

# SIRCET news

[www.sircet.org.nz](http://www.sircet.org.nz)

August 2012



Stewart Island / Rakiura  
Community & Environment Trust



for people for environment

## A word from Alina & Denise

*Our wonderfully mild winter is drawing to a close and everyone is anticipating the flurry of life that's on its way with the coming spring.*

Unfortunately, this makes for great conditions for weeds! We've had some helpful weedy tips from our contractor, and trustee, Jessi Nichols who has held several workshops at the Lonnekers Beach Revegetation site for our local community and visiting school groups. We've seen some of Stewart Island's beautiful rare native flora returned to the site and we're sharing how you too can have these plants flourishing in your garden, in place of weeds, once and for all!

Conservation Week is here again and this year the nation is celebrating our national parks. It's the 10th anniversary of New Zealand's southern most national park - our very own Rakiura! Show New Zealand that you love it and join in on the events taking place to celebrate our national parks, marine reserves, native wildlife, and special historical places. There are planting days, interactive talks, a quiz, giveaways, and competitions galore!

We report on how the new, automatic kill, Stewart Island Community Possum Trap is performing, as well as reveal the 2012 native species monitoring results; some of our native wildlife don't seem to be doing as well as they could; the survival rate of our Ackers Point tūi colony chicks has declined dramatically to pre-2006 levels. Our article explores what may have influenced this sudden and severe drop and SIRCET is calling for volunteers who may be able to assist with some vital feral cat trapping.

The trust sends it's thanks to funders who have granted SIRCET several small grants over recent months, as well as to all the Sponsor-a-Hectare sponsors who have helped us reach our annual sponsorship goal - a record



Alina



Denise

\$5,000 has been raised! This much needed funding is going towards key project areas where recent government cuts have left a gap. For info on how to contribute towards upcoming projects, check out the back page.

And finally, Alina says farewell to her Project Administrator role: "I have cherished my role within the community over the past 18 months administering these exciting and valuable projects. The highlight has been watching the trust grow from strength to strength and with the challenges to come, I look forward to staying on as trustee to continue to help as a volunteer". We wish Alina well in her endeavours, although this is not a final goodbye!

## Community Garden update

*In late 2011 SIRCET took over the Southland District Council's maintenance of the Stewart Island township gardens. SIRCET began by re-planting the waterfront car park plots with natives, and over the past couple of months the weeding of these and the community centre plots has been completed.*

They're looking great and the coming spring should give them a growing boost! SIRCET next looks forward to trimming and weeding some of the other plots on Ayr Street and Main Road and getting these gardens in tip-top shape for the summer. If you'd like to muck in on a weeding day, give Jessi a call on (03) 219 1291.



