

# SIRCET news

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

December 2013



Stewart Island / Rakiura  
Community & Environment Trust



for people for environment

# A word from our staff

## **Mandy Foster (Project Administrator)**

I can't believe it is December already and Christmas is just around the corner. The switch has been flicked and Stewart Island is a buzz with tourists and school groups alike enjoying our beautiful Island.

The last newsletter for the year features New Zealand iconic bird, which as 'Kiwis' we are affectionately named after. Kiwi ingenuity at its best is noted with the 'Tom-Cat Text Trap' and the Lonneker's Beach Re-vegetation Project is updated. Letitia accounts her recent trip to the Conservation Inc conference and gives a progress report on the HMBHRP review. Businesses will be interested in the article written by Ian and Pip Wilson from SI Water-taxi & Eco-Guiding and their involvement since the inception of SIRCET. This may prompt other businesses to sponsor the Trust and be shown to support the local environmental champions.



Mandy

On behalf of the Stewart Island/Rakiura Environment and Community Trust, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and safe new year.

## **Denise Hayes (Pest Manager)**

It's been a busy couple of months lately with all sorts of pest control stuff going on. We are in the process of condensing the number of rat traps along existing trap lines from the Ringaringa block (the bush up above Lonneker's Beach) to Acker's Point. Check out the 'HMBHRP Review Update' later in the newsletter for the reasons behind the next battle in the war against rats.

A couple of weeks ago, I joined kids from HMB School, DOC staff and Ruud Kleinpaste (the Bugman) where we participated in an on-line virtual field trip for a website called LEARNZ. This involved being part of an audio conference where three schools asked questions about pest control on Stewart Island and community involvement in conservation projects. We then headed out to various places around Halfmoon Bay with a video to film various aspects of the HMBHRP.

We have a number of visiting volunteers who have booked to help us out with the project over the summer months. This includes Gael Gordon who will be with us from now to the end of February and David Streit who will be with us from mid-December to mid-January. I'm looking forward to working with these volunteers over the coming weeks and I'm sure they will be a huge help to SIRCET. We'll all be busy progressing with the condensing of traps and trap lines, weeding in the project area, nursery work, on-going trapping and maintenance of the traps and trap lines.

Our feral cat trapping programme is progressing well with a number of new traps arriving and especially exciting is the development of a new SMS trap by Peter Tait. An article 'Pete's Cat Trap' is featured later in the newsletter so have a read about this awesome piece of kiwi ingenuity and for the more technical details go to: <http://sailsashore.co.nz/wordpress/2013/10/animal-control-project/>

In October I had a trip down to Pegasus to assist DOC staff with some possum monitoring – although the weather wasn't that great... I had a wonderful time and got to see a part of the island that I hadn't been to before. The trip reinforced my feelings of how lucky we are to live in such a fantastic



Denise

environment and how truly beautiful and unique our small, big island is.

In addition to all the pest control stuff going on, I've also been pretty full on at the native plant nursery at Horseshoe Bay. The front boxes are now full of species that haven't been available for sale previously – so if you haven't been out to the nursery lately, go check it out. Plants in the front yard are available to the public for a \$2 donation per plant.

Well, that sums up my last couple of months... now it's off to do some more rat trapping.



# LONNEKER'S BEACH REVEGETATION

A Community Weeding and Planting Day was held on 15 September 2013. It was advertised in the local Stewart Island News, on the Environment Centre noticeboard as well as the Community Information Board.

15 volunteers gave up their Sunday morning to help plant 196 natives in the area to the left of site 2 of the project area and then spent the rest of the working-bee, weeding the established site 2 area (see map right).



An educational hand-out was given out to all the volunteers. Two invasive weeds commonly found on Stewart Island – namely *Berberis darwinii* (Darwin's Barberry) and *Trapaecolum speciosum* (Chilean Flame Creeper) – were featured and control methods were noted. The native plants – *Pingao*, *Euphorbia glauca* and *Olearia nummularifolia* were presented as plants suitable for Stewart Island gardens and they are readily available at the Community Nursery.



