

# SIRCET news

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

January - February 2011





## A word from Claire



WELCOME  
DENISE

We hope you have been enjoying an awesome summer! We are certainly loving all the birds around the bay, the flocks of tūī, and back in spring, the sound of shining cuckoo. The shining cuckoo is the bird of the edition, read ahead for interesting facts about how it gets grey warblers to do its parenting.

The tūī/sooty shearwater have returned to lay their eggs, and we'll be out monitoring them to see how many breeding pairs there are this season. Little blue penguins are also around, feeding their very cute chicks.

It's fantastic that we have all these unique birds literally in our backyards. Unfortunately it's difficult to explain to our pets the difference between catching a rat and a tui! In this edition we have tips to help you keep wildlife safe and free cat collars to give away.

There has been lots happening since we last wrote. The possum monitoring results are looking good. We have a brand new sign at Harrold's Bay which we are thrilled about -thanks DOC for making it happen! And you may also have noticed frantic activity at the Environment Centre. It's getting a revamp, and some lovely new panels will be going up soon.

A big change for SIRCET this summer is that Jessi has decided to work for DOC. We are going to miss her, and wish her all the best for the future! Denise Hayes, long time SIRCET volunteer and familiar face to many of you, has taken over Jessi's role. Welcome Denise!

Denise is keen to touch base with volunteers and landowners so please let her know if you are on the island or would like to catch up.

As always please get in touch with us at anytime if you would like more information or are keen to get involved.

Claire

### *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 Claire or Denise a call on 03 2191 159 or e-mail us...

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

## About us

*The Stewart Island/ Rakiura Community and Environment Trust (SIRCET) is a non-profit organisation.*

SIRCET was formed in 2002 by a group of Stewart Islanders enthusiastic about protecting and enhancing the environment and community of Stewart Island. The Trust instigates and promotes local projects that support these goals.

SIRCET's main project is the Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project which aims to create an open sanctuary in our backyard. This project started as a result of locals becoming concerned about the number of sooty shearwater/tūī and little blue penguin deaths at Ackers Point.



Volunteers started to carry out predator control in the area, and with the support of landowners, the project has grown to protect 210 hectares from Ackers Point to Golden Bay Road. Trapping is the primary form of pest control.

The Trust also carries out bird monitoring in this area, which has shown an increase in birds over time. Weka have been released successfully and further bird re-introductions are planned.

SIRCET is able to carry out its work through the hard work of volunteers, and with sponsorship from the community and local businesses, DOC, Environment Southland, and funders such as the Community Trust of Southland, World Wildlife Foundation and Biodiversity Funds.





# SIRCET Update

## Lonnekers Revegetation Project

We have had four very successful planting days at Lonnekers Beach so far this season. A big thanks to everyone for all their help. 419 natives have been planted so far this season.



## Kiwi

The Halfmoon Bay School pupils have made some posters to remind us about how to keep kiwi safe. These can be seen at the Post Office, Wharf and DOC. Thanks guys!



*Posters by students of Halfmoon Bay School*

## Sooty Shearwater/ Titi Monitoring

As part of monitoring the titi colony at Ackers Point, titi have been banded since 2005. This mark-recapture project is aimed at gauging the population dynamics of the colony.

Adults are caught in October/November as they return from their travels, and chicks are caught just before they fledge. So far this season 32 new adults have been banded and 7 birds from 2006 and 2008 recaptured.

In total since 2005, 105 adults have been banded and 19 recaptured.



# Community Nursery

## Plants available

With all this sunny weather we have been having – it is a great opportunity to plant something in your backyard. The nursery is located at Horseshoe Bay, corner of Lee Bay Rd. A selection of shrubs, trees and grasses are available for only a gold coin each, which can be left in the donation box or at the DOC visitor centre. Funds raised are re-invested in the nursery.



The nursery is staffed on Thursday mornings so your native plant questions can be answered. Check out the new plant signs up to help you browse throughout the rest of the week.

If you have any specific plant requirements these can also be grown to order so please get in contact.



## Nursery WORK MORNINGS

The native plant nursery runs on volunteer power – come out and lend a hand to propagate and raise seedlings. No previous experience is required and help is always appreciated!