**SIRCET invites your ideas and feedback**

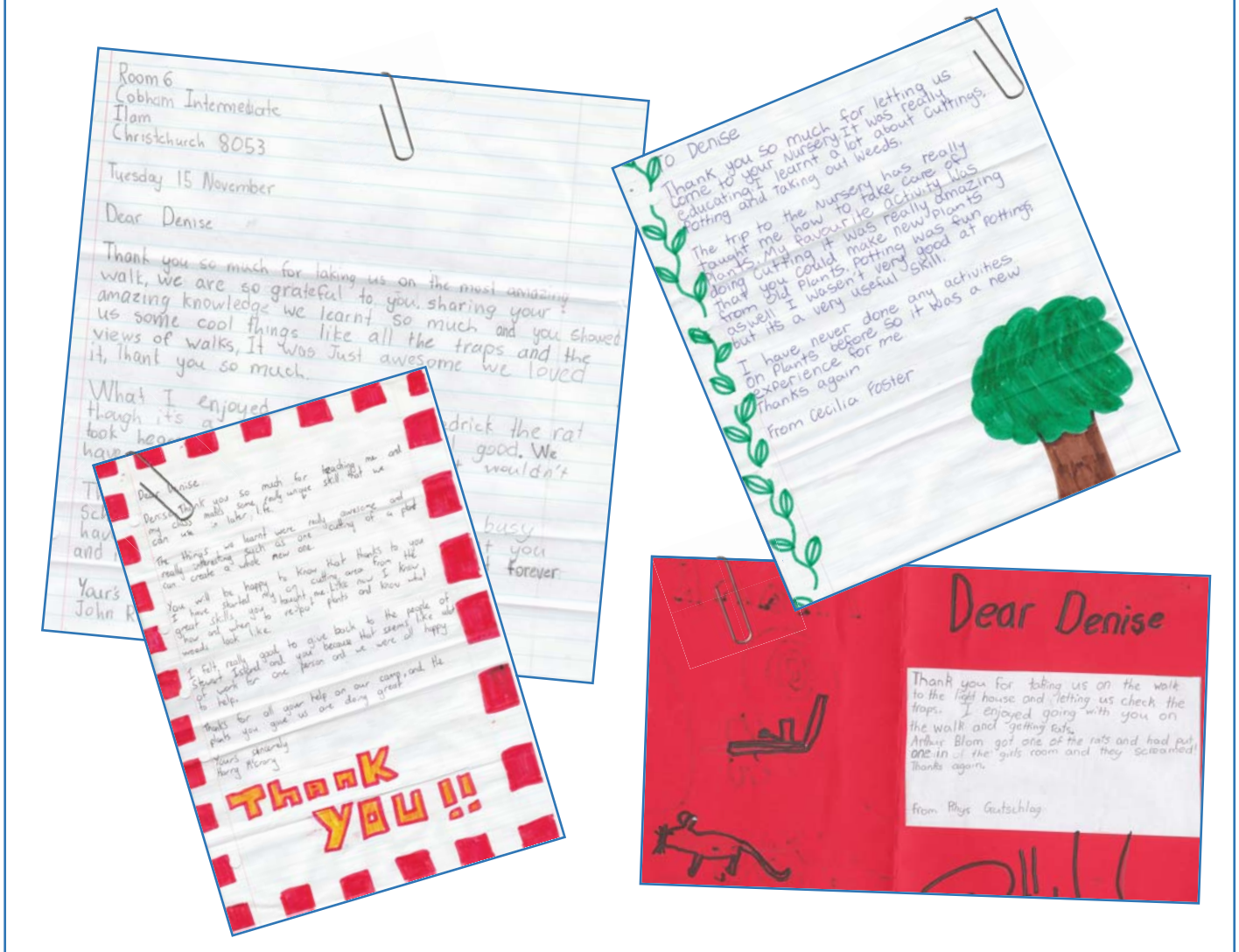
Do you have any suggestions for improvement, require further information on joining SIRCET, or have an article of interest you would like to see featured...

Just give Alina or Denise a call on 03 2191 487 or e-mail us...

[alina@sircet.org.nz](mailto:alina@sircet.org.nz) or [denise@sircet.org.nz](mailto:denise@sircet.org.nz)

# SIRCET Community Education Program

***A big thank you to Denise for all her hard work over the past year conducting SIRCET's Ackers Point and Nursery school workshops! The kids at Cobham School send their thanks!***



## NURSERY

***A variety of native plant alternatives, including the rare plants described on pages 10-11, are available from the Community Native Plant Nursery (at Horseshoe Bay) for just a gold coin donation.***

***The nursery is manned on Thursday mornings and always needs helping hands. Contact Denise.***



# CONSERVATION WEEK

## 9-16 SEPTEMBER

*Celebrate Conservation Week (9 – 16 Sep) and show New Zealand that you love it!*

This year's Conservation Week theme is 'Love your parks' – New Zealand is celebrating the 60th anniversary of the National Parks Act and the 125th anniversary of Te Heuheu Tukino IV gifting the Tongariro, Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe mountain peaks to the people of New Zealand.

And here at home – we are also celebrating the 10th anniversary of New Zealand's southern most National Park – our very own Rakiura!

Join thousands of people across the country to celebrate our national parks, marine reserves, native wildlife, and the places that are part of our history by taking part in conservation events and activities, entering the competitions, and sharing your photos with the Love New Zealand photo group on Flickr!



WE LOVE  
**NEW YOU**  
**ZEALAND**  
CONSERVATIONWEEK.ORG.NZ

### THE GREAT LIVING LEGENDS MUCK-IN

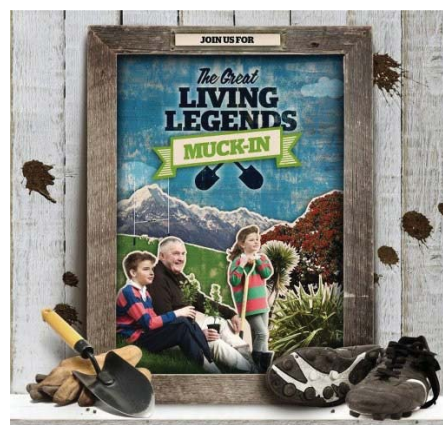
1 SEPTEMBER

*In 2011, to celebrate New Zealand's hosting of the Rugby World Cup, 17 Rugby Legends joined thousands of volunteers to plant 83,000 native trees throughout New Zealand.*

It's a five year project and the target is to plant 170,000 trees before the end of 2015.

