Sniffing out predators

Using olfaction to protect native species



Grant Norbury

Manaaki Whenua
Landcare Research

PREDATOR FREE NZ

Key management objective is to attract mammals to our cunning devices

	Olfactory		Auditory		Visual	
ATTRACTION	Food	Social	Food	Social	Food	Social

124
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Behaviour of stoats (*Mustela erminea*) raiding the nests of rock wrens (*Xenicus gilviventris*) in alpine New Zealand

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Abstract Understanding the behaviour of invasive predators is an important step in developing effective predator control techniques. Stoats (*Mustela erminea*), introduced to New Zealand in the 1880s, are major predators of indigenous birds in forest, wetland, and coastal habitats, and are an emerging threat to alpine biodiversity. Stoats have recently been found to prey upon rock wrens (*Xenicus gilviventris*), New Zealand's only truly alpine bird species. We monitored 32 rock wren nests using motion activated infrared (IR) cameras from 2 locations in the Southern Alps over 3 breeding seasons, 2012-2015. The behaviour of stoats that preyed upon 13 rock wren nests was quantified to describe how they behaved around rock wren nests, and to determine whether understanding these behaviours could lead to improved predator control to help to protect this vulnerable bird species. Stoats usually hunted alone. They could reach nests on cliffs and on the ground equally easily by climbing or jumping to them. Rock wren nests were attacked most frequently during the day (85% of nests) and at the chick stage in their life cycle, making this their most vulnerable stage. We suggest that this is because stoats are attracted to nests by the auditory cues of chicks calling out for food. Nests were rarely visited by stoats before or after the observed predation events. Stoats left little evidence of nest predation events beyond enlarging nest entrances. There was no indication that IR cameras or the actions of field workers affected predation behaviour, although some stoats clearly knew the cameras were there. There is an urgent need to deploy effective stoat control to recover rock wren populations. Control should focus on cliff habitats as well as on more accessible ground nests, and, if resources are limited, should primarily focus on the nestling stage. Future research could trial auditory lures to attract stoats to traps, and determine the vulnerability of rock wrens to predation outside the breeding season.

Little, L.; King, C.M.; O'Donnell, C.F.J. 2017. Behaviour of stoats (*Mustela erminea*) raiding the nests of rock wrens (*Xenicus*

SCIENCE FOR CONSERVATION 330

Mammalian pheromones – new opportunities for improved predator control in New Zealand

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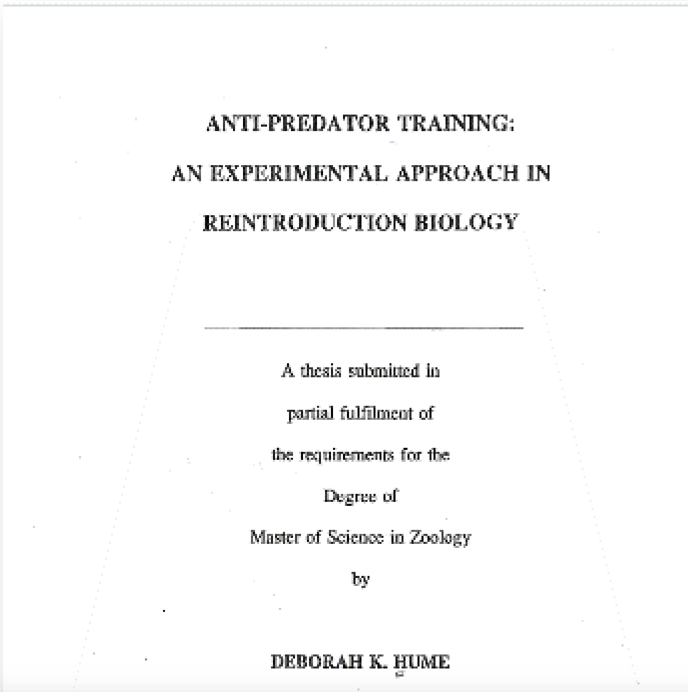
New Zealand Government

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

	Olfactory		Auditory		Visual	
ATTRACTION	**Food**	**Social**	**Food**	**Social**	**Food**	**Social**
DETERRANCE		Social		Social		Social



ANTI-PREDATOR TRAINING:

AN EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH IN

REINTRODUCTION BIOLOGY

A thesis submitted in

partial fulfilment of

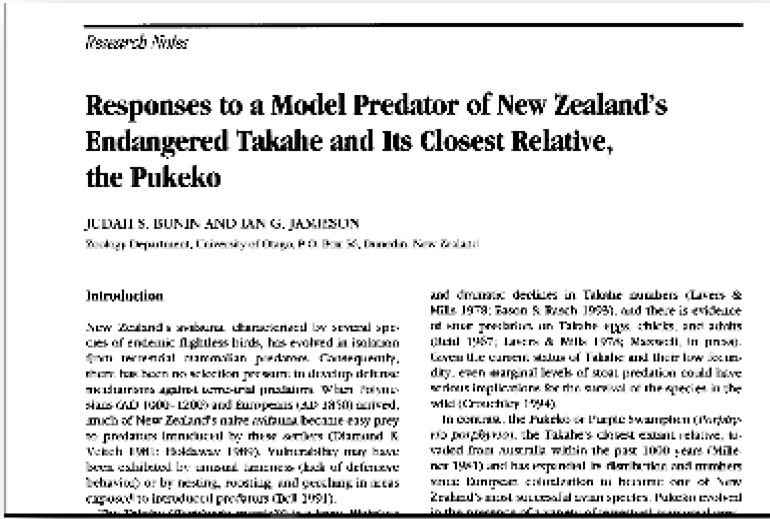
the requirements for the

Degree of

Master of Science in Zoology

by

DEBORAH K. HUME



Research Notes

Responses to a Model Predator of New Zealand's Endangered Takahe and Its Closest Relative, the Pukeko

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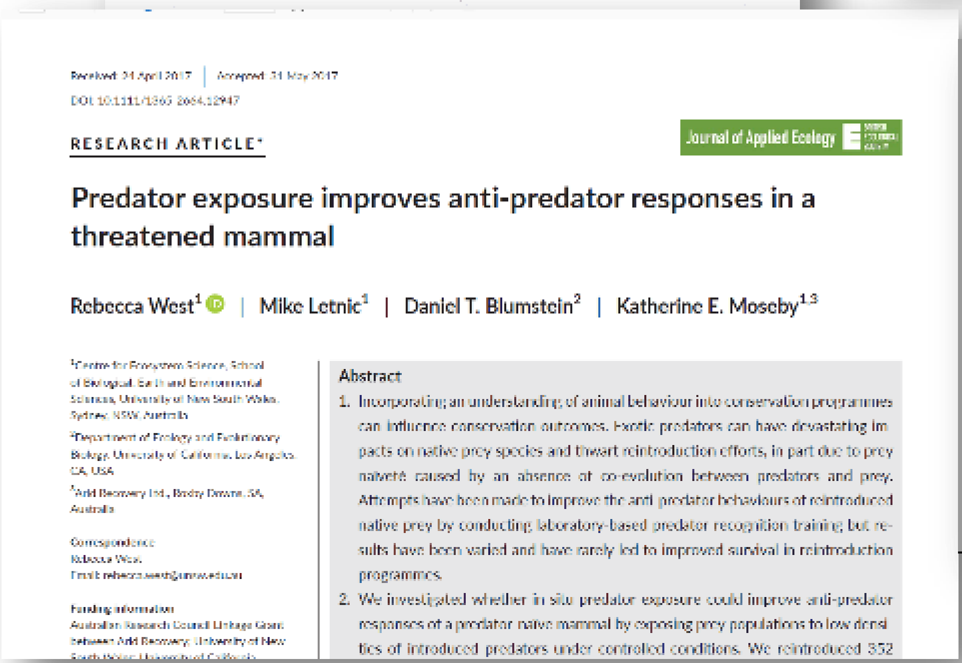
Introduction