Thursday mornings If you need a lift, meet 9am outside the Environment Centre/Glowing Sky shop.  
For more info please contact Denise on 2191 159 or [denise@sircet.org.nz](mailto:denise@sircet.org.nz).



# Clowning Around

In October the wonderful Vicki Coats (of quiz fame) organised a Scavenger Hunt for SIRCET's benefit.



Teams had to dress up as clowns and find such items as: skis, hot baked beans on toast, rainbow sprinkles, a photo of a team member in a bubble bath reading today's paper, a copy of Stephen King's IT book, etc etc.... The tourists were bemused but great fun was had by all!



\$257 was raised for SIRCET to purchase first aid kits for staff and volunteers. A big thanks to Vicki for organising the hunt and to all the scavengers who took part.



# OUR NATIONAL BIRD *Kiwi*

This year we have had many kiwi sightings around Halfmoon Bay. Stewart Islanders are lucky to be living every (human) kiwi's dream. Let's keep kiwi safe in our backyards for future generations!



## *KIWI...*

- are one of NZ's most ancient species
- are more closely related to the Australian emu than NZ moa
- have an enormous egg which is 20% of the mother's bodyweight (a human baby is 5%)
- hatch fully feathered and independent
- can live to 60 years
- taste good to predators: 5% of chicks make it to adulthood

## *THREATS TO KIWI*

The culprits on Stewart Island:

- Cats – kill chicks
  - Dogs – kill chicks & adults
  - Possums – destroy eggs, kill chicks & adults
- (NB Stoats are a major predator on the mainland)

Other animals compete with kiwi for food – rats, hedgehogs and possums.



Sources: BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust: [www.savethekiwi.org.nz](http://www.savethekiwi.org.nz)



# Kiwi Safe

Unfortunately...

Curious Dog + Kiwi = Dead Kiwi



Traill Park 2007

Let's keep kiwi safe, please keep your dog:

- *On a leash*
- *Tied up at night or inside*

## More info?

[www.savethekiwi.org.nz/how-you-can-help/take-action/take-action.html](http://www.savethekiwi.org.nz/how-you-can-help/take-action/take-action.html)



## Volunteer Opportunities

### Kiwi, Morepork and Weka Call counts

In the coming months we will be looking for volunteers willing to come along to a training session and then spend an evening (or more!) listening for bird calls. Watch out in the Stewart Island News or the community notice board for more details or get in contact with us.

### Cat trapping

A series of cage traps have been put in place around the Lighthouse track at Ackers point. Helpers will be needed to check and re-bait cage traps during the high risk time for tītī predation. No handling of animals or prior experience is necessary so if a walk to the lighthouse with an extra purpose sounds good, get in touch.







## Shining Cuckoo *Pipiwaharaura*

*Shining cuckoo were frequently heard around Halfmoon Bay in spring. These interesting birds spend winter in the area around New Guinea and the Solomons. Shining cuckoo lay their eggs in grey warbler nests. Once hatched, the cuckoo chick pushes any grey warbler eggs or chicks out of the nest.*

Recent research by Michael Anderson at Massey University has found that cuckoo chicks use the same hatchling call as a warbler chick. It is a mystery how the cuckoo chick can produce this call when there are no warbler chicks left to imitate. Adult cuckoos and warblers have completely different calls.

Anderson has also found that the grey warbler has

not altered its begging call in response to the cuckoo's mimicry, whereas generally in co-evolution both species evolve in response to each other. The grey warbler better get on to it!

Shining cuckoo eat insects and especially like feeding on the black hairy magpie moth caterpillars. Unfortunately this food source takes them to ground level, where they are often killed by cats.

### MĀORI LORE

*"Māori tradition believed the shining cuckoo wintered in Hawaiki, which indicates that they were well aware of the bird's migratory habits. However, it was probably from observing the long tailed cuckoo, Koekoea, which winters chiefly in Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Cook, Society and Tuamotu groups, which lead the voyaging ancestors of Māori to believe that there was land to the south."*



### Māori Proverb

Ka tangi te wharaura, ko nga karere a mahuru  
If the shining cuckoo cries it is the messenger of spring



### Facts

#### DISTRIBUTION:

Migratory species, that breeds throughout NZ, mainly in scrub and forest. Also breeds in SW and E Australia, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. Returns to New Zealand in late September-early October to the same site each year.

