SIRCET news

www.sircet.org.nz

July 2014

Stewart Island / Rakiura Community & Environment Trust

for people for environment

A word from our staff

Shona Sangster (Project Administrator)

I'm Shona Sangster, SIRCET's new Project Administrator. I'm Ben Hopkins' partner, a recent arrival to the island from Auckland - after visiting for 4 years I am giving full time island life a go. Yes, in winter! It isn't the coldest place I've ever moved to, I can assure you. And the welcome has been incredibly warm! My interest in conservation has been life long and I'm passionate about the restoration and protection of our native environment and the reintroduction of native flora and fauna. Living in the Waitakere Ranges (west of Auckland) gave me an insight into the huge difference effective pest control can make to forest health and bird numbers. I am also a supporter of the TiriTiri Matangi island sanctuary in the Hauraki Gulf, and was involved in the early replanting projects there.

Denise Hayes (Pest Control and Nursery Manager)

It is with twinges of sadness and regret that I write this update as it will be my last. Due to personal reasons, I am heading back up north for a few months and have therefore resigned from SIRCET. Over the last couple of weeks, I have been reflecting on all that I have learned and achieved during my 3 and ½ years as the Pest Control and Nursery Manager for the Trust. Despite appearances – it certainly hasn't all been about rat trapping!! Yes - I've caught thousands of rats but also scores of possums and several feral cats. I've also learned a fair bit about the habits of the white tail deer through observation and performing a formal survey of them across the project area.

I've had the pleasure of working with a number of volunteers – both local and visiting and have heard a variety of reasons that people so generously give up their time to participate in the project. I've also found that I really enjoy dealing with school groups when they come along on our nature walks out to Ackers Lighthouse, checking the traps as we go – I've seen the excitement these kids get when they find a rat, cat or possum in one of the traps and the eagerness they show to learn about the impacts of these pests and the native species that we aim to protect. I have certainly had a lot of joy passing on my knowledge to the variety of school groups that I've had over the last few years. Some of their thank you letters and comments have been priceless.

I've had the chance to help monitor little blue penguins, titi and undertake tracking of kiwi as well as doing night time bird call counts for kiwi, weka and morepork. Along with volunteers, I'm proud that I've been able to help the Trust improve on the Pest Control operation by cutting in a whole lot of new trap lines along with new monitoring lines (very hard work – but ultimately rewarding!). Volunteers and myself also undertook a pest weed survey and have begun tackling a great variety of these pests.

I've had the opportunity to visit places on the island that I probably wouldn't have got to otherwise including the Lucky block on the north coast and South Pegasus where I helped DOC undertake possum monitoring within these areas. I also had the chance to visit Table Hill and Mt Rakeahua - again to help out DOC – this time to help protect the NZ Dotterels that breed on these high hills.

I've been videoed for a segment on Cue TV, an educational website aimed at school children (LEARNZ) and a Southland District Council DVD and have been interviewed by the NZ National Radio on two separate occasions (once on working with volunteers and another on our habitat restoration project).

At the nursery, I've been able to propagate and grow on many native plants including some rare and threatened species and it's been so rewarding to see many of these native plants heading out the gate to be planted in locals gardens as well as the town gardens and of course Lonnekers Beach.

I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to all the local volunteers that continue to support the project by undertaking a variety of tasks within the Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project. Also my thanks to staff at DOC for the opportunities, advice and support they have given me during this time. Lastly but not least, a huge thanks to the members of the Trust for their ongoing support and opportunity to have been part of this wonderful, fulfilling project. Look out for me in a few months time when I return to the island - I will no doubt be taking on some trap lines as a volunteer!!

Who is SIRCET?

The Stewart Island/ Rakiura Community and Environment Trust (SIRCET), a non-profit organisation, was founded on the 6th March 2003 to promote projects that benefit the community and its environment around the settled parts of Stewart Island/ Rakiura.

Our Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration project (HMBHRP) 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/tītī 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.

SIRCET is able to carry out its work through the hard work of volunteers, and with sponsorship from the community, visitors and local businesses, DOC, Environment Southland, and the generous support of a wide range of funders

LOCAL COLOUR

Autumn is a time of year often associated with bright colours like the red and orange of deciduous trees shedding their leaves.

Stewart Island doesn't have many of these, being mainly covered in evergreen natives but our abundance of berries means we get to see some of the same bright colours this season is known for. We see many kinds of berries here, both native and introduced and they are an important food source for both our native birds and also their predators, especially rats!

