

December 2025



Kawau Island multi-species eradication project

Working towards a pest free Kawau Island

Pause in active operations over summer

The project team would like to thank the Kawau Island community for your incredible support and cooperation throughout 2025. Your encouragement, reported sightings and help along the way has been vital to the progress we've made.

While **hunting, trapping and toxin operations will pause throughout the peak summer period**, wildlife camera monitoring will continue through January. Additionally, the team will be installing some temporary shade cloth fences to help reduce reinvasion into management areas where wallabies have already been removed or are in the process of being removed.

It has been a busy seven months, with the operational plan being tested by variable vegetation types, differences in wallaby behaviour, weather delays, and the challenges that come with targeting invasive species on an inhabited island. The lessons learned will help refine our approach and hold us in good stead to continue our progress in the new year.



Figure 1. Weka family in Schoolhouse Bay.

Conclusion of the remote Challenger Point treatment trial

The small-scale treatment trial was designed to evaluate foliage baiting methods for reducing wallaby populations and test assumptions relating to alternative food availability, wallaby behaviour, bait palatability (introducing cut foliage with 1080 gel as a lure) and presentation. With the conclusion of the trial last week, Island Conservation's Geospatial lead is reviewing wildlife camera footage and analysing data to assess the effectiveness of this approach and determine its suitability for inclusion moving ahead. These findings will feed into the Technical Advisory Group discussions in January, shaping strategies for 2026.

Since the operation began in May, the field camera network has confirmed a substantial reduction in wallaby numbers, particularly in Block 1, as well as promising progress towards possum eradication. Current modelling suggests that fewer than a dozen wallabies remain in Block 1, however with reduced hunting pressure during the break, monitoring is likely to reveal a small increase. When field operations resume in early 2026, the priority will be removing these last individuals—often the hardest to catch.

Possum handlers will return in the New Year to confirm clearance in Block 1 and strengthen buffer zones to prevent reinvasion. They will also sweep South Cove to verify zero detection of possums in Block 2.

Early Christmas announcement: Publication of the baseline forest ecosystems report

Auckland Council's Environmental Services team are pleased to share [the forest ecosystems of Te Kawau Tūmaro ō Tōi: a baseline assessment 2025](#).

A forest monitoring network was established on Te Kawau Tūmaro ō Tōi / Kawau Island for the purposes of establishing a critical baseline of forest ecological integrity, highlighting current ecological issues, identifying trends associated with mammalian pest eradication programme outcomes and informing adaptive management to improve overall success of the programme.

This report describes a baseline snapshot of the current condition of dominant forest ecosystems on the island prior to the implementation of the pest eradication programme. It showed that:

- Overall, it is evident that the browsing pressure from wallabies and other mammalian pests has degraded the forest ecosystems, creating a recruitment bottleneck and arrested forest succession across much of Kawau Island.
- The successful eradication of pest mammals shows strong potential to release these forests from their current degraded state.
- The high indigenous dominance, high numbers of seedlings, and relatively intact bird communities, suggest a robust chance of forest recovery over time.
- Recovery trajectories will likely vary significantly between ecosystem types – with kānuka-dominated areas and exotic forests potentially being slower to diversify than areas with existing broadleaved forest components.
- Close monitoring of weed species will be essential, as the removal of browsing pressure may allow rapid expansion of exotic plants which are currently suppressed.

The baseline data collected through this assessment provides a foundational snapshot of forest ecosystem health on Kawau Island, allowing for future monitoring and adaptive management to ensure successful ecological outcomes from the 'working towards a pest free Kawau Island' programme.

Vegetation plot and bird count remeasures will be required over time to assess the outcomes of the pest free Kawau Island programme. It is recommended that in the short-term, remeasures occur every two to three years post eradication to enable emerging pressures to be identified and mitigated; followed by a five-year frequency in the long term. Species-level population monitoring should also be considered to better understand outcomes of the pest free Kawau Island programme on the populations of high-value native species on the island.

Argentine Ant update

The Environmental Services team carried out Argentine ant surveillance at Vivian Bay earlier this month. After several days of monitoring, no new nests were found at Vivian Bay; however, three new sites were detected and successfully controlled at Little Vivian Bay. A highlight of this visit was the noticeable abundance of birdlife, including kāka, tūī, kererū, and more.

At Schoolhouse Bay, the second ant treatment is scheduled for the second week of December—weather permitting. We would like to thank the Kawau community for your ongoing support in helping us control this invasive species.



Figure 2: Argentine Ant dog Jamie, and his handler, Brian, at work in Vivian Bay.

Regional Environment and Natural Heritage (RENH) grant now open

The RENH grant supports community-led conservation projects across the Auckland region. Applicants can be any group, organisation or individual carrying out conservation work that:

- protects significant region-wide ecosystems, species and habitats
- increases community involvement and builds conservation group capacity
- supports meaningful engagement with Māori and reflects Te Ao Māori values
- carries out work that benefits or affects a large area.

Key dates:

- Applications open 14 November 2025
- Applications close 25 January 2026
- Applicants notified May 2026
- Project start date after 1 July 2026

Workshops available (online only):

- General workshops for first-time applicants: 4 Dec 2025 and 14 Jan 2026, 1-3pm
- Advanced drop-in sessions: 10 Dec 2025 and 15 Jan 2026, 4:30-6:30pm

More information:

Read the [Applicant Guide](#) and [Community Grants Policy](#) before applying. [Find out more on how to apply.](#)

Keep up the good work this summer

Keeping Kawau free from the threat of invasive pests starts in your own backyard:

- Leave a dedicated set of tools and boots at the bach so you're not bringing unwanted weeds from the mainland.
- If you can't, give everything a good scrub before you travel.
- Check out the [Pest ID search](#) to locate information about pest plants in Auckland.
- When buying plants, choose local suppliers or look for the *Plant Pass* label.

 *Small steps in your garden make a big difference for native plants, birds, and insects across the Hauraki Gulf.*



Wishing you a safe, relaxing summer from the Pest Free Kawau team and all of us at Auckland Council.

To keep up to date on operational progress and important safety information visit [Working towards a pest free Kawau Island](#). Please observe all signage and instructions relating to operational activity.

If you need to get in touch urgently with a member of the team over the break, please contact Auckland Council's Infoline 09 301 0101, otherwise email kawauislandproject@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz. We will return to monitoring the inbox from Monday 12th January.

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