

efforts to establish animals from various parts of the world in his private hideaway. Bennett's wallaby was introduced to South Canterbury. Subsequently, dama wallaby from Kawau Island were released in the forest beside Lake Tarawera. They thrived. Releases and escapes led to further populations of dama wallabies near Auckland at Waitakere. Rock wallabies were also released on Rangitoto and Motutapu Islands at the mouth of Auckland Harbour.

The biggest population now is of dama wallabies, centred around Lake Tarawera. This population has grown and spread over 170,000 hectares of the Bay of Plenty and adjacent Waikato Region, with sightings peppered even further afield at Tokoroa, Tauranga and the Rangitaiki valley. In South Canterbury, Bennett's wallaby occurs over 300,000 hectares in the hills and ranges around Waimate. Landcare Research has reported on other populations recently established.

In New Zealand, the spread of wallabies is not principally by hopping. People shift wallaby faster than wallaby disperse themselves. Although it is illegal to shift wallaby without a permit, hunters, keen to have a handy new target, are known to deliberately release wallabies into their local patch.

Another source of dispersion is wildlife traders. Inexplicably, there are people who are licensed by the Director-General of Conservation to catch, move and hold wallaby for export. Several new wallaby populations have been established as a result of escapes in transit to or from a trader's holding pen.

So where is the good news in all this? The good news is that the Auckland Conservancy of the Department of Conservation, sponsored by the Auckland Rotary Club, has eradicated rock wallaby from Rangitoto and Motutapu Islands in recent years. Otago DoC has exterminated a small population of Bennett's wallaby which became established at Quartz Creek, between Lakes Wanaka and Hawea. Environment Bay of Plenty has eliminated a wallaby population near Ngongotaha and is working on another, thereby reducing the threat of wallaby spreading to the Mamaku forests.

These successes demonstrate how

feasible it is to eradicate small, isolated groups of wallabies.

Unfortunately most wallaby populations don't fit this convenient model. The large, dispersed Bay of Plenty and Canterbury populations are a different kettle of fish. The spread of Bay of Plenty dama wallaby is a burden to Environment Waikato. Wallabies shifted by hunters are popping up as far afield as Tokoroa. To the south, only the imperfect barrier of the Rangitaiki River prevents the wallabies sighted there from bounding into Te Urewera National Park. A small population has crossed the Kaituna River, threatening the forests behind Tauranga.

To manage the wallaby problem, the animal-pest manager of Environment Bay of Plenty, Dave Moore, is about to co-ordinate a joint strategy between his council, Environment Waikato and the

Department of Conservation. This is a real step forward. One objective, tentatively identified by Mr Moore, is to clear the boundary with the Waikato Regional Council to make its investment in wallaby control and eradication more effective.

'We need to walk the wallabies back to the centre, but how do we deal with the sparse numbers of wallaby spread over extensive areas?' he asks and, answering himself, muses,

'It looks as if we have to invest in a programme that will clean out all the pests over some 170 000 hectares.' So, in the Bay of Plenty and Waikato, serious thought is being given to a regional plan to prevent wallaby spread.

The same problems apply with the population of Bennett's wallaby. These wallabies are spread over 300,000 hectares in the Hunter Hills, Two Thumb Range, and the Kirkliston and Grampian Mountains. Just as for the Bay of Plenty, a co-ordinated and substantial investment will be required to clear such a large area.

As in the Bay of Plenty too, shooters have spread them further afield, to Mt Oxford in North Canterbury, and the Godley Valley at the head of Lake Tekapo. These small populations need to be eradicated quickly. We don't need wallaby as well as thar, chamois and deer in the South Island high-country.

