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Media Release

EDS welcomes *Battle for our Birds 2* funding boost

The Prime Minister and Minister of Conservation have today announced a \$20.7 million funding injection for the Department of Conservation.

This is additional money to pay for the *Battle for the Birds 2* - a critical pest control initiative designed to stem the plagues of mammalian predators that are occurring as a result of the beech mast. This is a mass seeding of fruit covering 800,000ha of our forested public conservation land.

Masting provides a smorgasbord of food for struggling indigenous biodiversity. Lots of native wildlife breed when these events occur. Beech masts are natural but becoming more frequent due to climate change.

“The down-side of these events is that they also unleash population explosions of rats, mice and mustelids,” says EDS Senior Policy Analyst Dr Marie Brown.

“Once the fruit is gone, the predators turn their attention to native birds. To prevent this, DOC needs to carry out pest control to reduce predator numbers and give our wildlife a chance.

“In 2014 *Battle for our Birds 1* was a resounding success. DOC staff worked at a national scale and carried out an unprecedented 27 aerial control operations and in most areas rat numbers dropped to undetectable levels. It was an amazing effort with great outcomes for our wildlife.

“*Battle for our Birds 2* promises to be another success for the Department and more funding for it is an important step forward for conservation.

“But it’s important to remember that DOC is still seriously underfunded and there are many other important areas for investment.

“EDS sees funding nature conservation as an investment that has tangible economic benefits for the country. Brand New Zealand and our burgeoning tourism sector rely on maintaining and enhancing our natural heritage.

“We are still managing only a fraction of our public conservation land for pests and biodiversity decline is continuing. To effectively respond, our conservation agencies need far more secure long-term funding that is tailored to meet scientifically determined levels of conservation need and includes boosting staff numbers where necessary.

“This is an area in which we absolutely must do better. The funding must match the job at hand and we’ll be looking for a substantial boost for DOC in next month’s budget,” concluded Dr Brown.