Received: 24 April 2017 | Accepted: 24 May 2017

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

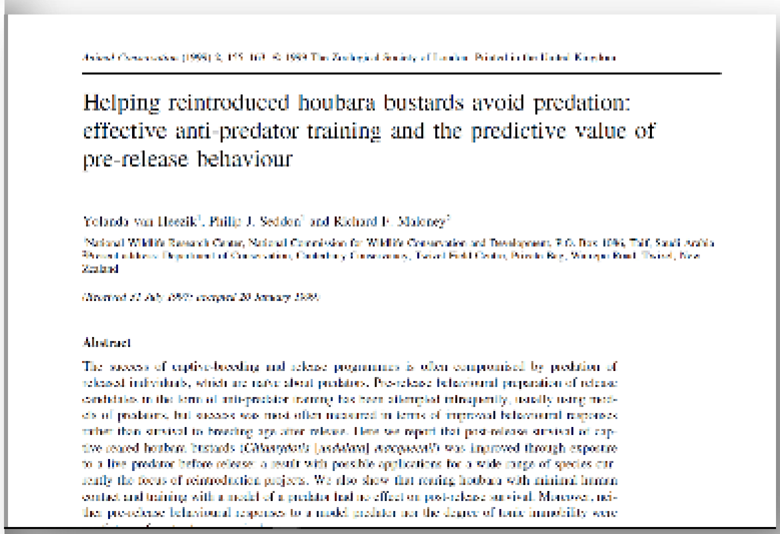
Journal of Applied Ecology

Predator exposure improves anti-predator responses in a threatened mammal

Rebecca West[1] | Mike Letnic[1] | Daniel T. Blumstein[2] | Katherine E. Moseby[1,3]

Abstract

1. Incorporating an understanding of animal behaviour into conservation programmes can influence conservation outcomes. Exotic predators can have devastating impacts on native prey species and thwart reintroduction efforts, in part due to prey naiveté caused by an absence of co-evolution between predators and prey. Attempts have been made to improve the anti-predator behaviours of reintroduced native prey by conducting laboratory-based predator recognition training but results have been varied and have rarely led to improved survival in reintroduction programmes.
2. We investigated whether in situ predator exposure could improve anti-predator responses of a predator-naive mammal by exposing prey populations to low densities of introduced predators under controlled conditions. We reintroduced 352



Helping reintroduced houbara bustards avoid predation: effective anti-predator training and the predictive value of pre-release behaviour

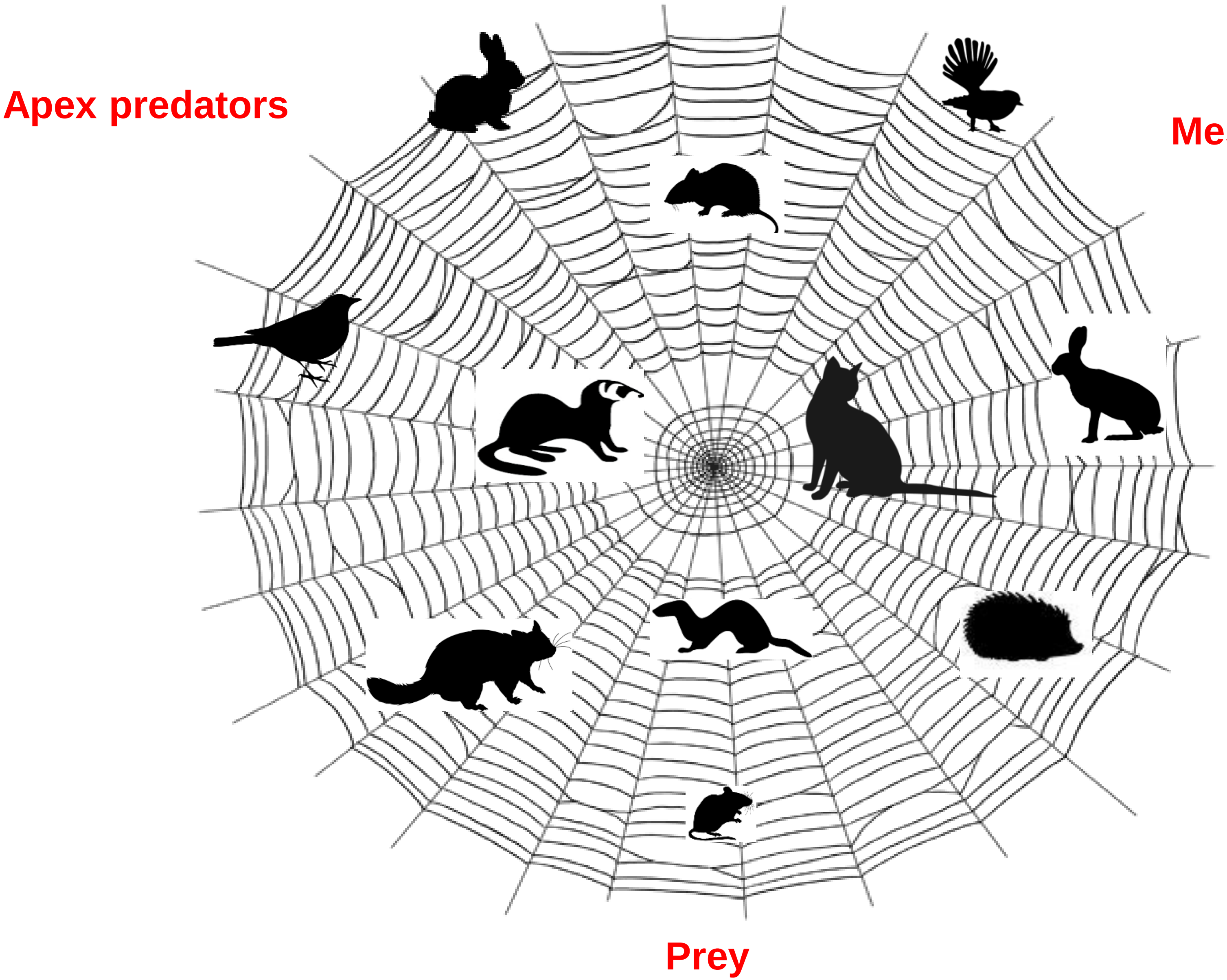
Yolanda van Heezik[1], Philip J. Seddon[1] and Richard F. Maloney[2]

Abstract

Patrick Garvey

Developing a 'super lure' for stoats and weasels

Olfactory web of information



Experiments - Predator interactions

Stoats **fear and avoid** ferrets and cats

Garvey, Glen & Pech (2015) Biological Invasions

Stoats are **attracted** to the odour of ferrets and cats

Garvey, Glen & Pech (2016) Behaviour Ecology & Sociobiology

Information is power…..