#### BREEDING:

Parasitic species. Host species grey warbler.

#### DIET:

Invertebrates.

#### THREATS:

Not threatened in NZ. Rainforest clearance in their wintering grounds could be a serious problem.

#### STATUS:

Protected native. Numbers are stable.

### SONG

Listen to their characteristic song online: <http://www.nzbirds.com/birds/pipiwaharaura.html>

Sources & extra info see: Heather and Robertson, *The Field Guide to Birds of New Zealand* 2005.  
[www.nzbirds.com/birds/pipiwaharaura.html](http://www.nzbirds.com/birds/pipiwaharaura.html)



# Tips to help protect wildlife from your cat






*Keeping cats as pets is a human tradition that dates back thousands of years to Ancient Egyptian times. They are cute, affectionate members of many families.*


Although domesticated, like feral cats they are hunters by instinct and can cause a surprising amount of damage in the wild, especially at this time of year when birds are breeding.

Little blue penguins, titi and their chicks are a tasty target as they commute to their burrows at night. Also young kiwi are particularly vulnerable to cats in the first 3 months of their life.



*Follow these tips to help protect the wildlife in your backyard:*

-  **Keep your cat indoors overnight** – let kiwi, nocturnal insects, lizards, penguins etc have free reign of your wider backyard.
-  **Feed well and have moving toys to chase and play with.**
-  **Put a bell on a collar (see advert!).** This will also help cage trappers easily identify your cat as a pet.
-  **Arrange care while you are away.**
-  **Neuter or spay your cat** – this is a legal requirement for cats on Stewart Island.

 **Do not dump unwanted kittens.** Find caring, responsible homes yourself or with SPCA's help or humanely put down kittens.

 **Be aware of ground nesting birds in your area.**

**Tips from:** "Did my cat do that?" DOC DVD and <http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/threats-and-impacts/animal-pests/animal-pests-a-z/pets/you-can-help/>

**FREE  
CAT  
COLLARS!**

**Available in a range of colours and styles to suit your pet's personality**

Bells are attached to help prevent bird stalking.

Contact us to get yours:  
[info@sircet.org.nz](mailto:info@sircet.org.nz) or  
Denise 03 219 1159





# PEST ANIMALS

## POSSUM MONITORING

Thank you to the Department of Conservation for carrying out our possum monitoring this year. The method used was a nationally standardised method called Residual Trap Catch (RTC). 6 lines of 10 leg hold traps were set out through the project area and checked every morning for 3 consecutive nights.

The results are analysed as a percentage. Our project aims to control possums to fewer than 5% RTC to allow forest regeneration. The result was well under this target at 1.9%. Thank you also to all the landowners within 150m of these lines who gave permission for DOC to carry out this vital indication of our possum numbers.



## EXTENSION OF TRAPPING

The border control area has been extended to include the Fuchsia walkway between Dundee St. and Traill Park. Trapping volunteer Sharon Pasco has already removed about 30 rats from this small area of bush – great work! This will help curb rats adjacent to the project area and protect birds around Halfmoon Bay.

If anyone is interested to help rid their area of pests, please get in touch.

## STEWART ISLAND EXPERIENCE

### Guided Walks

*Support SIRCET and learn about Stewart Island's unique cultural and natural heritage!*



Stewart Island Experience is donating \$5 from each adult booking on its evening guided walks to SIRCET. This programme of sponsorship was very successful last summer.

Two walking options are available, one of which visits SIRCET's project area.

Contact Stewart Island Experience for more information:  
[www.stewartislandexperience.co.nz](http://www.stewartislandexperience.co.nz)



 **Stewart  
Island  
Experience**



# VISIT OUR NEW HARROLD'S BAY SIGN

## Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project providing safe homes for threatened species



**The Stewart Island/Rakiura Community and Environment Trust (SIRCET)**

SIRCET was set up in 2002 in response to community concerns about the survival of Halfmoon Bay's iconic native wildlife.