Since the planting day a further 65 natives have been planted in site 5 to replace those that have succumbed to the elements. Gorse has been cleared and weeding kept up to date to give the young plants a chance to survive and thrive. The beach is looking great!

Belinda and Phred Dobbins have been on a crusade to clear 'the Nugget' of unwanted gorse and replace this unsightly menace with natives from the Community Nursery. A huge thank-you goes to Belinda and Phred.



# BUSINESS SPONSOR-A-HECTARE

## FEATURE BUSINESS SPONSOR: STEWART ISLAND WATER TAXI & ECO-GUIDING



*We have been proud supporters of SIRCET since the idea of predator control for Acker's Point was first started in 2003. As one of the larger land owners in the initial control area we were very proactive in getting the trap lines up and running, then maintaining them.*

As a result we have seen major change from pasture to regenerating forest and the effective continuing predator controls has meant an abundance of birdlife throughout the property. A major highlight for us so far has been the reintroduction of Kiwi into Acker's Point.

Stewart Island Water Taxi & Eco-Guiding are proud to be a business sponsor so the work SIRCET does can continue and be of benefit to the whole community.

Stewart Island Water Taxi & Eco-Guiding is owned and operated by Ian Wilson & Philippa Fraser-Wilson and have been operating an on demand and scheduled water taxi and guiding service since 1991.

Being from a sixth generation island family we are proud to show our clients the natural beauty that our island has to offer with daily services to Ulva Island Bird Sanctuary, Freshwater River and most other tramping destinations. We are proud to be Qualmark endorsed and have recently received an Enviro Silver Award for our efforts. We have supported, and continue to do so, many conservation projects here on Stewart Island.

[www.stewartislandwatertaxi.co.nz](http://www.stewartislandwatertaxi.co.nz)

[www.portofcall.co.nz](http://www.portofcall.co.nz)

\$250 Sponsor-a-Hectare entitles the business to display the SIRCET logo on their website and also have their logo displayed in SIRCET's annual report, the Environment Centre and on our website. A Business Sponsorship for SIRCET supports the restoration of our environment which in turn makes our backyards a better place.

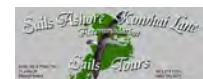
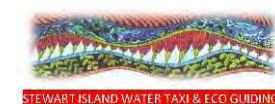
*We have local and national businesses that support SIRCET. Without their generous annual sponsorship it would be difficult to fund the Trust's day to day expenses including:*

- Management expenses
- Rat Bait
- Traps
- Vehicle running costs...

HOW ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS GETTING  
BEHIND OUR STEWART ISLAND  
ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPIONS?

## CURRENT BUSINESS SPONSORS:

- Aurora Charters
- Bay Motel
- Genera Ltd
- Rakiura Charters
- Kaka Retreat
- Sails Ashore
- Kowhai Lane
- S I Water Taxi & Eco-Guiding
- Pete Ross Automotive
- The Fernery
- Ulva's Guided Walks



**Pete Ross Automotive**





# Conservation Inc Conference

*In October I attended the Conservation Inc conference in Dunedin.*

This was put on by the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust as part of their 25 year celebration and was aimed at community conservation organisations and the changes and challenges they are facing. The four themes of the conference were:

- Connecting,
- Staying Viable,
- Responding to Need and
- What's Feasible?

It was a fascinating conference and I soaked up all the knowledge from the dozens of speakers. There were nearly 200 people at the conference and it was a great opportunity to network with other community environmental organisations from around New Zealand. I attended a workshop on sustainable fundraising that gave me some new ideas for SIRCET going forward. The main two days of the conference was a whirl of inspiring speakers including; a speaker from DOC talking about the new direction the Department is taking, lawyers giving us some legal considerations, social media wizz's explaining what benefits and drawbacks it has, and many groups talking about the issues they have encountered.

Thank you to Real Journeys for providing my transport to the mainland and back and to Sandy King for a lift to Dunedin and back!



## HMBHRP Review update

*After some strategic meetings earlier in the year we are now making progress to implementing our review objectives.*

By autumn our goal is to double the number of rat traps on each line from Lonnekers to Ackers Point, so each trap is 25m from its neighbour.