Last year volunteers planted 5,350 additional native trees at Southland's Living Legend site, the Bushy Point project area in Otatara. Bushy Point is a special place featuring native forest and wetland areas, with special plants, native birds, lizards and insects.

This year there are an additional 2,550 native trees and shrubs to plant at this wonderful site. Join us between 9am and 12 noon on Sat 1 September!



### DESIGN A T-SHIRT COMPETITION

9 - 30 SEPTEMBER

*Calling all budding artists! To celebrate Rakiura National Park's 10th anniversary, DOC are launching their Design a T-Shirt competition during Conservation Week!*

*What is the Rakiura National Park to you?*

Why do you love it and what makes it so special? The competition closes on 30 September and the winner will be announced in October.

Send your entries to [stewartislandfc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:stewartislandfc@doc.govt.nz) or Design a T-shirt Competition, DOC Stewart Island Field Centre, PO Box 3, Stewart Island



### QUIZ NIGHT

9 SEPTEMBER

*Study up for a Love Your Parks themed Quiz Night – Stewart Island South Sea Hotel, 6:30pm Sunday 9th September*

Everyone's welcome, be prepared for a night of banter and hilarity! No entry fee, just a donation at the end - all money raised goes to a Stewart Island good cause.



## CATCH OF THE WEEK COMPETITION

9 – 16 SEPTEMBER

*Fancy yourself a master rat-catcher? Have a great tale to spin? Put yourself to the test in the Catch of the Week competition!*

There are two categories you can enter:

1. Pesky Pests – most number of rats caught during conservation week (9 – 16 Sep). Traps can be purchased from SIRCET or borrowed from a friend. Please note the age group that you would like to enter under: 0 – 12yrs or 13 – 99yrs, there's a prize for each age group. Evidence accepted in the form of dated photos, tail tips or frozen samples (zip-lock bags available from DOC). Judging at DOC, Stewart Island Sunday 16th Sep at 5pm - don't forget to bring your evidence!
2. Trapping Tales – pen your best trapping story, you may have shared a great day out with a friend, bumped into a curious kiwi, have a muddy story to tell, or have caught 3 rats at once! Send your tale to [stewartislandfc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:stewartislandfc@doc.govt.nz) or PO Box 3, Stewart Island by the 17th Sep.



## WEED IDENTIFICATION TALK

12 SEPTEMBER

*Join DOC and SIRCET staff for a fun and factful talk on Stewart Island weeds – they're invasive, crowd out our beautiful native plants and replace the habitat of our native wildlife.*

Learn how to identify them, control them and keep them out, once and for all! There will be interactive displays and Weedbusters booklets and stickers to give away. Join us at the Rakiura Environment Centre, Stewart Island on Wednesday 12th Sep.