- Risk assessment
- Niche partitioning
- Mustelid family

Mustelid lure - trial

Kokako project Hunua ranges

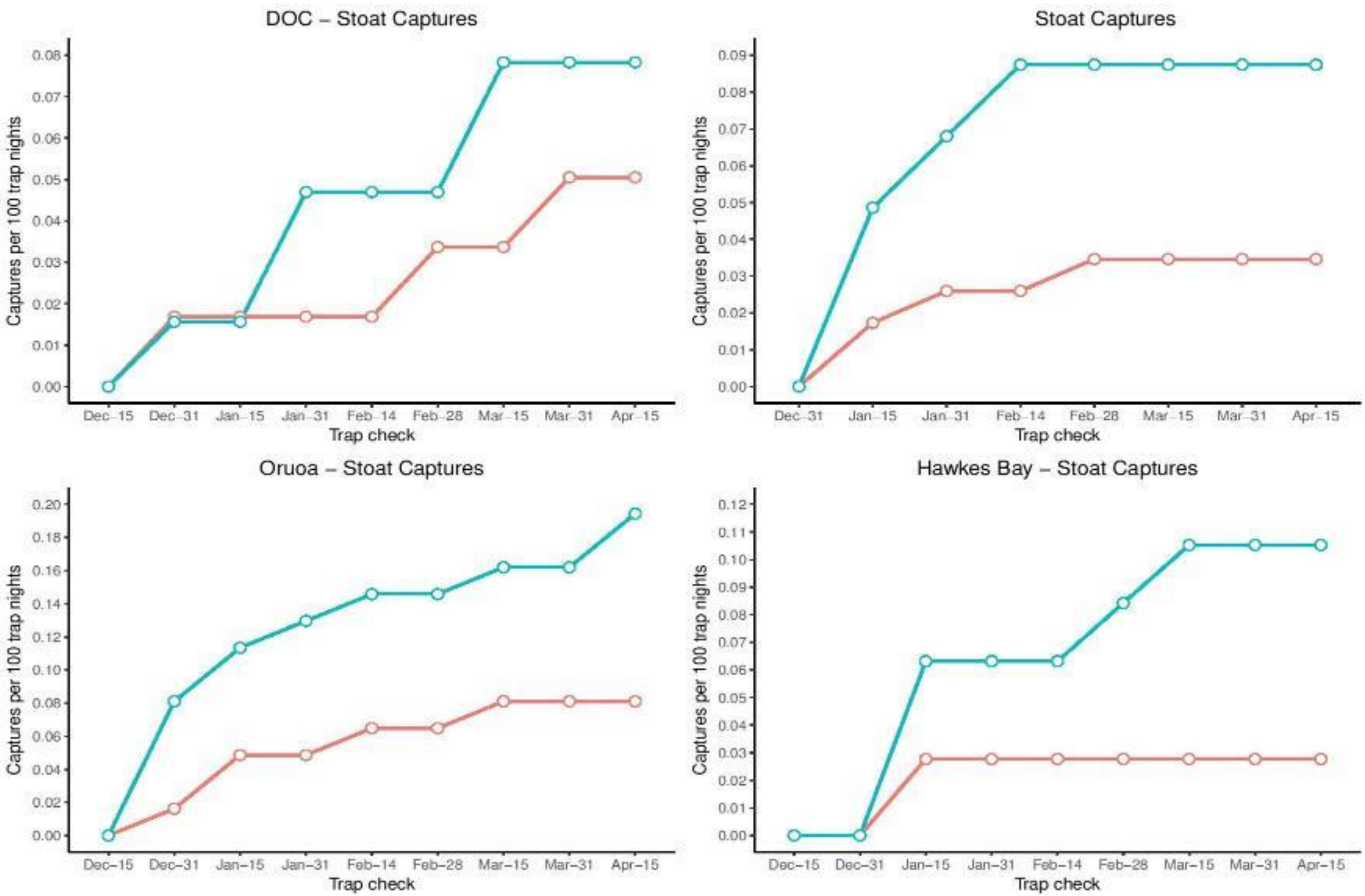
WHAREROA GUARDIANS COMMUNITY TRUST

WHANGAWEHI CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

Department of Conservation *Te Papa Atawhai*

Kaweka Forest Park

Lure trial – Stoat captures

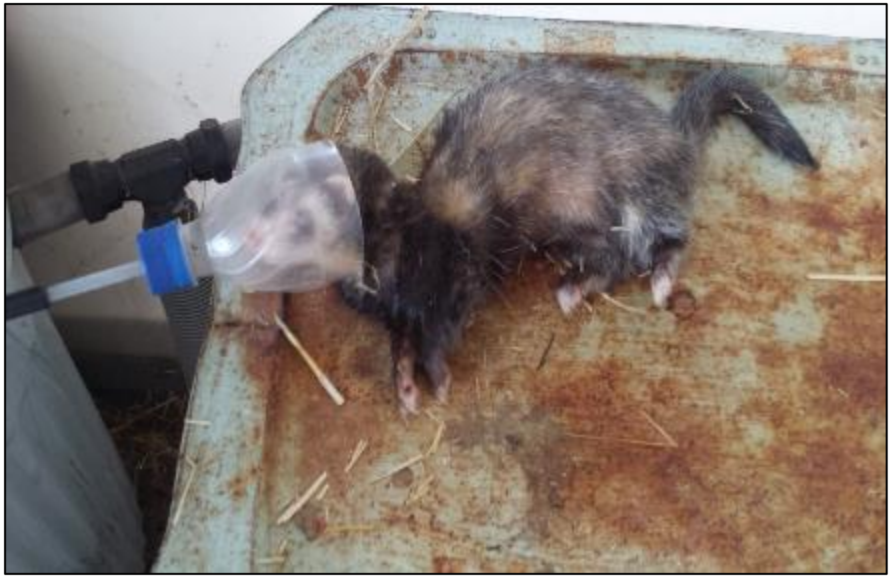


Natural lure has limitations!

- Difficult to collect
- Landscape scale
- Longevity could be extended

*** Need to synthesise ferret odour**

Behaviour trial

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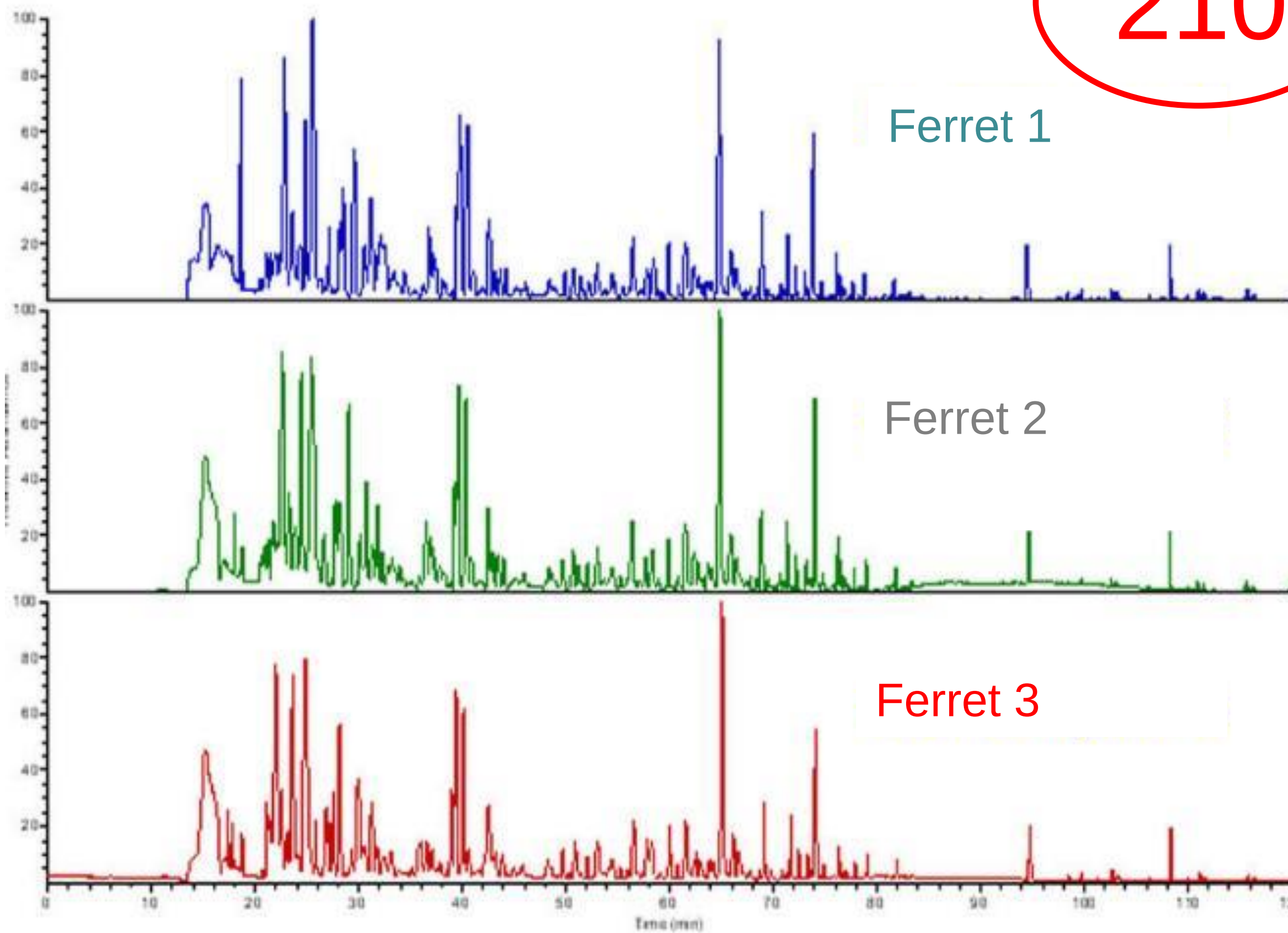
14°C
M
CAM106
RECONYX
SEE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN MISSING...