But in order to achieve this, the traps needed to be built! Ang Steffens has had the arduous task of putting together hundreds of traps, ready to go out on the existing lines. (Ang certainly looks comfortable on the end of a hammer).

The next step is to increase the number of rat lines, so that each line is no further than 50m from the next. With a rimu mast



looking likely this summer, rat numbers will be high in autumn and we are planning to wage war on these destructive pests with intensive trapping.

Part of the outcome of the review is to divide the project into a core and community buffer zone. To get rat numbers low over time we are going to concentrate resources on the area from Lonneker's Beach to Ackers. From Lonnekers to the Golden Bay Road we are going to continue to call on the community and visiting volunteers to manage trap lines as this will act as a large buffer for the core area and also reduce rat numbers around many of the townships houses.

With such an intense effort at Ackers and a good buffer to slow reinvasion, we hope to prepare the Ackers bush for the planned translocations of some birds into this area in 2015!

# Kiwi's, Kiwi's and more Kiwi's

## *Kiwi 'Our' Bird:*

*Our brown, flightless, insect eating, ground dwelling, native bird have been a symbol and nickname for New Zealanders all over the world.*

The Stewart Island Brown Kiwi or Southern Tokoeka (*Apteryx australis lawryi*), is one of six identified species of Kiwi. 'Tokoeka' which in the Maori language translates to 'weka with a walking stick' is unlike the other nocturnal varieties of kiwi as the Stewart Island Tokoeka is active during the day as well as the night. Check out these interesting facts:

- Kiwis outnumber residents on Stewart Island 50:1
- Length = 45-55cm
- Female Weight = 2.1 to 3.9 kg
- Male Weight = 1.6 to 2.8 kg



Stewart Island Tokoeka differs from most other kiwi species because they are faithful to their partner for life and often live in large family groups. Nests are made in; burrows, rock crevices, hollow base of a tree, in a hollow log or sheltered beneath thick vegetation. The female typically lays 1 very large egg (occasionally 2) and then Mum and Dad share egg-sitting duties over the 90 day incubation period. Stewart Island birds are unique as sons and daughters stay as helpers in the family unit (up to seven years) until a vacancy arises in a nearby territory.

Kiwis have poor eyesight so their long slender bill with lateral nostrils at the tip, gives them their keen sense of smell and they utilise this more than sight and sound. There are tiny hair-like structures around the nostrils to help the Kiwi bird 'feel' as it moves over the ground. Tokoeka feed by walking slowly along tapping the ground to forage in dirt or leaf litter to find their delicacies including; earthworms, beetle larvae, snails, spiders, centipedes, crickets, weta, cicadas and moths.

The female's shrill "kee-wee" or "kee-kee" and the male's hoarse "kurr kurr" are a distinctive duet that rings out in the forest. The bird's sing to each other to maintain contact with their partner and aid in defending their territory which can be range from 5 to 45 hectares (12 to 110 acres).

Stewart Island Tokoeka is the most abundant of the Tokoeka taxa with an estimated 20,000 birds on the Island. However recent research shows at least one population in Mason Bay is in decline and the Department of Conservation considers the Stewart Island Tokoeka to be 'threatened – nationally vulnerable'.

## *Kiwi Advocacy Project Continues!*

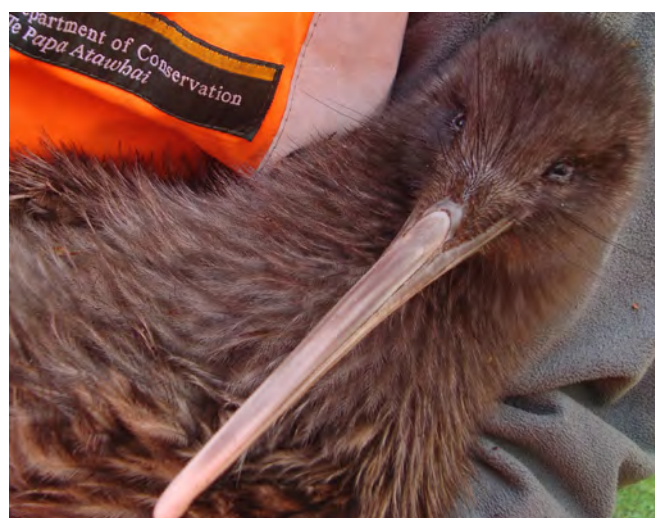
*Following on from the announcement in the last edition of SIRCET's News of our exciting new Kiwi project, the transmitted birds have been monitored with some interesting developments. A brief outline of the project:*

