

Vandals put wildlife at risk in the Okura Bush Reserve

13 December 2017

On or just before the 7th of December, 60 rat traps, deployed and managed by volunteers on the Okura Bush Walk, were vandalised. Torn down and thrown into the bushes. Friends of Okura Bush (FOOB), which fundraises and organises the pest eradication programme, is mystified: why would anyone want to do this??

Regular visitors to the Okura Bush will have noticed the significant plant regrowth that has occurred in the past few years. Possums, rats and mice in particular eat seeds, seedlings and young shoots, effectively leaving the forest floor barren. Since 2014, FOOB volunteers have humanely removed 2269 rats, 3912 mice and 484 possums with a very visible result in the regeneration taking place.

“We don't use poison”, said Geoff Reid of FOOB, “Our traps are effective, quick to set and humane. Why would anyone want to stop pest control in the Okura Bush. It's very sad, especially for the birds, rare plants and smaller creatures that are starting to reappear there and which need our ongoing protection”.

It's also very frustrating for the team of volunteers, who dedicate many hours every week to clearing and setting the traps. “This is an ongoing battle and our contribution to the effort to clear New Zealand of pests by 2050”, says Geoff. “If anyone has any idea who is responsible for the vandalism, please let us know, or tell the police”.

FOOB depends on local support and contributions. It's aim is to support the health of the beautiful Okura Bush through planting, weed management and pest control, so that the Reserve can be enjoyed by the 70,000 annual visitors. FOOB will be fundraising at the annual Okura Forest Festival on Saturday 17th February in Okura. Contributions can also be made through the FOOB website: www.okurabush.org.nz