Chemical analysis

210



Synthesising mustelid lure

Behavioural trials combined with chemical analysis

- 8 key compounds identified
- Testing the most attractive combination


HAWKE'S BAY
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THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF SCIENCE
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

	Olfactory		Auditory		Visual	
ATTRACTION	**Food**	**Social**	**Food**	**Social**	**Food**	**Social**

Remove social reward and habituate to cue

Remove food reward and habituate to cue

Exploiting olfactory learning in alien rats to protect birds' eggs

Catherine J. Price[a,b,1] and Peter B. Banks[a,b]

[a]Evolution and Ecology Research Centre, School of Biological, Earth, and Environmental Sciences, University of New South Wales, Randwick, NSW, 2052 Australia; and [b]Behavioural Ecology and Conservation Research Group, School of Biological Sciences, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, 2006 Australia

Edited by Stan Boutin, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada, and accepted by the Editorial Board September 14, 2012 (received for review July 5, 2012)

Predators must ignore unhelpful background "noise" within information-rich environments and focus on useful cues of prey activity to forage efficiently. Learning to disregard unrewarding cues should happen quickly, weakening future interest in the cue. Prey odor, which is rapidly investigated by predators, may be particularly appropriate for testing whether consistently unrewarded cues are ignored, and whether such behavior can be exploited to benefit prey.

we predict that repeated failed foraging attempts "push" the cues into the background of a predator's sensory realm so misleading or irrelevant information can be ignored in the future, a process that efficient predators must use constantly. Although actual sensory perception of the cue may not be affected, decreasing cue salience and responsiveness in this context is a short-term behavioral adaptation likely to arise out of a combination of associative

Messing with the mind

Using unrewarding prey stimuli to reduce predator impacts

Background

- NZ’s endemic fauna evolved with avian predators that hunt using sight
- Fauna visually cryptic with few defences against mammals that hunt mostly using smell

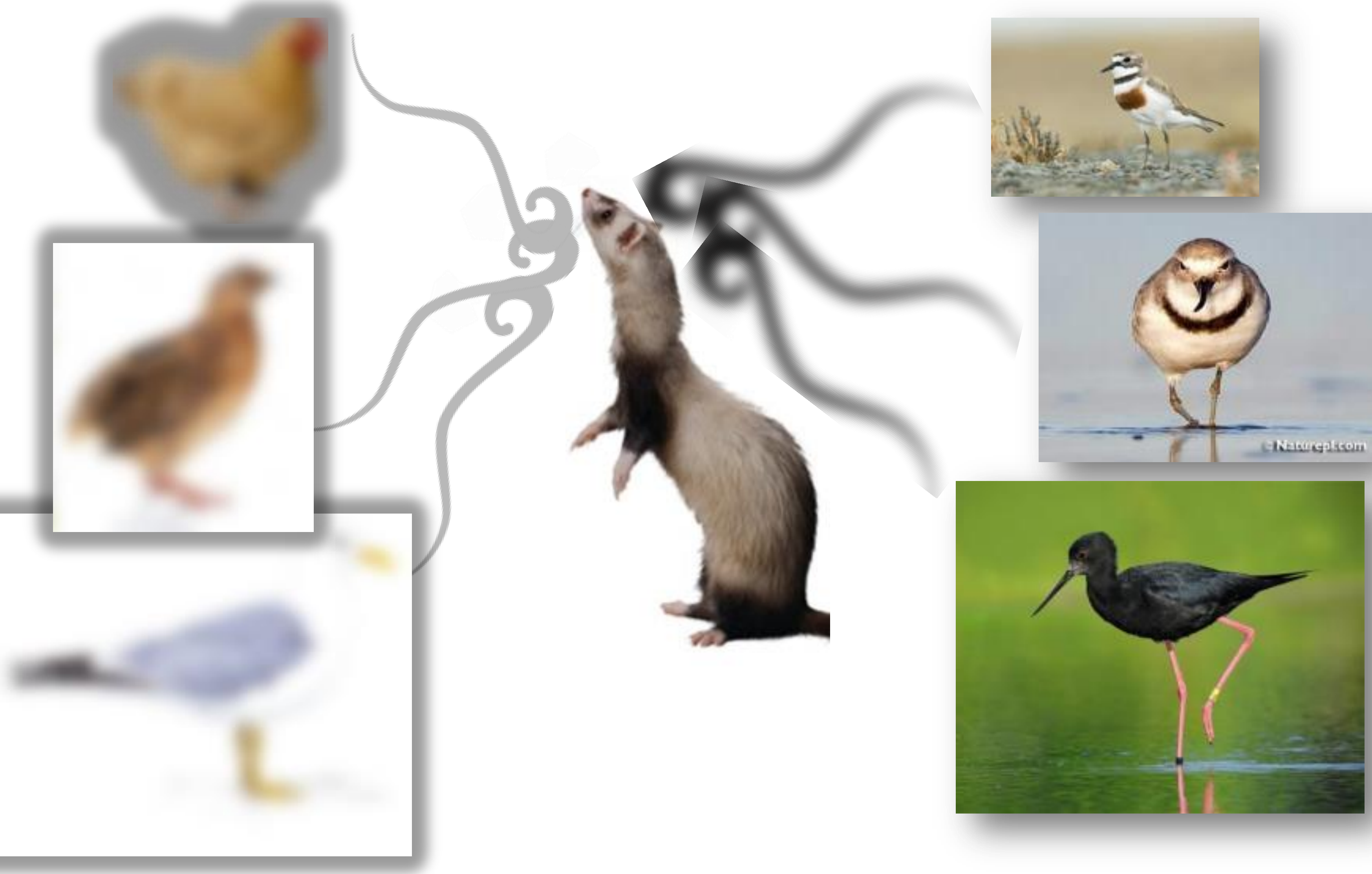
Background

- NZ’s endemic fauna evolved with avian predators that hunt using sight
- Fauna visually cryptic with few defences against mammals that hunt mostly using smell
- Mismatch between visual defences and olfactory hunting

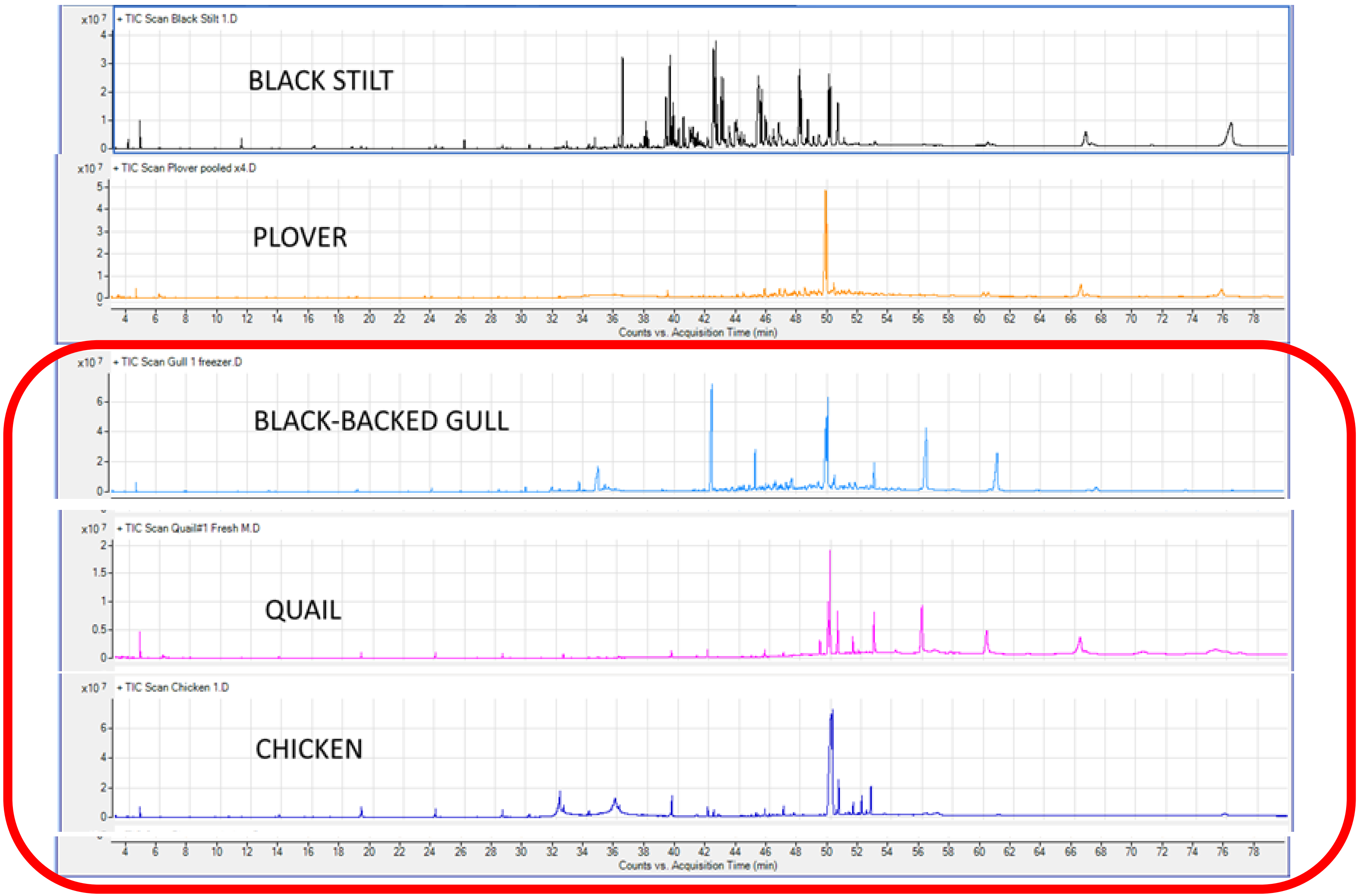
What can be done to address this mismatch?