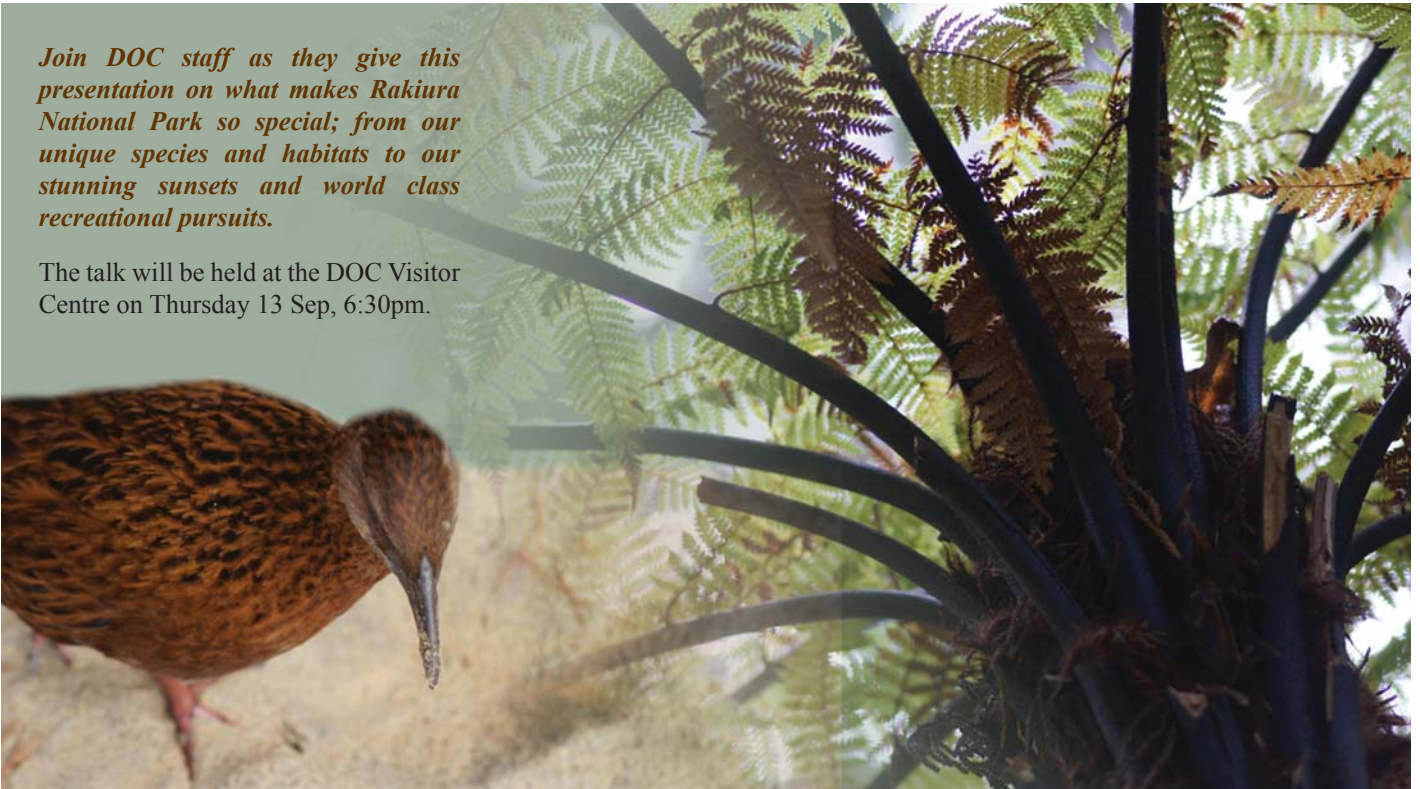


## AOTEAROA'S YOUNGEST NATIONAL PARK

13 SEPTEMBER

*Join DOC staff as they give this presentation on what makes Rakiura National Park so special; from our unique species and habitats to our stunning sunsets and world class recreational pursuits.*

The talk will be held at the DOC Visitor Centre on Thursday 13 Sep, 6:30pm.



# 2012 SPECIES MONITORING RESULTS

## Critical year for Tītī?

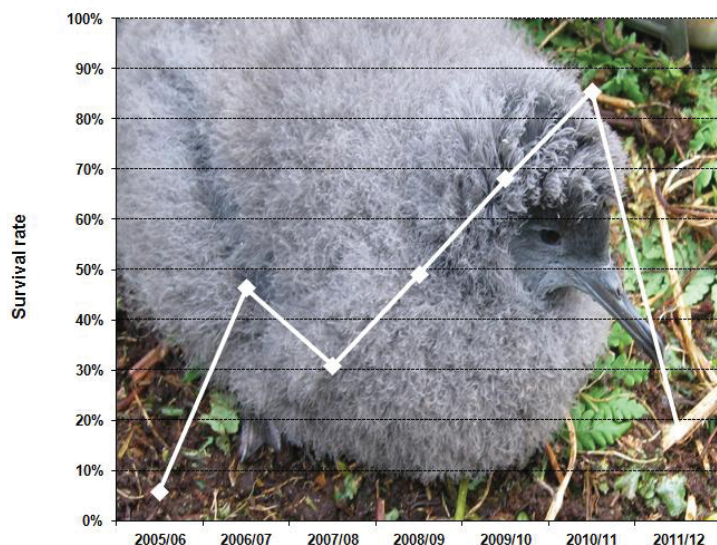
***The 2011/2012 season saw a disappointing result for Tītī / sooty shearwater breeding at Ackers Point.***

Of an estimated 39 pairs incubating eggs, an estimate of only 7 fledglings survived to the “pre-fledge” stage, prior to emerging from their burrows. This equates to an 18% survival rate, a major drop from last season’s 85%. These birds still