Birds also assist in the spread of non-native plants by eating and then redistributing the seeds. Here are some native and introduced species seen around Half Moon Bay, including our cover star, Nertera Depressa, affectionately known as 'fairy tomatoes'.

Cotoneaster Simonsii also known as Khasia berry or Himalayan cotoneaster. Introduced species with poisonous berries which can be used to make a rose-tan dye.

Coprosma lucida or Shining Karamu. Native.

Solanum laciniatum or Poroporo, native to NZ and the east coast of Australia. Can be used as a root stock for grafting eggplant.

Pseudopanax arboreus also known as Five Finger, Puahou or Whauwhaupaku. Native.

National Volunteer Week

15-21 June 2014

Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te tangata.

With your contribution and my contribution the people will live.

National Volunteer Week is held annually in the third week of June. This year from Sunday 15 to Saturday 21 of June, we celebrate the volunteering community and the invaluable contribution volunteers make in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Volunteerism offers an environment for sharing knowledge and skills in a way that benefits the surrounding community. The energy of volunteers in Aotearoa is felt throughout our local, national and global society.

This year we celebrate National Volunteer Week in Te Reo Maori with the whakatauki (Maori proverb) "Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te tangata", which translates as "With your contribution and my contribution the people will live". The whakatauki refers to the three baskets of knowledge from Maori legend: kete tuauri, kete tuatea, kete aronui. These baskets of darkness, light and pursuit reflect the ways in which volunteers contribute to the future of their communities, with the knowledge and energy that they possess.

We are proud of New Zealand's leading role in the efforts made by our volunteers. The sense of unity that is created from this is celebrated throughout National Volunteer Week as together we celebrate, raise awareness and encourage more effective volunteering in Aotearoa.

SIRCET would like to take this chance to wholeheartedly thank our many tireless volunteers.

TRAPS FOR SALE

SIRCET have for sale Victor Traps made up with bases and covers. These are the same design that we have been using and they have caught thousands of rats!

A dab of peanut butter, check them once a week and it keeps the rats from living in the ceiling chewing on those yummy wires and means you don't have to use poison.

Traps cost $20 and contact Denise

Contacting us

Project Administrator
Administration, sponsorship/ fundraising, newsletter,
info@sircet.org.nz

DENISE HAYES - Pests Project Manager
Pest control, community nursery, volunteering
denise@sircet.org.nz

Stewart Island/ Rakiura Community and Environment Trust ,PO Box 124, Stewart Island, 9846

www.sircet.org.nz

Kiwi Advocacy Project

SIRCET have had the privilege of following the lives of the kiwi that were transferred from Ulva to Ackers in February 2013. This is part of our larger Kiwi Advocacy Project, funded by Kiwis for Kiwis and DOC.

As a community, we are fortunate to have these birds living literally in our backyards. We wanted to show people the lives of the transferred birds as they settled into their new homes, where they live, who they partnered with and to follow any chicks that we hoped would be born. Cherie Hemsley has been tracking the birds fortnightly and informing the community with her light-hearted articles in the monthly SIN.

Protection of kiwi has also been enhanced. Funding from DOC enabled us to deploy an extra 10 cat traps around the Ackers area to protect the kiwi chicks and other wildlife from cat predation. Other advocacy activities have included several Kiwi Dog Aversion workshops check out Sandy King's article on page (insert number here) for more information. In May we also invited some local sponsors and supporters to come and watch one of the birds have their transmitter changed over. The weather was beautiful, but unfortunately after several hours of tracking Cherie and co were unable to locate our chosen bird. Thanks to all who came for their patience.

SIRCET KIWI ADVOCACY UPDATE

By Cherie Hemsley

Monitoring of the kiwis that were released into the Ackers project area in February 2013 had interesting outcomes this month!

The pang of winter has hit us and the Kiwi! So far this month we have Matatika and Ngaio snuggling up in a new burrow together, hopefully with their juvenile, keeping warm! Next month I will be putting another game camera out to see if this is indeed the case!

TX22 seems to have abandoned his burrow and his unidentified female companion, maybe she wasn't the right one for him after all? Or maybe he prefers the single life? He is now back to hanging out in crown fern and astelia…… living those old bachelor days all over again!

TX12 our 'golf course' gal has yet another burrow in her patch, I have put up a game camera and hope to, again, see her with her STILL unidentified male! Whether he be city slicker or bush boy, he sure likes his privacy and has managed to keep his identity secret.

This month's photo is of the SAR team getting me out of the bush in February. Thanks again Team!