- Robert MacArthur, Eric Pianka, Merritt Emlen – predators constantly make foraging decisions to maximise energy intake
- Hunger forces focus on rewarding cues – ignore unprofitable cues that waste energy
- Cryptic prey ignored if more easily detectable prey available

Habituation Generalisation

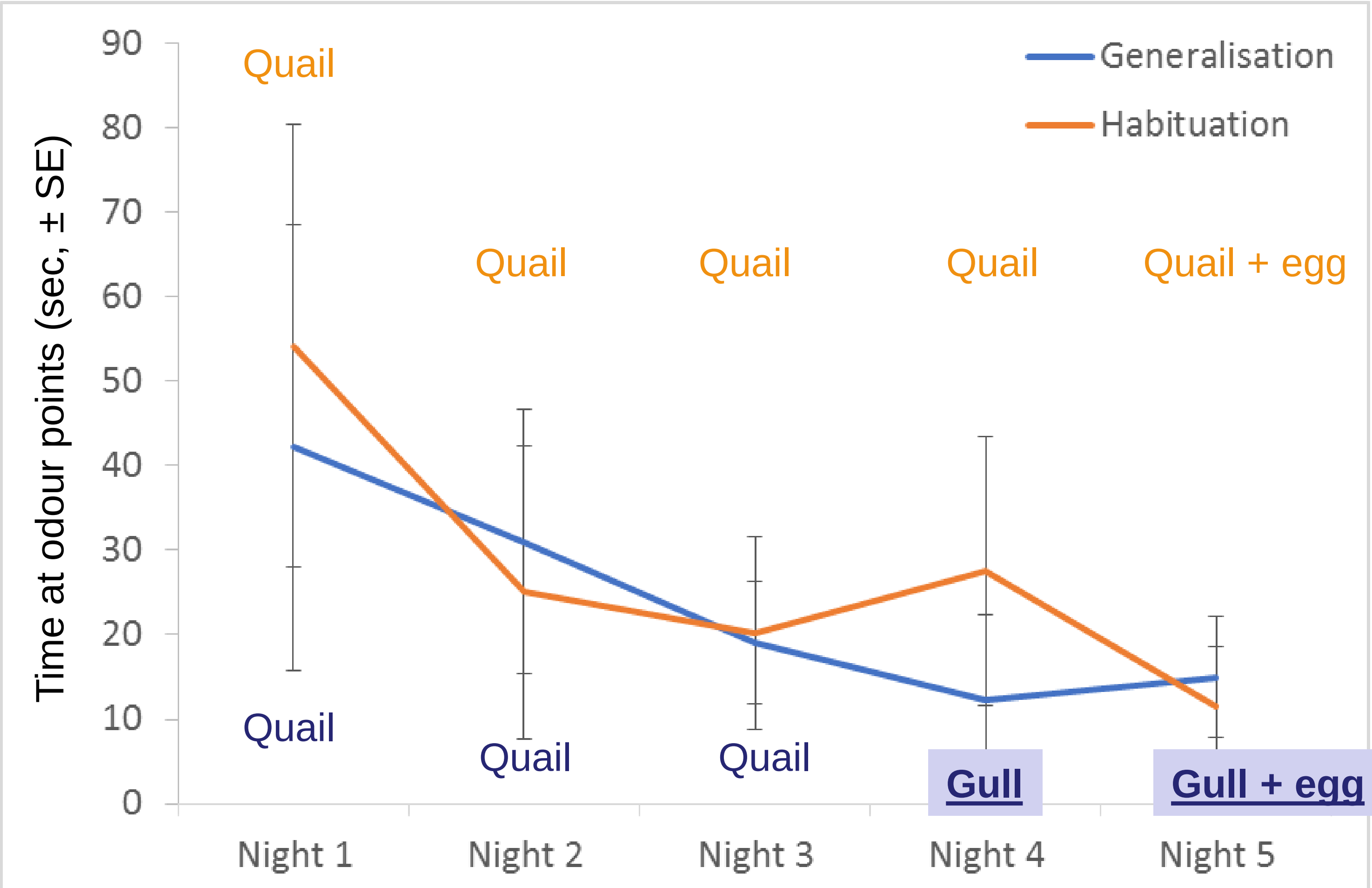


Chemical profiles of bird odours

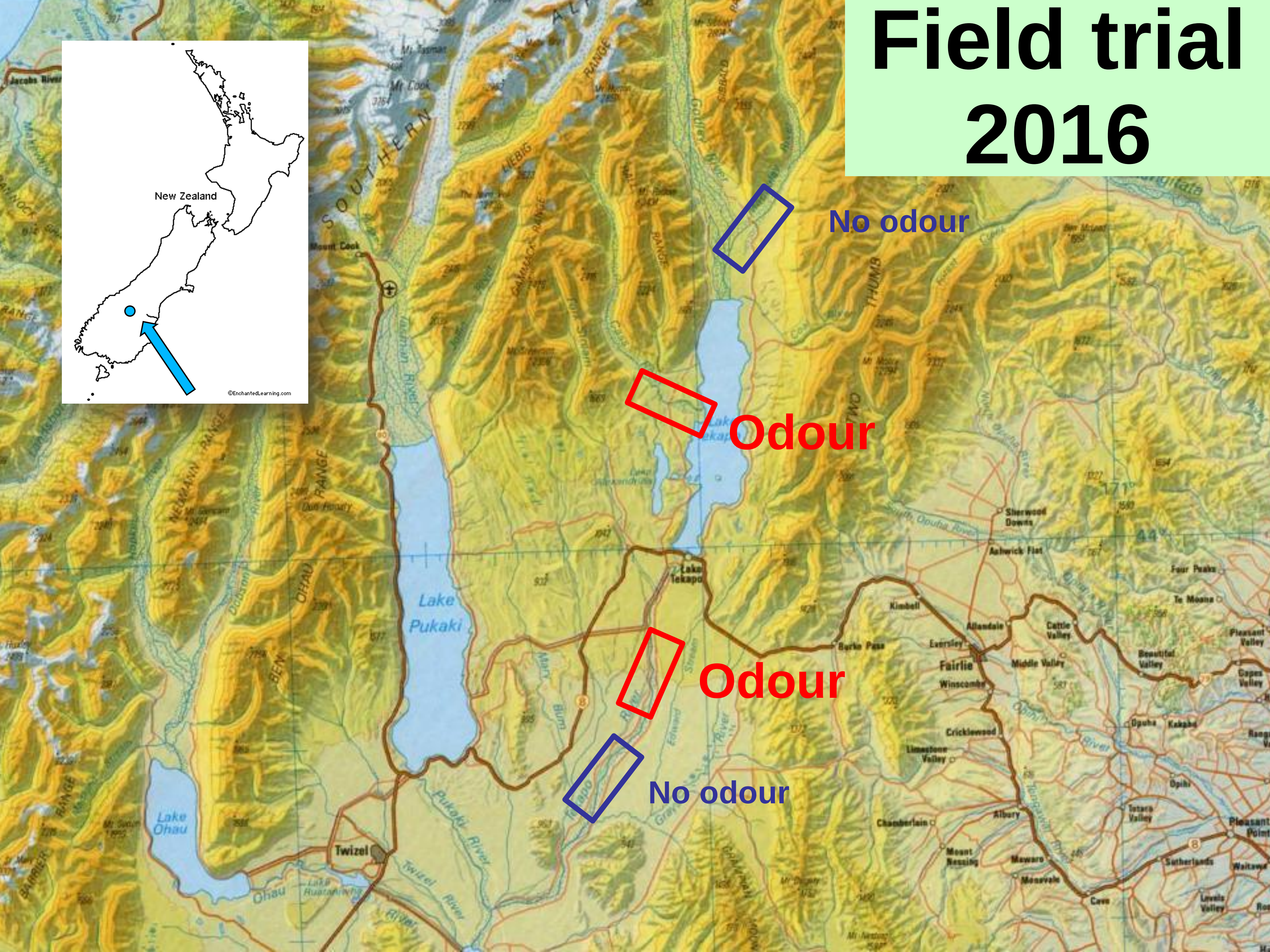


Ferret and hedgehog pen trials

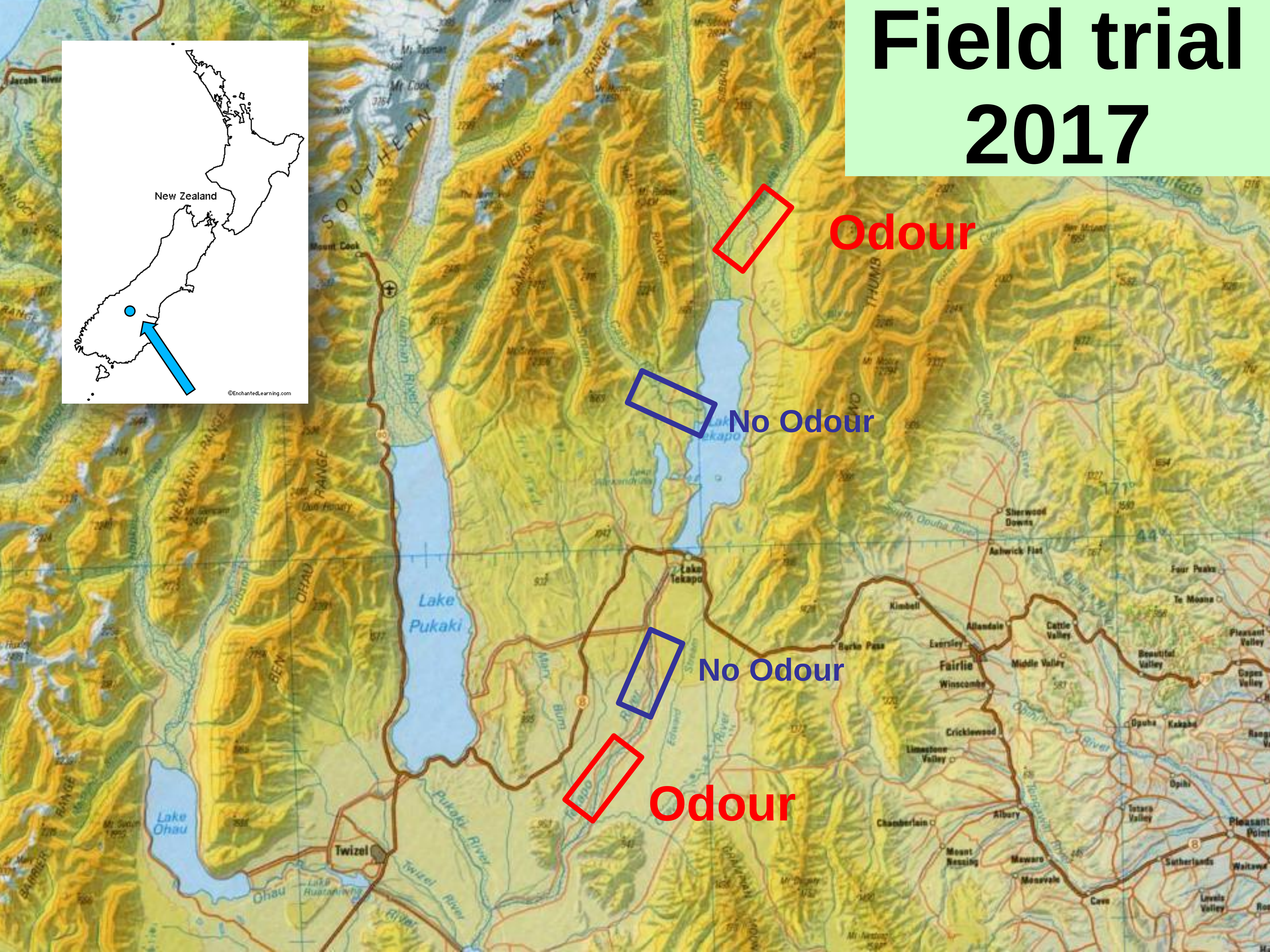
