

Predators of native flora and fauna on Great Barrier Island

Great Barrier Island is free of possums, stoats, ferrets, weasels, Norway rats, hedgehogs, deer and feral goats. It is an offence under the Biosecurity Act to transport any of the above pests to or around the Hauraki Gulf. The island is however under threat from pest plants and animals. Pick up an Auckland Council booklet for more details and help us by reporting any pest plants and animals you see on the island.

The main threats to our unique flora and fauna are;

Feral cats are a continuing problem on the island and can have a devastating effect on the rare native species. It is estimated that there are more than 7,000 feral cats on the island. Many cats brought to the island on holiday disappear into the bush and add to this number.

Dogs are a threat to Great Barrier Island's flora by disturbing or killing birds or nests, particularly ground-nesting shore birds such as the NZ dotterel. These birds may desert their nests if they are disturbed, leaving their eggs or chicks to die. Dogs may also bother marine mammals such as the little blue penguin. If you do bring your dog it must be kept on a lead at all times. A limited number of areas are set aside to exercise your dog. See page 4 for details.

Argentine Ants (*Linepithema humile*) are a 2-3mm pale to dark brown ant that travel in continuous trails of about 2cm wide. The ant can form dense multi-queened colonies that predate native fauna and compete for precious resources. An eradication program for the Argentine ant is currently underway on Aotea. Argentine ants may be present in the Mulberry Grove, Medlands Road, Sandhills Road, Gray Road, Crossroads, Blind Bay Road and Okupu areas. When visiting any of these areas be wary of ants and check all gear before moving away. The Argentine ant is easily transported in bags, cars and equipment, only one queen ant is needed along with five workers to establish a new colony elsewhere, which can then spread at 150m per year. Be vigilant and don't be responsible for a new infestation of these worldwide invasive ants!

Plague Skinks (*Lampropholis delicata*) are currently being eradicated from the Shoal Bay wharf area on Aotea as they are a threat to the native fauna found on the island. When around the wharf, avoiding placing goods that may attract lizards on vegetated areas. Check all gear before leaving the wharf for any skinks that may be trying to hitchhike a ride somewhere else on the island. All lizards in this area should be treated as plague skinks and not removed from site. (It is illegal to remove any lizard from its habitat).

BOATIES

Fanworm was recently found at Port FitzRoy harbour. Mediterranean Fanworm (*Sabella spallanzii*) is currently found in a limited number of harbours around Northland, Nelson, Christchurch and Auckland but, until now, has been absent from Aotea. Fan worm displaces native and fisheries species by competing for resources and predating larvae. Fan worm can form dense colonies of 1000 individuals per meters squared and fouls boats and marine structures quickly. Boats should have been checked and de-fouled before coming to Aotea to reduce the chance of it establishing around the island.