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27 October 1988

District Conservator
OFFICE

RAT ERADICATION NOISES ISLANDS

A visit was made to Motuhoropapa Island from the 9-12 August 1988 to establish a network of permanent poison bait stations.

PERSONNEL

C Hodsell	Conservation Officer, Hauraki District, Flora and Fauna.
C Syms	Wage Worker, Hauraki District, Flora and Fauna.
I Macfadden	Senior Science Technician, Northern Region.
T Green	Auckland University, volunteer.

BACKGROUND

In the early 1980's the Research Section of the Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, implemented a rodent eradication project for the Noises Islands under the control and guidance of Dr Philip Moors. This project included all of the major islands and small rock stacks within the group. A variety of techniques for monitoring rat numbers and eradication methods concentrating on the use of different poisons were tried. The project was primarily scientifically based, but did have important implications for future rodent control or rodent management on offshore islands. The project did appear to be successful and a scientific paper was later presented and published. Then in 1986 after rats had theoretically been eradicated and absent from the islands for at least two years, one rat was trapped on Motuhoropapa. Subsequent to this the future of the project was handed over to the management section of the Wildlife Service, now the Flora and Fauna Section of the Department of Conservation, Hauraki District Office.

WORK PROGRAMME

Our party had originally planned to spend a full week working on the Noises Islands but due to the unavailability of boat transport this period had to be shortened somewhat and our activity restricted to Motuhoropara Island only.

An index line of sixty standard back-break rat traps were set out along the entire length of Motuhoropapa Island with an off-shoot line set along the "knob" track which traditionally was a favoured area for rats and was the site of the last capture. Traps were baited with peanut butter and set in pairs at intervals of approximately 30 m on each night for the duration of our visit. No rats were captured and no bait was taken for the period.

Thirty-three poison bait stations were set out and positioned to get maximum coverage of Motuhoropapa Island. (A map of these is attached as Appendix 1).

Poison bait stations were constructed from short lengths of Novaflow piping, pegged into the ground at either end with lengths of wire and provisioned with two Rentokill wax poison blocks. These poison blocks are cereal based, impregnated/coated with an anti congluent poison, bound together with paraffin wax. Each station has been marked with a red tape on the main track system. While carrying out the above operations, debris left from the previous project was collected and removed from the Island. This included tape lines, know sticks, cardboard covers, poison trays and rat traps.

The small hut on Motuhoropapa was in need of some maintenance. The tank stand that was near to collapse was rebuilt in a new location, the water tank emptied, cleaned and repositioned and the spouting relocated. Some vegetation that was overhanging the hut was removed to allow some more light into the area. A section of the chipboard floor was replaced with plywood and several areas of the hut were made more weather-proof. Inclement weather prevented us from painting the hut but this will hopefully be carried out during our next visit in summer 1989.

While carrying out the rat control programme a general flora and fauna surveillance was undertaken. Of particular note is the regeneration of seedling trees that is now occurring. This was particularly noticeable to Mr Ian Macfadden who has had a long association with this island group. Grey faced petrels were observed prospecting for burrow sites over much of the island where formerly the breeding colony was confined primarily two areas on the south western cliffs. As the District has now initiated a commitment to servicing the poison bait stations installed on this trip, it may be an opportune time to incorporate a small scale banding study on the grey faced petrel population to determine the rate of population growth. The benefits and feasibility of this proposal will be investigated and reported on before our next visit. Two small areas of ground that had been cleared and prepared would most probably have been used for marijuana plantations during last summer. Both sites were at the southern end of Motuhoropapa Island, just off the main track.