DID YOU KNOW;

These are a few interesting things I learnt about kiwi that I would like to share with everyone.

Kiwis are a part of the Ratite family and all Ratites are flightless because their breastbone (sternum) is flat – there is no keel to attach the strong muscles needed for flight. This flat chest gave Ratites their name. Ratis means 'raft' in Latin – a boat without a keel.

The kiwi's body temperature is lower than most birds, which range from 39ºC – 42ºC. The kiwi is more like a mammal, with a temperature between 37ºC and 38ºC.

The kiwi's skeleton is heavy and marrow-filled, like a mammal, compared with the skeletons of most birds that are light and filled with air sacs to enable flight. Their powerful muscular legs make up a third of the bird's weight.

In most birds, feathers are connected by hooks or barbs that lock together and make it possible for birds to swim or fly without losing too much energy, even over very long distances. Because kiwi do not fly, their feathers have evolved a unique texture to suit a ground-based lifestyle. They are warm, shaggy and hair-like, hang loose and are much fluffier.

All the leaves are brown and the sky is gray

I've been for a walk on a winter's day

I'd be safe and warm if I wasn't at Ackers Bay.

Stewart Island dreamin' on such a winter's day……

Until next month,

Ka Kete Ano E Hua

Cherie

SIRCET KIWI ADVOCACY UPDATE

By Cherie Hemsley

Monitoring this month of the kiwis that were released into the Ackers project area in February 2013 has given us some more interesting game camera footage!

This month we completed some Kiwi advocacy in our Half Moon Bay School. This was an awesome experience for me. What was highlighted was that our tamariki get such a different experience with our native flora and fauna than mainland children, especially Kiwi! When asked if anyone had seen a kiwi, ALL hands went up! Their knowledge of what makes our Kiwi special and their personal Kiwi advocacy stories were incredible, I'm sure that nowhere else in NZ would those answers have been given! They have all gone down on my 'Why I love Stewart Island' List!

We ran two competitions, a colouring competition for the juniors and a story writing competition for the seniors. Dayton and Summer won a Kiwi soft toy each for their coloring competition and Timu won the story competition, his prize being able to name our golf course gal TX12.

The name Timu choose is perfect! Takiti (short for Takitimu after the Maori waka that survived rough seas). All the stories and the colouring competition entries are being displayed at the Environment Centre, I highly recommend you check them out, I'm sure everyone would be as proud of our tamariki as I am!!!

Also we tried to replace the transmitters on these birds, but could not catch Takiti and TX22 nor could we locate Matatika and Ngaio. We have some very smart Kiwi on our doorsteps! Could they smell us? Could they hear us? Or were they just out that day?

I have set up a game camera outside Matatika and Ngaio's burrow, here's' hoping I get some good footage to share!!

Takiti our golf course lady has headed a little inland for the winter, to the cottage in the bush. Game camera footage has proven she is still with a male, he is banded (but we cannot see the band number on the footage) and this confirms his identity finally. He is another Ulva release, so Takiti could not be swayed by the lure of city boy bright lights, it would seem Takiti prefers the bush boy to keep her warm over winter!

Hey, I got a lot of faith in ya

I'll keep you safe- that's the bottom line

Yeah, you have a lot of fun don't ya

And looking for you is a ball of a time

Hey kiwi when the mood gets you down

Your bottom beak's near dragging on the ground

That's when I gotta trap those cats for ya

and possums, and rats, to help you breed

Howdy Kiiiwiiii

Where did you hide your wings

Their love shines over Ackers Point- they're a slice of heaven

Loud Kiwi calls over Ackers Point- they're a slice of heaven

Until next month,

Ka Kete Ano E Hua

Cherie

KIWI ADVOCACY COMPETITIONS

As part of Cherie's workshop with Halfmoon Bay School SIRCET ran two competitions for the kids, to be judged by the SIRCET trustees.

The first was a colouring competition for the younger class with a toy kiwi (with realistic call) as the prize. Entrants were encouraged to use their creativity and the results were amazing with a great variety of materials like feathers, ferns and dirt being used. In the end it was too difficult to pick only one so Dayton Cripps and Summer Thompsons were announced as joint winners and another kiwi toy was found!

