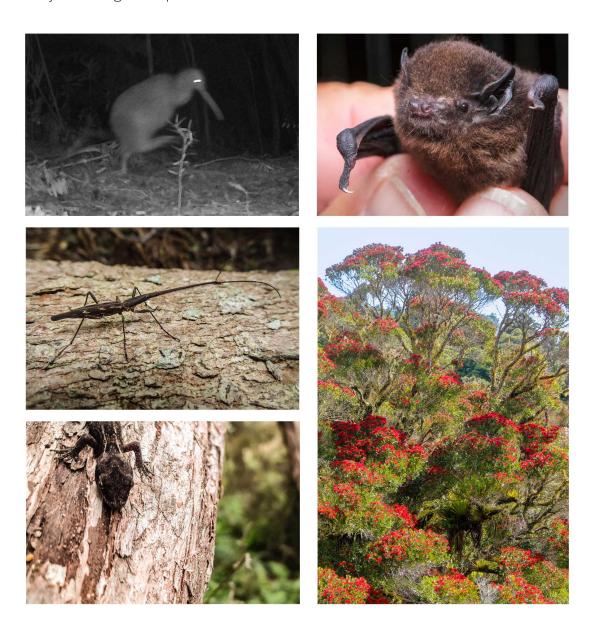
Northland tusked wētā

The last glaciation, 10,000 years ago, did not cover Northland with glaciers. This means the remaining native forests, including Maungataniwha Forest, have some of the greatest plant diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Maungataniwha Forest is home to an unnamed endemic gecko (related to Pacific gecko), Northland tusked wētā, pūpūrangi kauri snails, brown kiwi and we have detected critically threatened pekapeka long-tailed bats.

Over 300 native plant species from tiny orchids to giant kahikatea and kauri, which existed before dinosaurs, live within the project area.

Ongoing pest control is allowing an abundance of native plants to flower and fruit making nectar and berries available as food for native birds and bugs. Scientific research underway is finding new species of insects within this forest.



#### **Forest Carbon and Climate**

Possums have eaten their way through Maungataniwha Forest from the top-down since their Northland arrival in the 1960s. The added predation by possums pushed some native bird species, like kākā, the forest parrot, and kākāriki, forest parakeets, to become locally extinct.

Ancient forest giants like northern rātā and pūriri and canopies of smaller kohekohe, tōwai, rewarewa and taraire had escaped earlier logging and burning. But their leaves and buds are tasty to possums. Bit by bit branches died, then whole tree crowns as the forest canopy was being killed.

As trees die and rot they release carbon dioxide. Native forests that previously had been strong and stable carbon sinks, increasingly bleed carbon into the atmosphere, contributing to climate heating.

Possums also spend time of the ground and - along with rats and feral pigs - eat vast numbers of seedlings which would otherwise grow to be future forests.

Naturally the native forest cloaking Maungataniwha would have had many levels. From the tall ancient canopy over 12 storeys high, with a substantial understorey canopy of small trees, shrubs vines and ferns. All of these break the fall of raindrops, absorb water and slowly release it.

By controlling introduced pests we:

- protect and increase abundance of native biodiversity
- increase climate resilience of the forest and livelihoods, homes and businesses downstream from more extreme flooding
- enable native forests to become healthy carbon sinks once more



## Stoats are serial killers

Stoats kill 95% of kiwi chicks before they reach one year old if there is no pest control.

Stoats are supercharged introduced predators that have to keep killing constantly because they find it hard to retain body fat. Stoats eat bugs, eggs, chicks and adult birds – sometimes their prey is larger than they are.

One stoat on average kills two birds per day and lives for two years in the wild. By trapping just one stoat you have potentially saved 1460 birds.

The Maungataniwha project has recorded 638 stoat kills over four years. So if we look over the project we are winning because we have potentially saved the lives of 465,740 birds!

The forest is coming back to life – but only if we continue this work.



#### **Pests killed**

Between January 2021 and April 2025 contractors have killed 20,253 introduced predators in Maungataniwha Forest. This is allowing native birds to nest in peace. We are enabling native wildlife and trees to survive and thrive.

"20,000+ pests killed in just over four years"

Breakdown of trapped introduced predators:

7,662 Rats



638 Stoats

**11,661** Possums



236 Weasels

88 Feral Cats





238 Hedgehogs





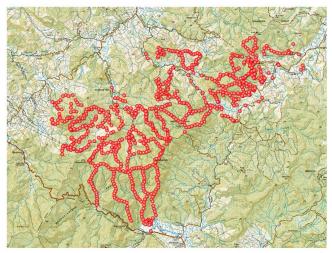
## Scope of project

This 7,000 hectare predator control project was set up between 2021 and 2025 under Jobs for Nature funding to protect ancient forest and native wildlife, including kīwī, from introduced predators.

The project was built upon existing smaller scale work and is made up of three different landcare groups from Ōtangaroa, Mangamuka and Honeymoon Valley who collaborate. Overall the project is managed by a volunteer governance group with hapū and Honeymoon Valley Landcare Trust support. At the heart of this rewilding project is local people protecting the local forest.

The Maungataniwha forest protection project now:

- includes 167 kilometres of tracks in place with over 1,400 predator traps.
- employs 10 local contractors who service the trap network 14 times each year, clearing traps and resetting them.
- includes 40% of the project area as private landholdings and 60% is publicly owned conservation land



Trap network



## Whakawhanaungatanga

A wananga (an immersive learning experience over a few days) was hosted at Ōtangaroa Marae that bought together kaitiaki from across Taitokerau, the Far North with a field trip into our project alongside rongoa practitioners. The wananga was supported by Save the Kiwi, DOC and the Whangaroa Papa Hapū.

December 2024 saw a hui at Mangamuka Marae where hapū and DOC members were updated about the project.















# The Team







Ka Waiatatia Maungataniwha

Photo credits:

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