**The project in action**

SIRCET's work to safeguard the future of our rich native wildlife includes:

- controlling introduced predators, especially rats and feral cats
- controlling browsing mammals, especially possums
- controlling weeds and re-vegetating habitats to increase food sources and local biodiversity
- monitoring native species numbers to measure project success
- increasing public awareness about the dangers to native wildlife from domestic dogs and cats



**Looking ahead**

Once pests are under control, SIRCET plans to re-introduce threatened birds and plants that have been lost to the area. They include South Island rifleman/tipounamu, Stewart Island robin/toutouwai and, ultimately South Island saddleback/tiaki.



**Ackers Point milestones**

- 1936 Lewis Ackers clears the site for farming and boat-building
- 2001 The last sheep and cattle are removed
- 2003 Trapping starts at Ackers Point
- 2005 The Habitat Restoration Project is extended beyond Ackers Point Peninsula to include the land south of Halfmoon Bay.

For more information ...  
Information about the Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project, including ways in which you can contribute, is available on SIRCET's website: [www.sircet.org.nz](http://www.sircet.org.nz)

Thanks to DOC for their support

## Grant Received

SIRCET is delighted to announce that it has received a grant from the Lottery Environment and Heritage Committee. The grant is \$19,348 and will go towards three projects.



AMOUNT	PURPOSE
\$10,140	Community Nursery – project management
\$5,815	Lonnekers Beach Restoration – project management & compost
\$2,860	Rat monitoring extension – project management & materials
\$533	GPS hardware

Jo Learmonth, Trust treasurer, is thrilled with the grant. "This is the first time that SIRCET has received a Lotteries Environment & Heritage Grant and it is a testament to the importance of the project that it qualified under their stringent application criteria.

The continued support of the 'larger' funding bodies means that we can continue to have people on the ground and achieve our high rate of environmental success."





# SPONSOR A HECTARE

***SIRCET has a 'sponsor-a-hectare' programme which bridges the gap between volunteer time and projects and equipment that need to be financed.***

There are 210 hectares protected by SIRCET and the Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project.

If you are interested in being part of the programme or making a gift to someone who has enjoyed the island please get in touch or fill in the form in this newsletter and return it to us. Donations are tax-deductible.

You will receive a certificate, our quarterly newsletter, email updates and invitations to our field days. For more information see our website: [www.sircet.org.nz](http://www.sircet.org.nz)

There are other sponsorship opportunities so if your business is interested in sponsoring SIRCET please contact us.

Thank you to our current sponsors for their on-going support!

## SPONSORSHIP OPTIONS

- 1 hectare (\$50)
- 2 hectares (\$100)
- 5 hectares (\$250)
- 10 hectares (\$500)
- ½ hectare (\$30)

*Alternatively, choose your own sponsorship amount.*

## PAYMENT OPTIONS

### BANK TRANSFER

Stewart Island/Rakiura Community and Environment Trust.

ASB Bank Invercargill 12-3154-0103153-00

*Enter the following details when making your payment:*

**Particulars** - Hectare

**Code:** (Leave this field blank)

**Reference:** (your name, e.g. J. Smith)

### CREDIT CARD OR MONEY ORDER

Please phone or email to arrange payment

### CHEQUE

Make cheques out to: **Stewart Island/Rakiura Community and Environment Trust**

*Receipts supplied on request*

We would be grateful if you would inform us of your sponsorship and your contact details so that we can continue to send you the SIRCET Newsletter.

*Please fill out the following form and return it to us:*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Business (if relevant) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Comments or special requests \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Please feel free to contact us with any questions*

## Do you visit or live on Stewart Island?

*Would you and your family like to be involved in:*

- workdays
- pest trapping
- replanting
- tending native plant seedlings

*Work on your own, in pairs or in groups.*

*Please contact Denise Hayes - [denise@sircet.org.nz](mailto:denise@sircet.org.nz)*

## Contacting us

**CLAIRE KILNER** - Species Project Manager  
Bird monitoring, plantings, sponsorship, newsletter  
(03) 2191 418, [claire@sircet.org.nz](mailto:claire@sircet.org.nz)

**DENISE HAYES** - Pests Project Manager  
Pest control, community nursery, volunteering  
(03) 2191 159, [denise@sircet.org.nz](mailto:denise@sircet.org.nz)

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