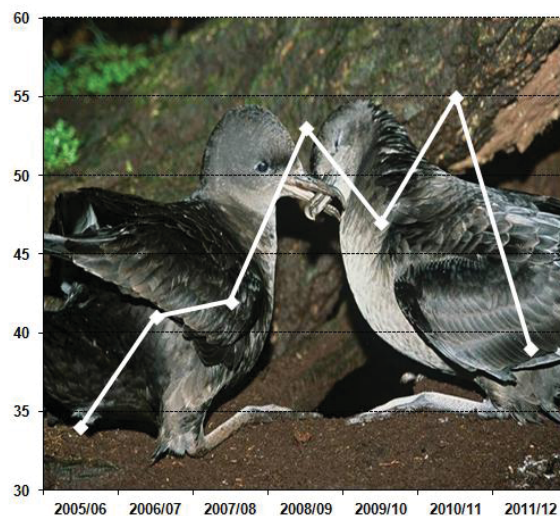
had weeks to survive, including emerging from their burrows nightly to lose the last of their down and strengthen their wings for flight, before they were ready to take care of themselves.

Therefore, the actual breeding success for this group is estimated to be lower still. And this year’s poor breeding success is seemingly reflected across the whole of the New Zealand archipelago.

**Ackers Point Tītī chick survival rate**



**Estimated number of tītī breeding pairs at Ackers Point**



*“New scope used in conjunction with old scope for 2011-12 monitoring: approximately 9% fewer eggs expected to be found with the new scope from now on.”*

## Why has this happened?

***Tītī migrate to the North Pacific during our southern winter and at this time face many threats at sea from human-driven industries, occasional natural food shortages and natural predators.***

Japan’s March 2011 tsunami and consequent damage to the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power-plant sent a plume of radiation across the North Pacific, contaminating the marine food chain, adding to the hazards\*.

Two consequent studies looking at Stewart Island Tītī found that only two thirds of the birds which would normally return to breed returned this year.

The birds which did return were in poor condition; it is suggested the food supplies in that area were not sufficient to support a full moult, and that the La Niña weather patterns which affected the globe last year would have also played a part.

## Can you help?

***Recognising these external pressures, SIRCET’s goal is to remove or minimise the land-based threats to this population, and trapping of animal pests such as feral cats, known to prey directly on Tītī, continues in the project area.***

We are now planning an assault on the Ackers Point feral cat population in preparation for the coming Tītī breeding season and are seeking vital volunteer assistance to help out with checking these traps.

If you can lend a hand, contact Denise - your help is needed now more than ever!



***“Cat traps are easy to check and re-set, trapping lasts a week and traps need to be checked daily”***

## Advances in technology

*In 2011 SIRCET purchased a new burrowscope, thanks to funding from Birdlife International, to replace the old, decrepit one.*

While it's thought that the new scope's light disturbs the birds more than the old one, and that slightly fewer birds would be found, it's been recommended to SIRCET that we continue using the new scope to take advantage of its improved technology: its faster meaning less time in the burrow, provides a clearer image and doesn't fall apart on us in the field! SIRCET also decided to discontinue banding of the birds in 2011, decreasing the disturbance caused to the population.

*Thanks to Kari and Brent at SolutionNZ for carrying out the monitoring.*

*During the monitoring a calibration was carried out between the new and old scopes in order to create meaning between data from previous and future years. \*Landcare Research tests undertaken on samples of Titi from Harekopare Island prior to the 2012 muttonbirding season found no measureable radioactive contamination, declaring the birds safe to eat.*



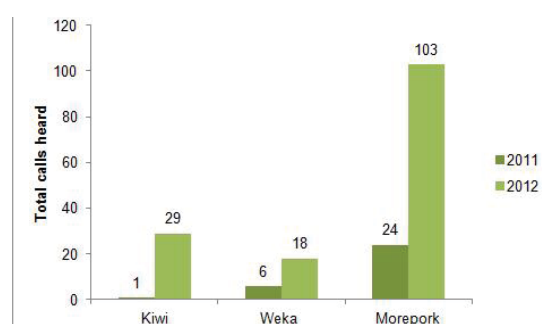
*The new burrowscope, Source: Sextant Technology*

## Kiwi, Weka and Morepork

*This year's monitoring of kiwi, weka and ruru/morepork saw a marked increase in the total number of calls heard from all three of these species. While this program, with only two years of data, is too young to provide insight into any statistically sound 'trends', this is certainly a positive result for SIRCET.*

Kiwi were heard a total of 29 times, compared with just one call in 2011. Highlights for volunteers included up-close kiwi encounters at several monitoring sites, a total of seven kiwi were seen over three nights. This included a young juvenile indicating that kiwi have been breeding within the habitat restoration area. Volunteers Matt Jones and Jules Retberg were gobsmacked at the three kiwi they saw within 20 minutes. Matt shares: "One walked straight over my boot, it was just so curious. We loved the whole experience. That time of evening everyone's usually wrapped up at home but it was great to listen during the night time, your senses pick up every rustle. We were amazed at the wildlife on our doorstep."