The competition for the older class was to write a story and the prize was the right to name a kiwi! The story was to be about how the actions we take can affect kiwi and what they might do in the future to continue to help kiwi. We received a lot of great entries and the trustees had a very difficult time deciding but in the end Timu Moxham's story was chosen as the best, with honourable mentions given to Timmy Dobbins, Jack Dobbins and Leeym Thompson for also writing very strong stories. So the kiwi formerly known as TX22 will now be known as Takiti. See the next pages for Timu's winning entry and some background on the name he chose.

SIRCET would like to thank all the kids who entered and congratulate our winners - Timu, Dayton and Summer! All the entries are on display in the Environment Centre, please do go and check them out.

Cherie Hemsley talking to Halfmoon Bay school children about Kiwi

How the transmitters work

Kids looking for a (soft toy) kiwi wearing a transmitter

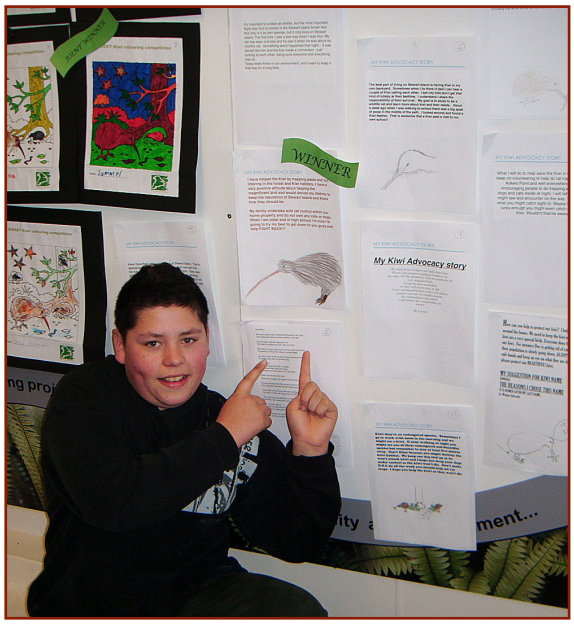
Cherie demonstrating tracking equipment to two business sponsors

MY KIWI ADVOCACY STORY

I have helped the Kiwi by trapping pests and not littering in the forest and Kiwi habitats. I have a very positive attitude about helping the magnificent bird and would devote my lifetime to keep the reputation of Stewart Island and Kiwis how they should be.

My family undertake wild cat control within our home property and do not own any cats or dogs. When I am older and in high school I'm sure I'm going to try my best to get down to you guys and help FIGHT BACK!!!

Timu Moxham



MY NAME SUGGESTION FOR KIWI

Takiti

THE REASONS I CHOSE THIS NAME

This name is short for Takitimu, a moari waka that travelled for years through rough seas and weather and I think the Kiwi refers to this. The kiwi have been through some rough times and its great that they have made it this far.

KIWI AVOIDANCE TRAINING FOR LOCAL DOGS

SIRCET together with Kiwis for Kiwi have recently been involved in putting on a series of kiwi avoidance training sessions for dogs. Here, Sandy King who is the trainer provides a little more information on avoidance training.

As many dog owners and their dogs already know, three avoidance sessions have been held, with the last two at Zane's hangar. A big thank you to Zane for allowing us to use the hangar area. The kiwi avoidance training scheme was started by an organisation called Kiwis for Kiwi, which runs training sessions throughout the country in conjunction with DOC and community groups. SIRCET have taken up the cause here, arranging for me to be trained as a trainer and purchasing an electric collar.

As most people know, kiwi are being encountered more frequently around the Bay, even right in the centre of town! Of course dogs can pose a threat to kiwi if they are not properly controlled, as emphasised by the recent media report of the young kiwi Otautahui being killed by a dog. It is great to know that so many owners here are aware of the risk and are taking the time to do something about it by putting their dog/s through the avoidance training. Thirty-six individual dogs have now undergone the training on Stewart Island. But, having just said that I need to emphasise that the avoidance training is not a substitute for good dog control and dog owners still need to take responsibility for their dogs' actions and whereabouts. If you don't know where your dog is, you don't know what it is doing!

So, what is involved with this training and how does it work?

Kiwi avoidance training, as the title suggests, is intended to train dogs to avoid kiwi. The same sort of training could be used to teach dogs to avoid weka, penguins, chickens, to stop running off with your shoes or pulling the sheets off the washing line, etc. The basic tools are an electric collar (the receiver) which is controlled by a transmitter held by the trainer (me), and the "props" – whatever it is that you want the dog to learn to avoid. In this case the props are kiwi from the DOC freezer (two victims of previous dog attacks on the Island), and some kiwi poo gathered from my lawn.