Ferret pen trials



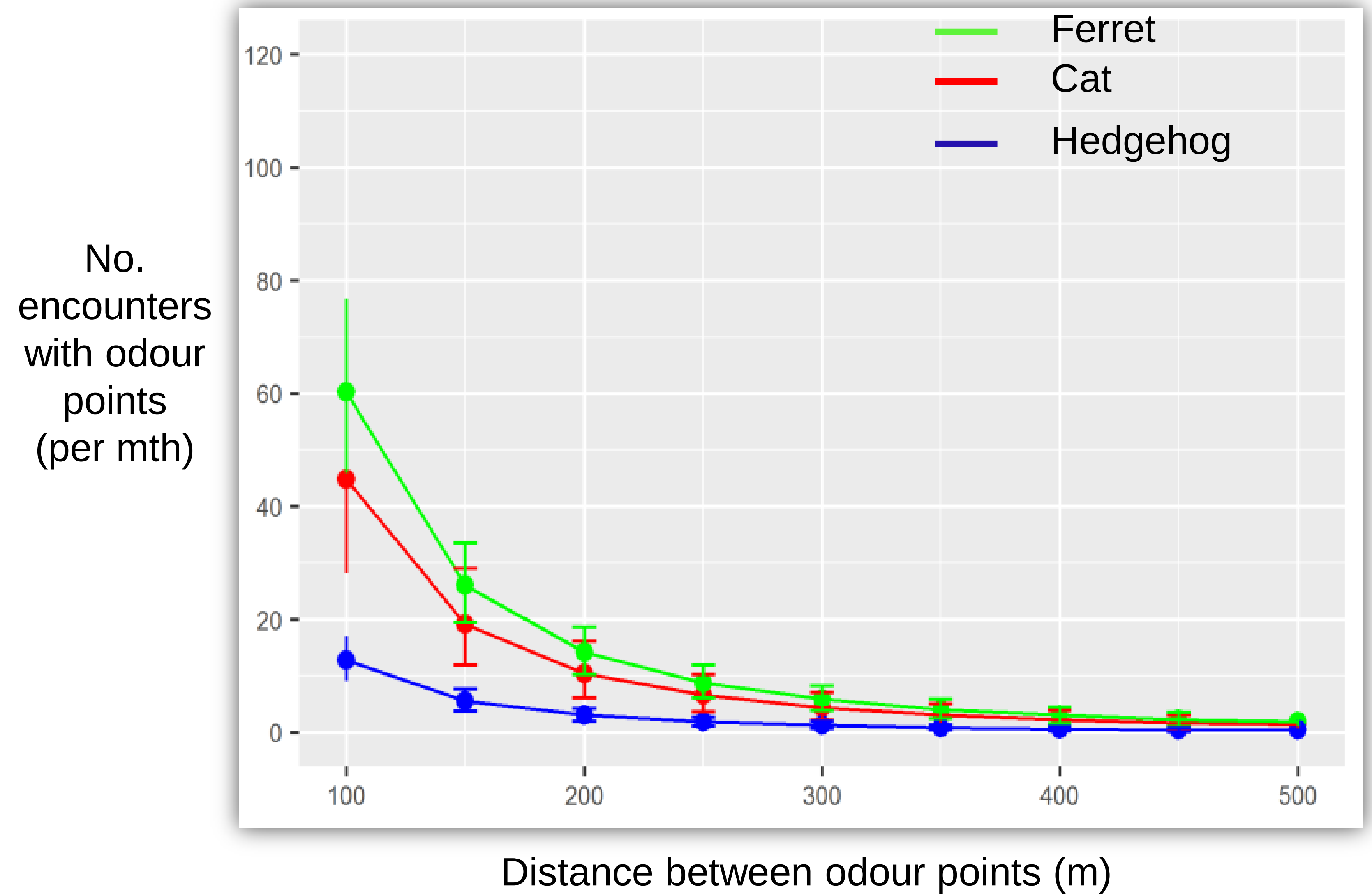
Field trial 2016



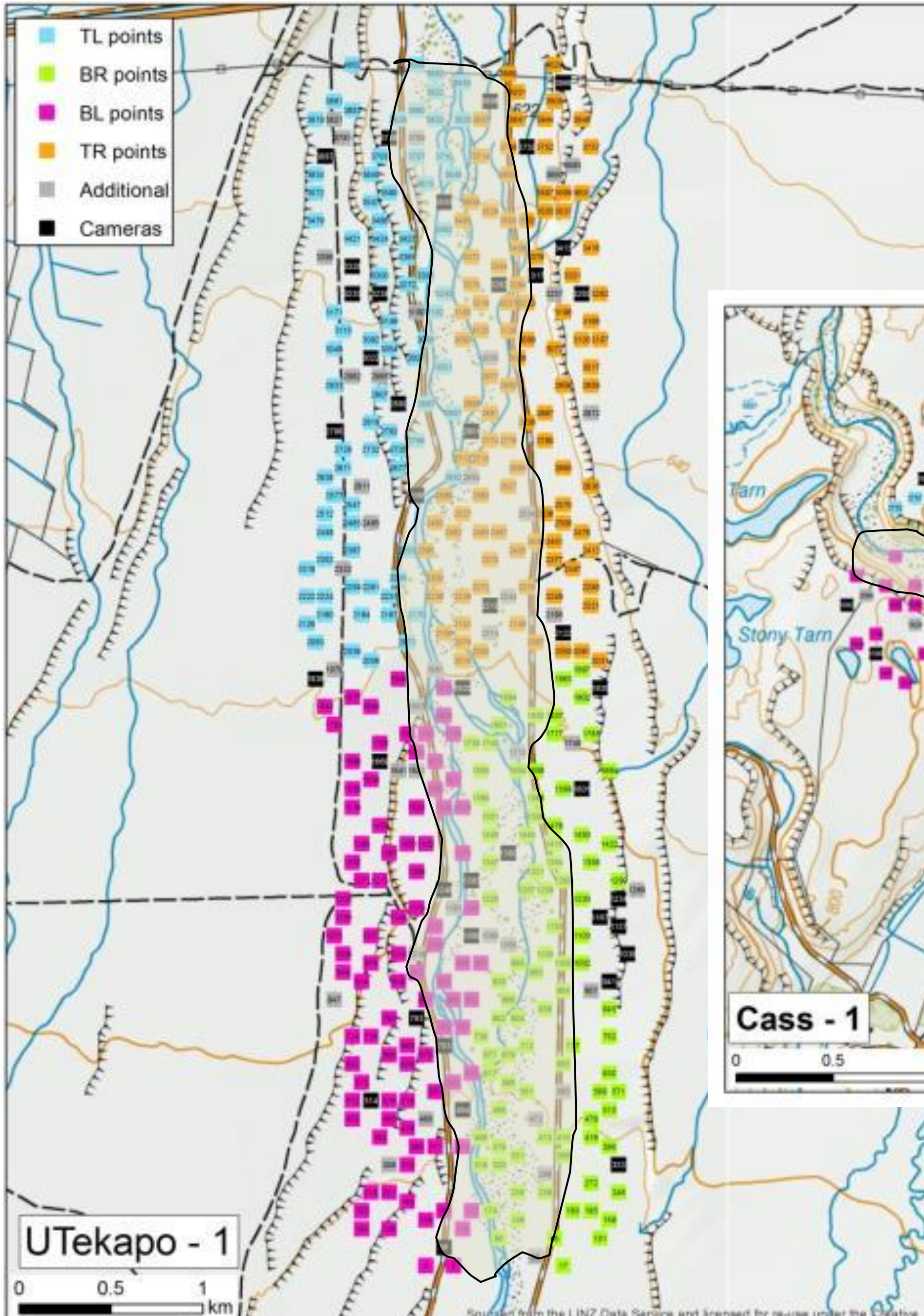
Field trial 2017

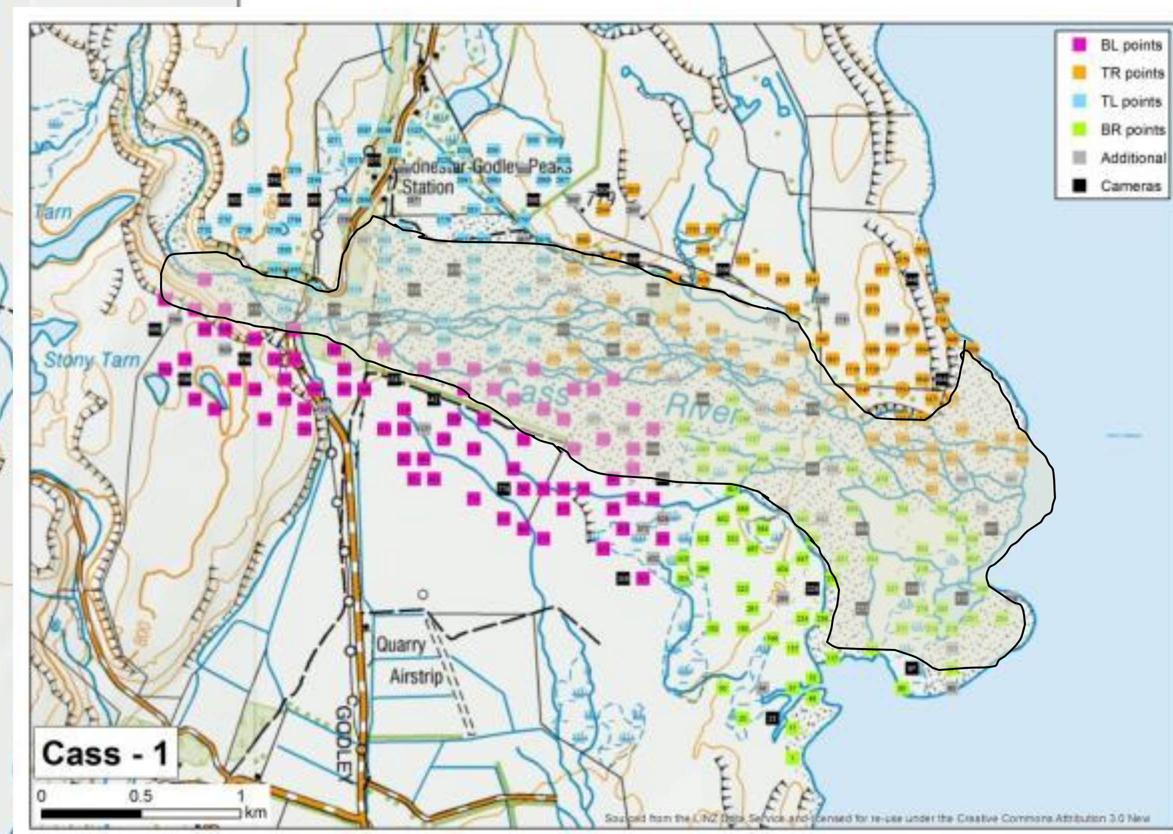


Modelling encounters with odours



Odour points





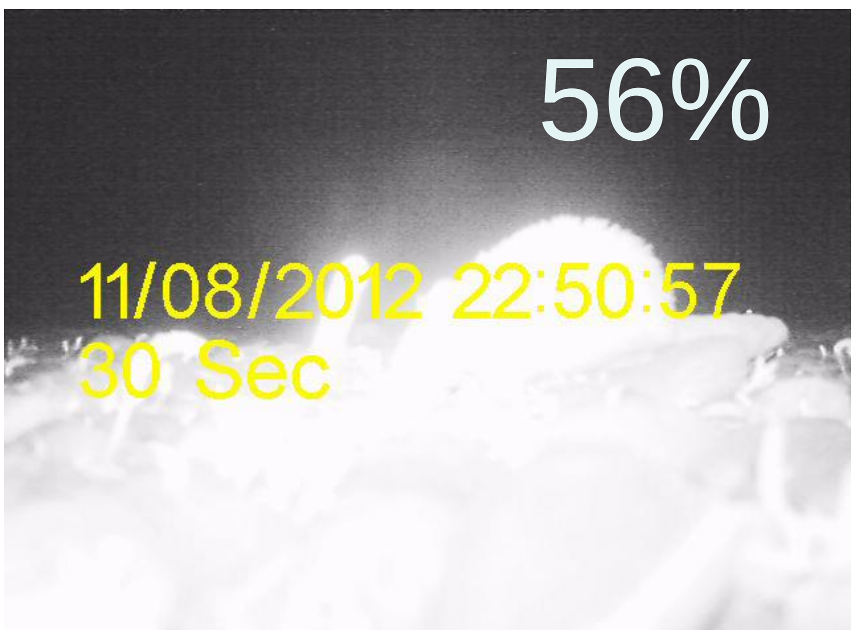
Predator abundance

Interactions with odour points

Camera

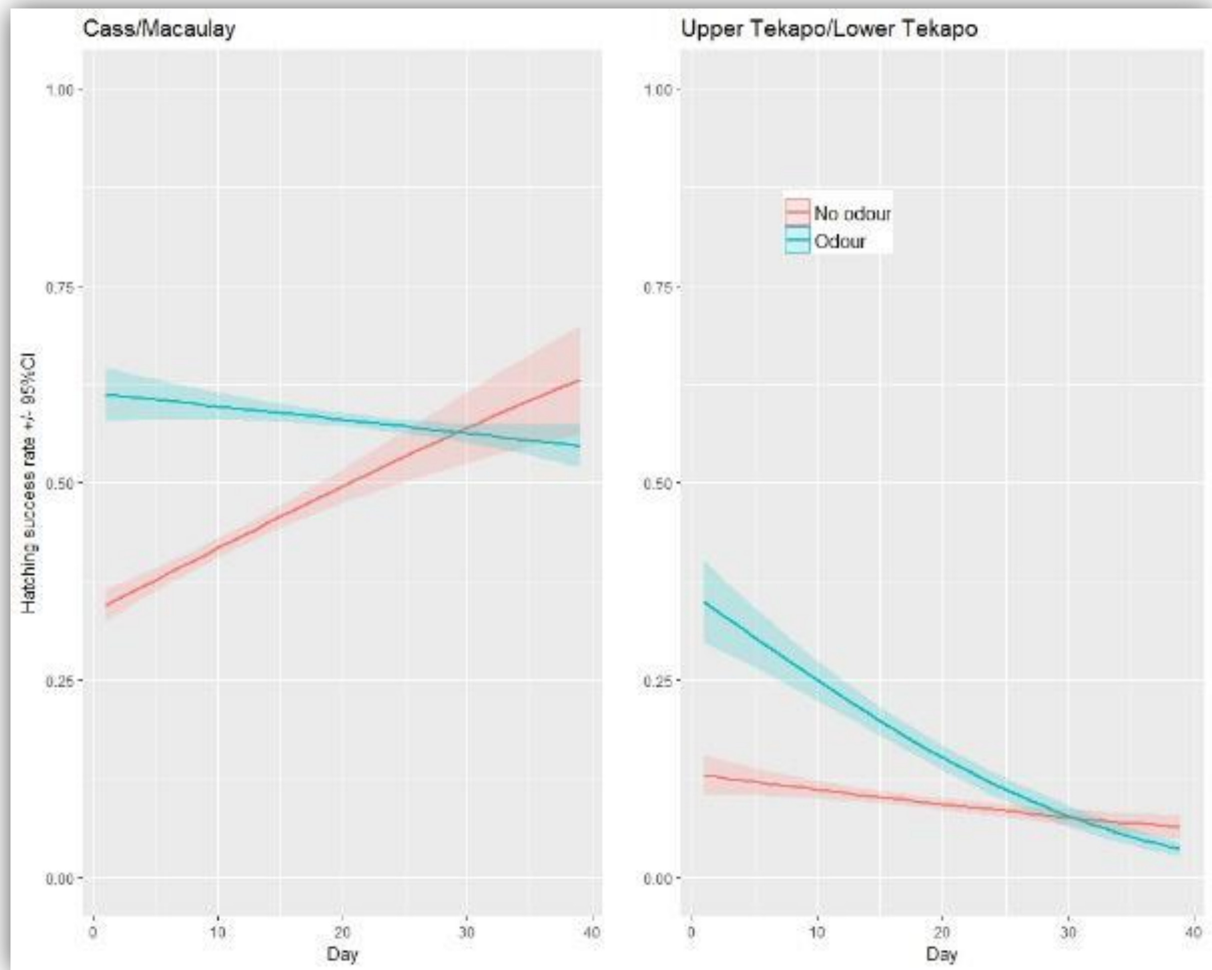
Odour smear on rock


6%
31/10/2012 03:43:17

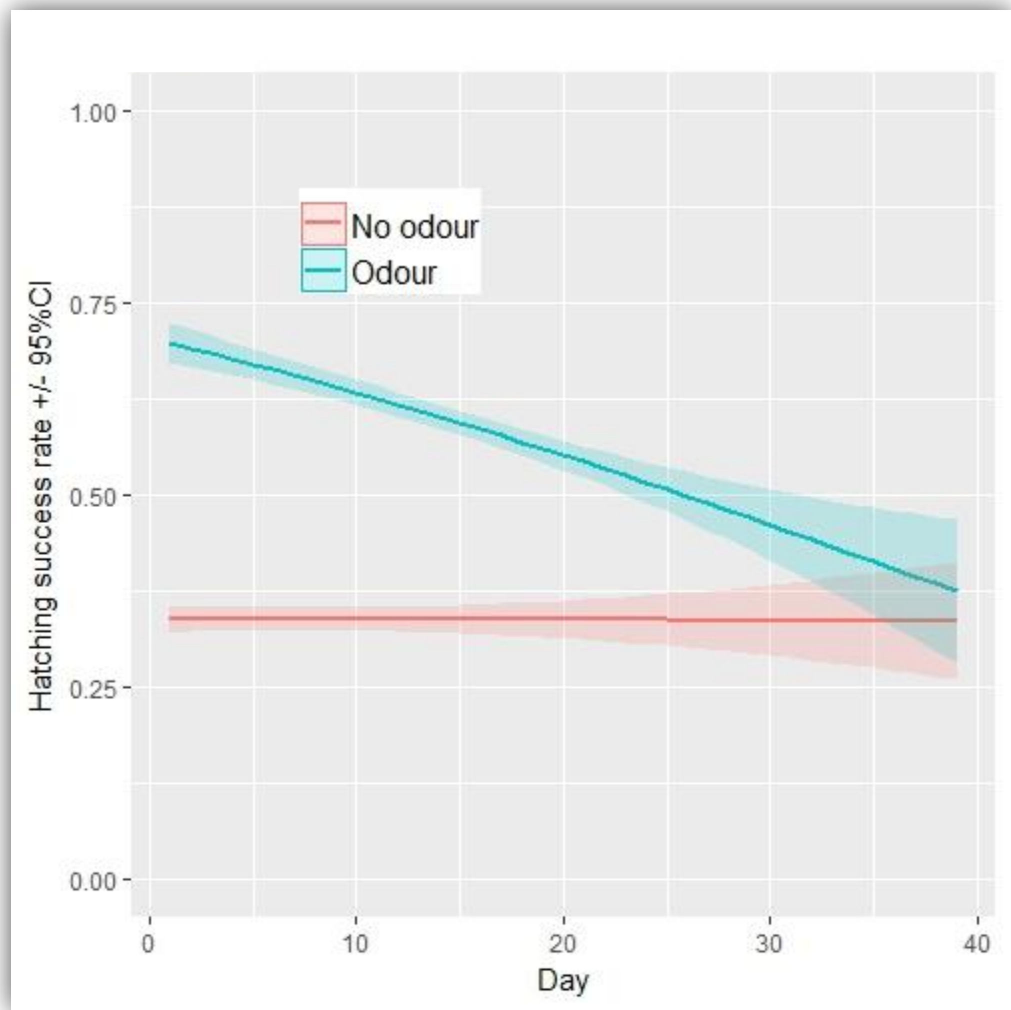

56%
11/08/2012 22:50:57
30 Sec


34%

Banded dotterel & wrybill



Pied oystercatchers (sites combined)



Summary

- Boosted chick production by c. 40–100% during a 25–32 day period

- Survival of chicks born early typically higher than chicks born later (Aalbert Rebergen, unpubl. data).

- Probably targets predators that inflict most damage, and evade control programs

How is it any better than existing lethal methods?

- Lethal methods cannot be applied everywhere, especially where problem predators are native and protected
- Common sense to develop array of methods:
  - predators learn to avoid single methods that are repeated
  - different methods suit different circumstances
- Best applied during vulnerable periods e.g. breeding season or during translocation
- Areas prone to rapid re-invasion

- Predators that rely on alternative prey
- Prey that are visually cryptic

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