Peter Tait wrapped up warm at Observation Rock and found himself really enjoying the solitude: "The stars were stunning and several times I watched boat lights in the Inlet. Kiwi, weka, and morepork were



certainly out there. And the hot chocolate when I got back tasted extra good!"

Three times more weka were heard this year and a whopping 103 ruru calls were heard, compared with 24 last year. The stand out site for ruru calls this year was Motorau Gardens where 40 calls were heard.

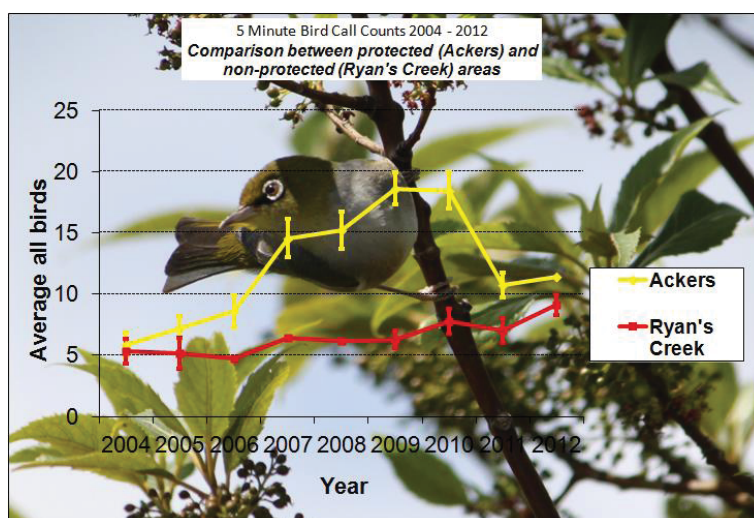
Watch this space for the next opportunity to join SIRCET's volunteer call count team!

## 5-min Bird Call Counts

*5 minute bird counts, carried out by SIRCET each April, assist in measuring changes over time in the populations of individual native bird species, both within the project area (Ackers Point) and in a representative non-protected area (Ryan's Creek).*

This allows us to compare how the populations change over the years in an area with pest control, with how they change in the absence of any formal pest control.

This year's call counts show an increase at both sites from last year. The low results seen in 2011 were believed to have been impacted by a rat eruption and this year, we may be seeing a recovery from that event. It's hoped that with ongoing pest control and no more rat plagues for a couple of years, the birds will soon bounce back.



# COMMUNITY POSSUM TRAP UPDATE

*All ten of the new automatic kill possum traps have now been sponsored!*

Thank you to all our contributors: Liz Tanner (of Kaipoi), Ben Hopkins, Margaret Fairhall, Denise Hayes, Aurora Charters, Oystercatcher's Choice Oysters, Rakiura Charters, Clampett Industries, Ship to Shore and community members who purchased raffle tickets from their fundraiser.

The "Community Trap", wholly sponsored by the local community, is located on Peterson Hill, and has now caught a total of six possums, two more since our May report! We will continue to report on its progress.

DOC has just completed the June round of possum monitoring (thank you to our DOC volunteers who contributed a whopping 104 hours!), and we're pleased to report a residual trap catch (RTC) of 4.1% - just below our aim of 5%. This is a slight increase to the last round of monitoring undertaken in 2010 and is indicative of a small population of possums in the area, particularly in the Ackers block. SIRCET is continuing its cleanup of the Warrior traps and in the meantime, has 10 automatic traps along with 50 Warrior traps active in the project area.

## GRANTS RECEIVED

*SIRCET is pleased to announce that it has been successful in its bids for several grants over the past few months.*

These funds will go towards the Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project as well as other projects such as the township gardens and community nursery:

\$1,500 from Southland District Council (SDC) for maintenance of Town Gardens.

\$2,000 from SDC Community Initiatives Fund toward nursery materials and equipment, shade house extension and ramp.

