

# Predator Free Rakiura: Hedgehog Survey Q&A

## Who is Predator Free Rakiura?

Our Predator Free Rakiura vision is to grow Rakiura as a taonga by working collaboratively towards a predator-free Rakiura that allows ecosystems and community to thrive and benefit from each other. Only together can our vision become a reality. A predator removal project of this complexity, on an island of this scale, has never been attempted.

The proposal is to remove rats (Norway, Ship and kiore), possums, feral cats, and hedgehogs from Rakiura and its islands, as these predators eat or compete with wildlife and damage the forest. Deer and domestic cats are not target species for our project.

## What is a 'hedgehog survey'?

Don't worry, we're not sending our team out with questionnaires hoping to interview hedgehogs! We'll be placing up to 180 trail cameras in a 13km<sup>2</sup> area around Oban. These cameras will be in place for at least 10 nights and will take photos of any animals that come near enough to set them off. This way, we'll hopefully get pictures of hedgehogs - which will help us to understand how many there might be and how far they spread out from the town!

## What's the problem with hedgehogs?

While they mostly eat insects (and yes, we have some native insects worth protecting, too!), hedgehogs will eat almost anything interesting to them, including bird eggs, chicks, lizards, and other invertebrates. We want to make sure we can protect our precious species from these hungry predators.

## Why have you chosen the area you are surveying?

We are fortunate that there are a lot of sightings and reports from residents about hedgehogs being present around Oban. There's also been some excellent hedgehog trapping work from Stewart Island Rakiura Community Environment Trust, which helps us to understand where hedgehogs are and are likely to be. This survey will help to check beyond the areas where sightings have been reported to date. We don't know how far beyond Oban and into the surrounding forest that hedgehogs may be established - this survey will help us design future investigations into hedgehogs on Rakiura.

## Where will the cameras be placed?

We won't be sharing specific locations of the cameras because it's important they remain undisturbed during this project – but we've secured permission from private landowners, and we will be collecting them again at the end of the survey period – after at least 10 nights.

## What information are you hoping to gather?

One of two things: either we find an apparent boundary to the population of hedgehogs around Oban, or we find that they are present throughout the area surveyed – meaning more investigations as to whether there is a boundary further out, or simply no boundary at all. We'll also get a range of other data on camera including species like tokoeka, feral cats, and other species of interest!

## How does this information help you to remove hedgehogs?

In order to plan for eradication, we need to have a better understanding of *where* the hedgehogs are and where they aren't. This will mean we can tailor our eradication methods and plans to suit.

## What happens next?

Once we've gathered the cameras back up, the images will be reviewed and analysed by Manaaki Whenua, then our team will consider the results and decide next steps. This is likely to begin with some more hedgehog detection work on other parts of the island, like old settlement areas which were inhabited after the introduction of hedgehogs to New Zealand. It might also include other research tools like eDNA, spotlight surveys, poo searches, and detection dogs!

## Can I get involved? How?

While this part of our work is covered for now, we'd love for you to consider having a go at trapping hedgehogs in your own back yard – any little bit helps! DOC has some awesome information on their website [here](#), or if you're a Rakiura resident, perhaps get in touch with SIRCET for some great advice on how to target a resident hedgehog!

## How can I find out more about this project?

You can contact us at [info@predatorfreerakiura.org.nz](mailto:info@predatorfreerakiura.org.nz), on our Facebook or LinkedIn pages, or you might like to browse our website – [www.predatorfreerakiura.org.nz](http://www.predatorfreerakiura.org.nz)