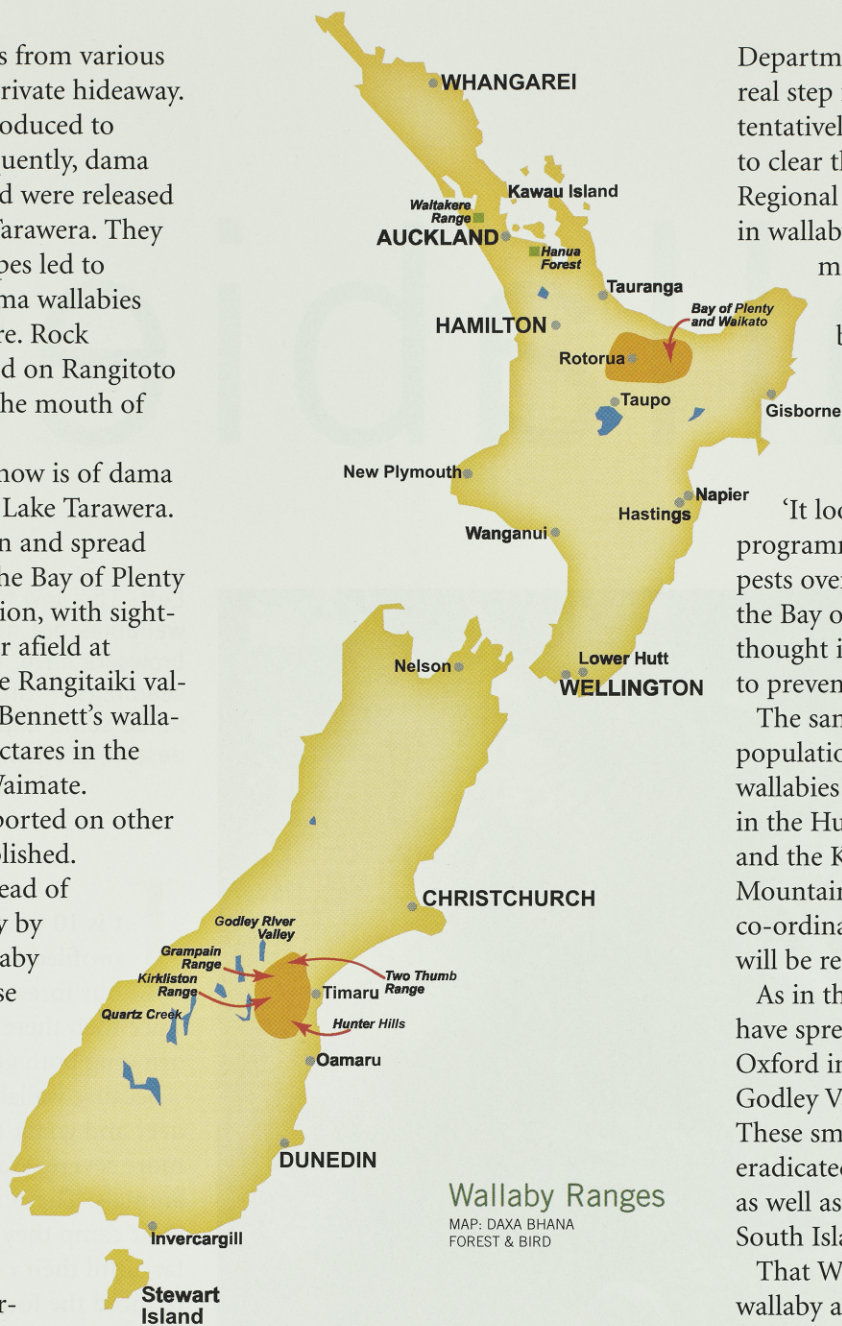
That Waimate District has adopted this wallaby as their local logo – as bizarre as adopting a ferret or a possum – suggests that a lot of education about wallaby is needed in the South Island.

Fortunately, there is another discrete population which can be readily tackled. Kawau Island is one of the most under-recognised wildlife habitats in the country. This island, in the Hauraki Gulf off Warkworth, is already forested and

Red-necked or Bennett's wallaby is well-established in South Canterbury.



ROD MORRIS, DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



### Wallaby Ranges

MAP: DAXA BHANA  
FOREST & BIRD