\$1,000 from BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust for 2012-13 Kiwi, Weka, Morepork monitoring.

\$800 from Honda Tree Fund toward plants for the Lonnekens Revegetation Project and Battery-powered Makita drill donated by Placemakers, Invercargill for pest trapping field work.

Our thanks go out to all of our sponsors and supporters who make SIRCET's important work possible!



*Community volunteers removing weeds and bringing rare natives back to Lonnekers Beach*

# Worrisome Weeds

*Weeds taking over your garden? How do you get rid of them once and for all? This was a question our Lonnekers Beach Manager Jessi Nichols helped our weeding volunteers answer at two recent Lonnekers Beach Weed Workshops held on the 21st of April and 2nd of May:*



*Jack, Tommy and pony Minty help destroy some weeds!*

## Replace With Alternatives

**Clearing areas of weeds can create open, disturbed conditions that can favor re-growth or trading one problem weed with another.**

Replant with alternatives as you go. This is the best way to prevent weed infestation. Natives are usually best as they naturally thrive in local conditions so require less maintenance and support native bird and insect life. Otherwise choose exotic alternatives that are proven to be non-invasive.

Pesky weeds can easily be controlled in your garden to stop them taking over. By restoring with native plants, we can increase local biodiversity in our backyards and help prevent erosion

## Tips for controlling weeds

- Choose the correct method for the weed species to make effective use of your time. Weedbusters ([www.weedbusters.co.nz](http://www.weedbusters.co.nz)) have weed specific methods and the best timing to undertake;
- Start with small patches and tackle big areas in stages. Start with outliers to slow the rate of spread;
- Prioritise the older plants and deal with plants before they fruit or seed to stop the next generation from growing;
- If a herbicide approach is necessary-get good advice. Find the right chemical to kill the weed, cause least damage to surrounding area and best way to apply it. Most of all always use proper safety equipment;
- Take care not spread seeds or plant material that could grow again. This could be from moving weeds or soil on shoes, gear...
- Dispose of wisely and method suitable for weed species. i.e. Let rot in black plastic bags, burn or deep bury. Some can re-grow from dumped piles or seeds that remain active in compost heaps

# WEED PROFILES

## *Gunnera tinctoria* (Chilean Rhubarb)

### What makes it weedy:

Gunnera forms dense clumps producing thousands of seeds and fast growing rhizomes. It invades coastal cliffs, stream margins and wetlands with large leaves 2m across shading out natives and adding to erosion.



### Ways to control it:

- Cut off and dispose of seed heads
- Hand pull seedlings
- Dig out plant and all rhizome roots. Dispose of properly
- Cut off leaves and paint stalks with a herbicide vigilant gel or glyphosate (250ml/L) in spring
- Knapsack spray leaves with glyphosate (10ml/L) using safety equipment

### Replace with:

Native: Kakaha (*Astelia chathamica*) or Harakeke (*Phormium tenax*)

Exotic: Orange ligularia (*Ligularia dentata*) or Chinese rhubarb (*Rheum palmatum*) or Hosta species.



**Kakaha** (Source: nzplantpics.com)

## *Crocasmia x Crocosmiflora* (Montbretia)

### What makes it weedy:

Montbretia invades by crowding out native shrubs and groundcovers and spreads down from roadsides and slips with masses of underground corms. It contributes to erosion, siltation and the breakdown of stream banks.



### Ways to control it:

- Dig out small patches and try to remove corms and all rhizome roots. Dispose of properly.
- Knapsack spray at full leaf stage with glyphosate (10ml/L) + metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (4g/10L) + penetrant. Use safety equipment.
- Re-sprouts and thrives from soil disturbance so replanting is essential to long-term control

### Replace with:

Native: Rengarenga (*Arthropodium cirratum*) or Wharariki (*Phormium cookianum*) or Turutu (*Dianella nigra*)

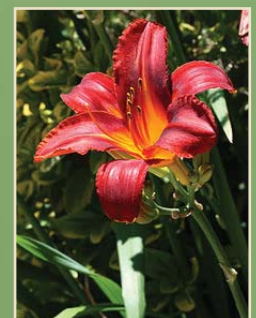
Exotic: Day lily (*Hemerocallis*) or Crown Imperial (*Fritillaria imperialis*) or Hosta species



**Rengarenga**



**Chinese Rhubarb**  
(Source: Wikipedia)



**Day lily** (Source: Wikipedia)

Information sourced from Weed-busters [www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz).



