



# Te Urewera to stay 1080-free - for now

**Karla Akuhata**  
Staff reporter

THE Government may be committing more than \$20 million to ramp up pest control using 1080 in New Zealand but Te Urewera will remain free of the poison – for now.

The battle for New Zealand's native birds is set to receive a \$20.7 million boost in this year's budget and the aim is to squash a predicted boom in rat and stoat populations, predicted to follow heavy forest seeding, by backing aerial 1080 operations with on-going trapping and ground control programmes.

Conservation minister Maggie Barry said the 2016 Battle of our Birds would be the largest pest control operation in New Zealand's history and would be launched over winter.

She said the programme would increase pest control by 500,000 hectares, to cover more than 800,000ha.

"Department of Conservation scientists have confirmed the seed fall predicted last year has eventuated. We must respond if we're to pro-

tect our native birds and animals from the threat – and the funding will enable the department to achieve this," Ms Barry said.

"As rats increase due to the readily-available food source, so will the number of stoats which feed on rats.

"Once the seeds germinate and the food source disappears in early spring, the plague of millions of starving rats and tens of thousands of hungry stoats will turn on native wildlife, bringing disaster if we do nothing."

Ms Barry said the decision to use 1080 was made after research from the 2014 Battle of our Birds programme showed breeding success rates in areas treated with the poison were far greater than in areas with no control.

"Biodegradable 1080 remains the safest, most efficient and effective method of pest control in the rugged backcountry of New Zealand, and we must use it if we are to protect our precious native creatures from the effect of the beech mast – we simply can't allow ill-informed, unscientific campaigns to cause us to back away from what we need to do to save our

taonga species."

However, Tuhoe chief executive Kirsti Luke said 1080 poison would not be used to control pests in Te Urewera.

"Currently 1080 is not used in Te Urewera, albeit that there is no explicit policy on that. The non-use of 1080 at this stage is a view supported by Tuhoe."

Ms Luke said the matter would be revised under a management plan for the area, which was being developed by the Te Urewera Board in consultation with stakeholders.

"Te Urewera Board, Tuhoe and stakeholders will fully consider pest management and control needs for Te Urewera and the board will then declare the final outcome. The use of 1080 is only a part of that wider consideration.

"We are all interested in the most effective pest control strategies but we want to give all of them equal consideration."

A draft management plan for Te Urewera was due by April 2017 and a public hearings process would follow, enabling the final plan – Te Kawa – to be released in September 2017.