Kiwis are naturally occurring within the HMBHRP and in February 2013, DOC supplemented the population by translocating 11 birds to the area. SIRCET monitored the birds for the following three months to see where they went and at the end of that time all the birds were still in the project area.

In June, seven of the Kiwis were re-caught and fitted with new transmitters in order to use telemetry to monitor the bird's movements. The information gained will be used to:

- *Engage the community and visitors in conserving this sub-species*

The birds have been monitored monthly to establish their location and any potential breeding. Breeding for Stewart Island Tokoeka is from June to December and it is hoped the



birds will be followed through breeding and that ultimately we can place transmitters on chicks.

August 2013 Report – A promiscuous female (TX12) was frolicking with a fine young male (TX22) at Harrold's Bay in May but she got a better offer and in August was off with another male at Evening Cove. Two birds were caught sharing a burrow out towards Ackers in May and while the male is still in the area, the female has 'done a runner'. TX3 male and TX71 have sorted out their love life and they have been residing at Leask Bay.

September 2013 Report – TX12 has left her wild days behind and has settled down with her male at Evening Cove – hopefully wee Kiwis are on the horizon. TX3 and TX71 are going strong and residents of Leask Bay have regularly heard the heralding of their union.



## October 2013 Report –

Just when we thought it was all cosy on the Kiwi relationship front. TX12 and her mate, after spending two months together at Evening Cove, are ‘on a Kiwi break’.

One of the signals Cherie had been tracking for the last two months was consistently coming from the Traill Park area. It was a bird that didn’t receive a new transmitter back in May and as they were designed to fall off around August it was likely that it had come off but was still beeping.

After enlisting some expert help, Cherie went to track it down. Starting at Observation Rock the signal was followed to the start of the Fuchsia Track, and then with a bit more tracking, a transmitter was unearthed from the rugby field where it had been pushed into the ground when the mower ran over it. Not as exciting as finding a kiwi but it’s good to know that they are falling off as designed!



*Kiwi Transmitter - Cherie*



### *Kiwi Dog Aversion Workshop:*

*Mother Nature threw hail, sleet, wind and freezing temperatures at the Kiwi Dog Aversion Workshop day held on 27th October but Stewart Islanders are a hardy bunch and ‘the show must go on’.*

Despite the atrocious weather conditions, the owners and dogs arrived at their allocated times and were introduced to Pete Graham who is a nationally recognised dog trainer and Wendy Sporle from Kiwis for Kiwi. Once registered on the national database, the dogs had the opportunity to sniff the electronic collar before it was put on. Pete, the owner and dog then went for a short walk across Traill Park to a track where a dead kiwi had been placed. At this point the dog would show; interest, partial interest (may have been distracted elsewhere for moment) or a definitive aversion - that is when the dog saw/smelt the kiwi and took ‘aversive’ action in order to avoid going near it. If the dog showed either interest or partial interest, they would receive a shock from the collar with the theory being the dog then associates the zap with the kiwi scent. From then, the walk continued to another track where a second dead kiwi had been placed. It was noted that at this point 99% of the dogs gave this second kiwi a wide berth and showed definite aversion to the scent. Including the walk back to the Scout hall, where a certificate (valid for 6 months) and information was given to the owner, the training only took 15 minutes to complete and during the course of the days 24 dogs were put through their paces.



A big thank you must go to Sandy King who joined Pete and Wendy at Traill Park for the day and gained her qualification as a Kiwi Dog Aversion Trainer.

