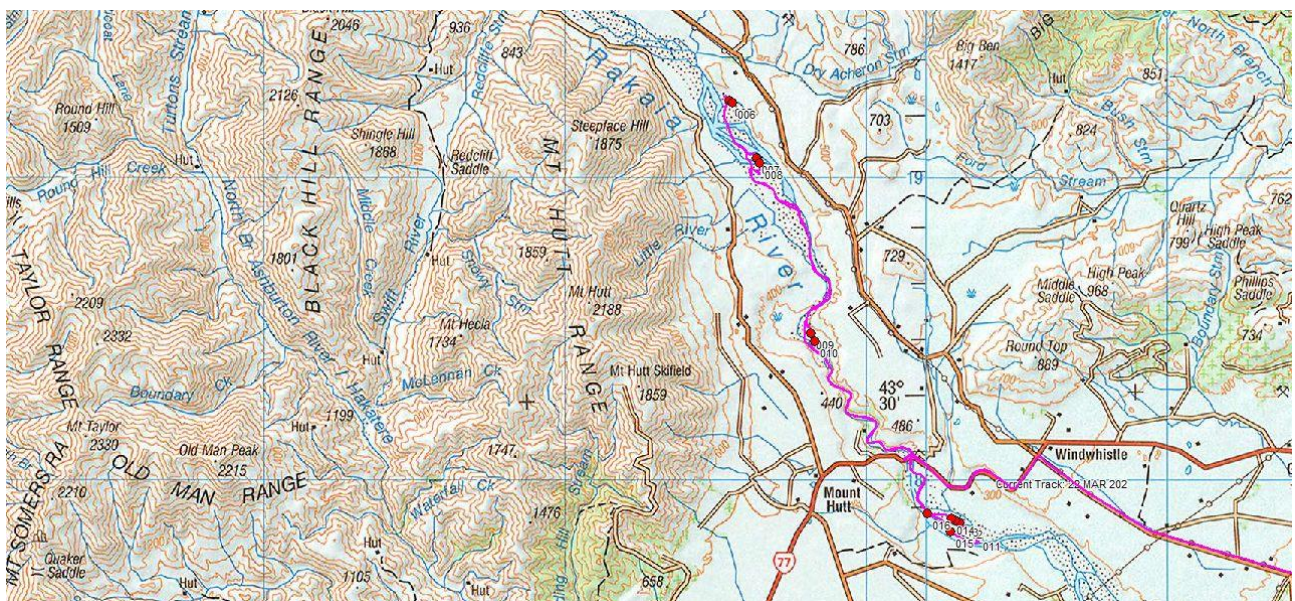


# Rakaia River Black Back Gull Control Project Summary - December 2023



## Introduction

This Project was carried out in the Rakaia Gorge, one of the colonies being below the Rakaia Gorge Bridge and three colonies above, this was a continuation from control work completed in previous years.



## Delivery

Work was completed by Downer's Biosecurity personnel assisted by the operator of Discovery Jet who provided access along the river for finding and assessing each colony, pre-feeding, laying of toxic bait and

gull collection. Baiting was carried out at the areas where it was evident where the BB Gulls were nesting. This project required a total of 9 visits up the Rakaia River for the assessment and bird counts, pre-feeding, laying of toxic bait and then the pick-up.

The bait used was plain white bread on which we applied a mixture of Alphachloralose powder and margarine.

DATE	TASK	DETAILS
21/11/2023	1 <sup>st</sup> Prefeed	Site inspection and bird counts followed by first prefeed
Work delayed while we waited for river levels to drop		
23/11/2023	2nd Prefeed	Gulls observed taking bait, second prefeed completed
27/11/2023	3rd Prefeed	Gulls observed being quicker at getting onto bait lines, third prefeed completed
29/11/2023	4th Prefeed	Gulls observed taking bait very well with all offered bait quickly cleaned up by gulls. Gull numbers on site increasing leading us to apply more feed bait during the fourth prefeed
30/11/2023	5th Prefeed	Gulls onto the bait line as soon as the bait is on the ground, weather forecast was for rain in the alps and along the coast, fifth prefeed completed
01/12/2023	Preparation	Make up toxic bait
04/12/2023	1st Toxic	First round of toxic bait laid, Gulls took to new baits extremely well.
05/12/2023	1st Collection 2nd Toxic	Birds collected from previous days toxin lines; Toxic bait fed out on Middle Rock
06/12/2023	2nd Collection	Collection of birds along North Side continued with all remaining baits collected from original bait lines.
08/12/2023	3rd Collection	Completed collection on north side in areas where access was readily available without the jetboat. Vehicle tracks used to access riverbed through Middle Rock Station where all uneaten bait was collected from original bait lines.

### Outcome

This was the largest collection of gulls to date with a total of 1,748 Black Backed Gulls and 5 Canadian Geese, no other non-target species were found. These were all disposed of in a pit that had been previously dug for us on Middle Rock Station. An offal pit was also available for us to use on Montrose however this was not required.



The river flat paddocks on the dairy farm below the Rakaia Gorge bridge is a huge attraction to the gulls with the irrigation systems providing them a continual food supply.

### Issues

The main issue with baiting gulls in the Rakaia River is the need to use a jet boat to access each colony, the Rakaia is prone to flooding following rain on the West Coast and in the Main Divide. These floods will bring



down large branches and other debris so the river has to be fairly clear to safely run the jet boat. A secondary factor that we need to allow for is that the boat needs be off the river by 7pm due to commercial operator regulations.

Unfortunately, there was a flood in the Rakaia River after the first feed and we had to wait a few days to get back onto the river, this flooding had no impact on the nesting of the gulls. However, this caused us to need to offer an additional pre-feed once the river levels had receded.

There were no other bird species seen nesting or feeding close to any of the Black Back Gull colonies.

There were no accidents or incidents to report, the pre-feeding, toxic baiting and gull collection went well with no issues.

The river flat paddocks on the dairy farm below the Rakaia Gorge bridge is a huge attraction to the gulls with the irrigation systems providing them a continual food supply.

### Photos

*Alphachloralose and Margarine*



*Making bait*



*Bait Line*



*Gulls feeding on baits*







Warning Sign