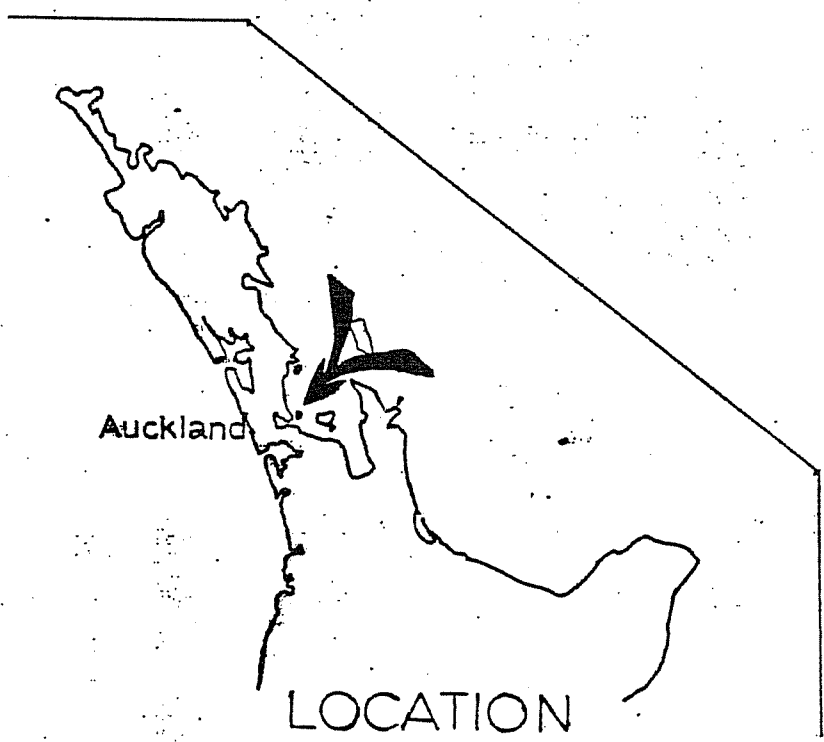
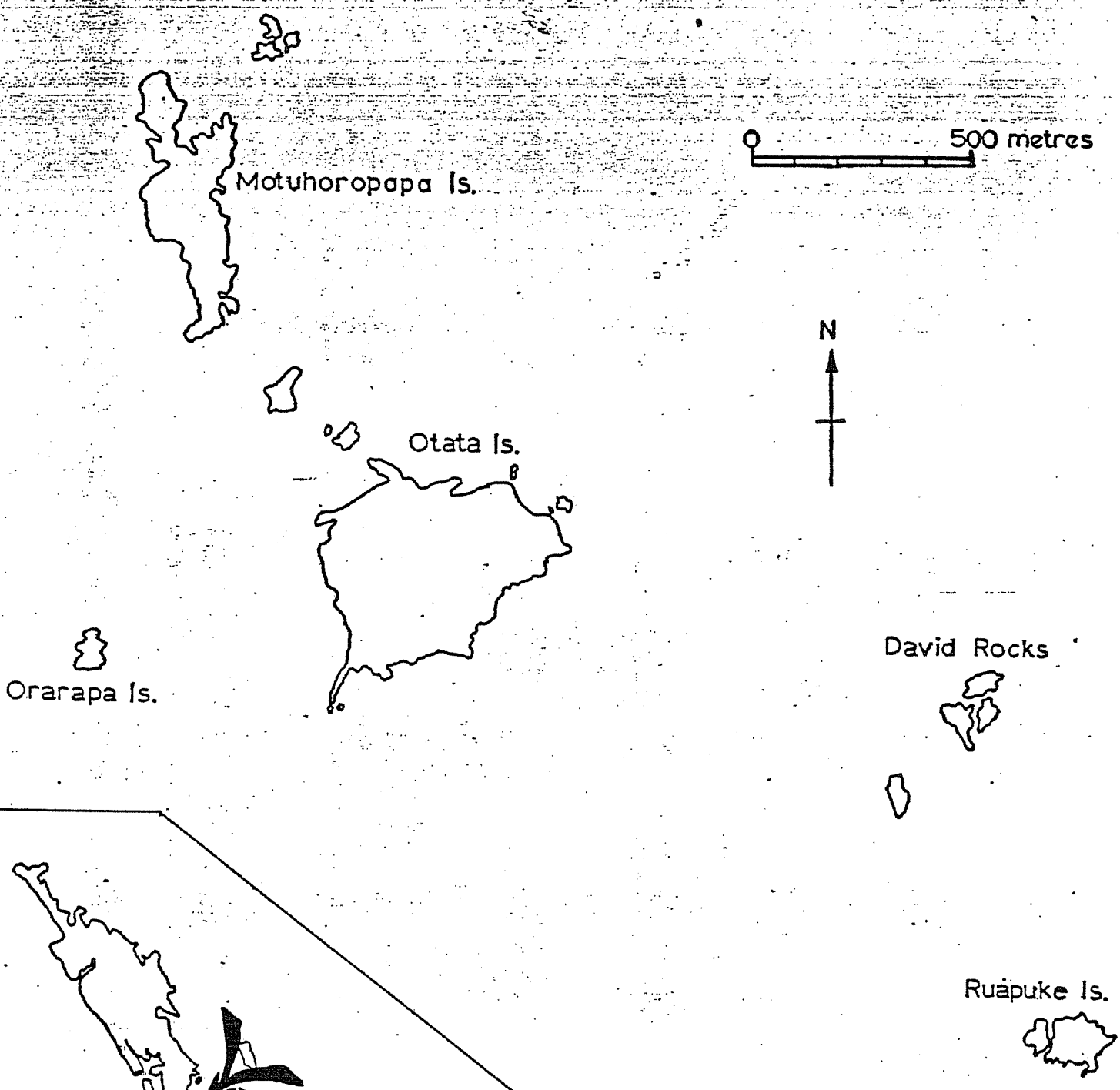
On our return journey to Auckland a brief check of the cottage area on Otata Island was carried out for rat sign and nine poison bait stations were put out in the vicinity of the cottage.

Our next visit to the Noises is scheduled to take place in January 1989, finances permitting.

Craig Hodsell

Craig Hodsell
Conservation Officer
Flora and Fauna

The INOISES



LOCATION OF POISON DISPENSERS
11 AUGUST 1988

MOTUHOROPAPA