SIRCET is very grateful that Sandy is willing to give up her time to continue the good work and, that island dogs will be able to be trained in kiwi aversion into the future. A further Kiwi Aversion training day will be held in 6 months, however, in the meantime anyone interested in their dogs being trained, please get in touch with Di Morris or Sandy King.

Many thanks to Di Morris for co-ordinating the training day – hope it didn’t take too long to thaw out!



## Kiwi's, Kiwi's and more Kiwi's

*In conjunction with Trademe and Kiwis for Kiwi, SIRCET offered to auction the naming rights of two of our relocated Kiwis. The auction brief was as follows:*

'SIRCET has an exciting project following the movements of 7 Kiwis that were transferred from Ulva Island to our project area. We are keeping a close eye on their movements, who they 'hook' up with and stay together long enough to produce kiwi babies!

But alas - one of our males (TX3) does not have a name. Can you help? Win the auction and you then have naming rights to TX3.

TX3 has recently been cavorting with a frisky young lady who also has an identity crisis so if you prefer female names TX71 would appreciate a pretty name'.



*Beyond Services (www.beyond.co.nz) which is a value based 100 Kiwi-owned; multi-service recruitment, contracting, temp agency & talent service organisation, won the rights to name our birds. Established in 2003, the Beyond group has offices in Auckland and Wellington and employs 105 staff. The Beyond group embraced the challenge to name the Kiwis and ran an internal competition coming up with the following:*

Ben Pearson (General Manager – Wellington) writes:

'The team here at Beyond had a great time suggesting names for the 2 beautiful kiwis we had the honour of naming. We settled on:

**Matatika** - be right, straight, ethical, fair, equitable, honest, impartial, unbiased & upright.



**Ngaio** – expert, clever & professional

These names are a good reflection of our own company values and aspirations!

There were of course some other very good kiwi names suggested (Jools & Linda and Tamati & Rachel were popular!), and everyone thought the 2 kiwis looked amazing – healthy, happy and fat!

Beyond Services (www.beyond.co.nz) is a large recruitment company based in Auckland and Wellington and working to benefit NZ is one of our core values. We look forward to keeping an eye on Matatika's and Ngaio's progress and are pleased we have been able to contribute to such an excellent cause'.



In addition to the Kiwis naming rights, Beyond Services will receive certificates with the birds' name and a one year subscription to SIRCET's sponsor-a-hectare project. No doubt the certificates will be proudly displayed in their offices.

Many thanks to Beyond Services, Trademe and Kiwis for Kiwi for their support.



# Tom-Cat Text Trap!

*Beware marauding moggies the Tom-Cat Text Trap (TCTT) is up and running and ready to wreak havoc on the furry feral felines.*

An international touch, local environmentalists and Kiwi Ingenuity at its best have been combined to wage war against feral cats which are a real threat to native birdlife on Stewart Island.

The story begins with Tom Sandoz who is an annual visitor to Stewart Island and stays with Peter and Iris Tait from Sails Ashore Lodge. Tom comes from a small seaside town in Oregon, USA and locals here will recognise him having his morning coffee at The Crepery and frequenting walking tracks around Half Moon Bay when he visits for two weeks each year. Tom is considered part of the Tait family so instead of paying for his accommodation he has made a sizeable donation to SIRCET, indicating a preference for using technology to reduce labour costs and at the same time to increase efficiency.

For several years, Peter Tait has been involved with SIRCET, and is well aware that feral cats are actively trapped around the Acker's Point reserve. Live capture traps are used so these need to be checked on a daily basis when opened which is labour intensive and reduces resources to other pest control projects. So wouldn't it be great to use technology that consists of a device that attaches to a cat trap and when the trap is sprung, a text message alerts the Pest Control Officer. Commercial telemetry traps are available but



expensive at \$600 each. Peter thought he could do better than that and after a lot of research put together a trial unit that will reduce the cost to \$400. (Full details of materials used available on <http://sailsashore.co.nz/wordpress/2013/10/animal-control-project>) A field trial has currently been set up at Acker's Point so watch this space.

Thank you Pete for all your hard work on this project and Iris for putting up with the initial trials in your kitchen!