*Lumsden school students lend a hand.*

# Remarkable Rares Returned

The workshop also saw local volunteers bringing some of our rarer natives back to the Lonnekens Beach site:

## Native Ice Plant/ Horokaka (*Disphyma australe*)



*Horokaka* (Source: nzplantpics.com)

moisture levels and does well in free draining soil within a sunny site however, it can be frost tender and requires some protection from slugs and snails.

This NZ endemic is a coastal creeping succulent with dense branches. It is fast growing making it an ideal groundcover to crowd out those weeds. It has pale pink and white flowers in summer that open and close with sunlight. Horokaka is found mostly on cliff faces, rock stacks, boulder/cobble beaches, and is often in petrel scrub on offshore islands, extending into coastal forest around petrel burrows. It is easily propagated from rooted pieces and fresh seed. It's not fussy about soil fertility or



## Shore Splurge (*Euphorbia glauca*)

Another NZ endemic, this perennial herb is in decline. Threats include browsing from possums and coastal development and erosion and population fragmentation makes the remnants vulnerable to sudden decline.

The stunning deep red flowers appear from September to March and sporadic flowering through the year can occur. The shore splurge is easily grown from fresh seed, cuttings and the division of whole plants.



*Shore splurge* (Source: Shannel Courtney, NZPCN)

## Pūnui (*Stilbocarpa lyalii*)



*Rare Stewart Island Megaherb 'Pūnui'*,  
(Source: naturespics.com)

Discovered by Dr. Lyall in 1848, pūnui is a robust herb forming large clumps up to 1m or more. Maori once used the large, vivid green leaves on the Tītī Islands to wrap food for placing in umu (earth ovens), the leaves being eaten as a kinaki (relish) to the food. Some muttonbirders bring back bundles of it to eat as a cabbage.

Flowering occurs from November through to February and the flowers, which are small, purple, and occasionally yellow, are hermaphrodite (they have both male and female organs). This plant was once common but is now virtually eliminated by browsing on mainland Stewart Island, and it is prone to rat damage. Suitable sites for this plant include sandy, loamy and clay soils with acid, neutral or alkaline soils. It can grow in semi-shade or no shade and prefers moist soil.

## Congratulations **SIRCET** and a huge thank you to the Stewart Island and wider community.

**SIRCET has successfully achieved its 2011-12 target of reaching sponsorship of 50% of the project area!**

### SPONSOR A HECTARE

*Sponsor-a-Hectare program bridges the gap between volunteer time and projects and equipment that need to be financed.*

The 'Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project' area is protected by SIRCET's pest trapping program and each hectare is available for sponsorship through this annually renewable program. Levels of sponsorship range from \$30 for ½ ha to \$500 for 10 hectares.



*You will receive a certificate, our quarterly newsletter, email updates and invitations to our field days and special events.*

### VEHICLE SPONSORSHIP PACKAGE



Have your company logo displayed on the SIRCET vehicle, and receive our quarterly newsletter, VIP invitations to special events, and your company acknowledged as a major sponsor in the environment centre, on the SIRCET website and at on- and off-island events.

Cost: \$2,000 per year

A record \$5,000 was raised through the Sponsor-a-Hectare program this year, and 105ha now have proud 'owners', contributing to the restoration and protection of Halfmoon Bay. With recent cuts in government funding, this support has never been so important to the project. C'mon Rakiura! – let's make 2012-13 another record year!

### FRIENDS OF SIRCET

Subscribe and become a 'Friend of SIRCET' member by making an annual \$25 donation. Donations go towards funding of equipment needed to continue pest control, our most vital activity. You'll be added to our mailing list to receive an electronic copy of our quarterly newsletter, plus invitations to workdays and special events.

### BUSINESS SPONSORSHIP

Financial assistance from businesses plays a fundamental role in helping SIRCET continue its important work and a range of opportunities are available to businesses to show their support. Member benefits include use of the new SIRCET Business Sponsor logo, acknowledgement in the Rakiura Environment Centre, on the SaH map, the SIRCET website and at event displays. You'll also receive a Business Sponsor Certificate, our quarterly newsletter and VIP invitations to special events and field days.

Cost: \$250 per year

### THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

*A special thanks to those businesses that made a commitment to the program this year!*



### Contacting us

ALINA THIEBES - Project Administrator  
Administration, sponsorship/ fundraising, newsletter, work days  
(03) 2191 487 or 027 354 9991  
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DENISE HAYES - Pests Project Manager  
Pest control, community nursery, volunteering  
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