



PREDATOR PROFILE

1 Possums (*Trichosurus Vulpecula*)



Introduced from Australia in the 19th century, **brushtail possums** have become one of Aotearoa's most damaging predators. While they look harmless enough, their impact on native ecosystems is anything but. Possums eat vast quantities of leaves, flowers, fruit, seeds, invertebrates and even bird eggs - putting huge pressure on forests and wildlife already struggling with habitat loss and other predators.

Across the Whakatipu and Upper Clutha, community groups, landowners and volunteers are working together to reduce possum numbers at a landscape scale. The results are starting to show: fewer possums, healthier forests, and early signs of native birds returning to places where they've been scarce for years.

WHY POSSUMS ARE A THREAT

Possums cause harm in several ways:

FOREST DESTRUCTION

A single possum can eat up to 300g of vegetation a night. Multiply that across a population and entire canopies can be stripped, especially preferred species like rātā, kāmahī and kōwhai.

PREDATION ON WILDLIFE

Possums eat bird eggs, chicks, wētā, snails and lizards - putting pressure on already vulnerable native species.

COMPETITION FOR FOOD

They out compete native birds and insects for fruit and flowers, reducing food availability at critical times of year.

DISEASE SPREAD

Possums are the main wildlife carrier of bovine TB, posing risks to livestock and rural communities.



WHAT LOCAL CONTROL IS ACHIEVING

Thanks to coordinated trapping by groups like Whakatipu Wildlife Trust, Southern Lakes Sanctuary, Predator Free Arrowtown, Coronet Face Trapping Group, and many others, possum numbers are dropping across key sites.

Recent data from Arrowtown and Coronet Face show a clear shift from knockdown (rapid initial reduction) to suppression (keeping numbers consistently low). This is the stage where native species finally get breathing room to recover.

Locals are already reporting more tui and korimako and fewer possum sightings at night. Ongoing monitoring will help confirm these trends - but the early signs are promising.

Possum control is one of the most effective ways we can support native biodiversity at a landscape scale. Every trap checked, every volunteer hour, and every coordinated project contributes to healthier forests, safer habitats, and the gradual return of the birdlife that makes our district special.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

JOIN A LOCAL TRAPPING GROUP.

Our Partner organisation Southern Lake Sanctuary (southernlakessanctuary.org.nz/get-involved) is a great place to find out more and connect with a local trapping group.

HOST A TRAP ON YOUR PROPERTY.

Especially if you live near bush edges, gullies or river corridors. Your local trapping group can help you get started.

PLANT POSSUM RESILIENT NATIVES.

Species like kānuka, mānuka and some coprosmas are less palatable.

REPORT SIGHTINGS.

Helps groups target hotspots and track reinvasion.

