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Rat trap theft puts Whaingaroa wildlife at risk

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A spate of rat trap thievery is hampering Karioi Project's predator control programme in a year when the numbers of rodents are predicted to spike.



forests boosts rodent and stoat numbers, and when the seed is gone, they turn to native birds, bats, lizards and insects.

Karioi Project manager Kristel van Houte says it comes at a vulnerable time as oi (grey-faced petrel) – the project’s keystone species – return to the Whaingaroa coastline for the first time this year to begin breeding.

“We’ve noticed three times as many rats this year and we are increasing our trap checks in response to the increasing numbers of predators.”

Karioi biodiversity rangers Duncan Mackay and Dayton Keremeta are finding the traps missing but say the thieves are leaving the tunnels behind and are concerned the misuse of the traps will pose a danger to native wildlife as well as domestic animals.

“The tunnels are designed for a predator to enter at one end to take the bait, without the tunnel other animals are vulnerable to getting trapped,” Duncan says.

battle the rodent plague and Kristel says it’s disheartening to encounter the missing traps.

“We had an amazing response from the community when we put the call out for more volunteers. We would encourage people who are interested in predator control to use our trap library.”

The Karioi Backyard Hub Trap Library loans traps for up to three months at little to no cost and there are already 240 backyard traps in Whaingaroa.

Karioi Project volunteer coordinator Bexie Towle is hosting oi nights, which provides the opportunity for the community to learn about oi monitoring, visit their habitat and possibly hear or see the birds.

To find out more about the trap library or oi nights visit www.karioimaunga.co.nz or check out Karioi Project Facebook page.

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