The transmitter has 5 buttons. One turns it on and off. The second is a dial which sets the intensity of the "correction" (i.e. the shock) given to the dog and has a scale of 0-127. The third button is labelled "Page" and when pressed it makes the collar vibrate but doesn't deliver a "correction". The sudden vibration gives the dog a bit of a fright or a reminder to move away and can be used instead of a correction for very sensitive or nervous dogs, or for dogs that have already had a correction but are still a bit hesitant about avoiding the kiwi a second time. The fourth button delivers a "correction"

Gadget the rat detector dog modelling a collar. For more of Gadget's adventures, check out http://detectorgadget.blogspot.co.nz/

– literally a short sharp shock that lasts about 1 second. The final button is labelled "Constant" and delivers a correction for as long as the button is depressed, for up to 12 seconds. I've never used this function and can't imagine a circumstance when I would use it on a dog.

Gadget wearing the collar. SIRCET are about to purchase a second collar that is better suited to petite dogs!

The theory behind the training is that the dog doesn't associate the correction with the collar, or the owner, or me. The correction comes from moving in on the kiwi, when the dog actually puts its head down to have a good sniff……. WHAM, the kiwi bites. The dog learns that a certain action hurts (i.e. close approach to kiwi). It's all in the timing, the correction has to be given at precisely the right moment. The advantage of the electric collar is that the correction can be given in a split second and from a distance so that the dog doesn't associate it with the owner or me.

For our training I set up the two (very unfortunate looking) kiwi some distance apart and put a good sprinkle of kiwi poo around each one. Ideally this is set up so we approach into the wind and the dogs get a chance to scent the kiwi before getting close. When the dog arrives for its training session the collar is put on, reasonably firmly so that the prongs make good contact with the skin, but not so tight that the poor dog is being strangled. Dogs with a lot of thick fur might need to have their necks wetted as well, to ensure good contact. The transmitter is set to about 80 – a level which gives a good whack but doesn't send sparks flying from the dogs bum! (And yes, I did test this on myself before using it on any dog; and no, the collar is not available for party hire so don't even ask…..). Then we (dog + owner + me) go for a walk and pass close to the first kiwi, the owner walking right past pretending not to know the kiwi is there while I watch the dog. Most first

time trainees go straight to the kiwi, have a good sniff and receive a correction. Then we continue to the second kiwi and repeat the process, but this time most dogs will deliberately avoid walking close to the kiwi and that's it – training over. Some dogs will go straight to the kiwi again and get another correction, maybe even a third correction, before moving away. Some dogs will hesitate a couple of meters away, sniff from a distance, and then move away. Some dogs will do the same but don't move away so quickly, in which case they get a "page" which reminds them to move off.

It seems simple but it seems to work. We had several dogs that attended the first training last October return at Easter for testing, and most avoided both kiwi. This is a national training scheme, and records from the national database tell us that 87% of dogs remember the training for the first year, but after that remembrance tails off as time goes on. It is therefore important to keep up the refresher training and we plan to hold training sessions every six months, around Easter and Labour Weekend each year. Any dog over six months old is eligible if it is still able to get out and about.

We will try to vary the training location so that experienced dogs don't start to associate the location with the training. We are also thinking about ways to introduce a bit of kiwi movement into the equation, to make the situation more realistic than the awkwardly thawed kiwi propped up with sticks that we have now! Keep an eye on SIN and the notice board for details of the next training session, but in the meantime I'm happy to answer any questions and maybe run an extra training session if there is a need.

MAORI MEDICINAL GARDEN - Letitia McRitchie

This project has been progressing with cuttings being put down of medicinal plants, new knowledge being gained and a potential site being discussed.

Over the last few months I have been taking some cuttings of Korimiko and propagating them. Hebes seem to grow very well from cuttings and I had some good instruction from Denise, our Nursery Manager. I dipped the cut ends of the stems in rooting hormone and they have flourished. They have recently been potted up into the next size and are growing strongly. I took a selection of cuttings from around the town gardens, so they are a mix of the original white flowered ones and then blue, purple and red flowered varieties. They will hopefully make an attractive show!

I was researching medicinal plant practitioners from Stewart Island and the name Agnes (Granny) Harrold came up. A bit of research and what a fascinating character! Agnes was Canadian by birth whose mother was an Amerindian. She married James Harrold and after moving to the Orkney Islands they came to New Zealand in 1848 and shifted to Stewart Island in 1861. She lived her for over 40 years and among many other roles, she was the unofficial doctor and midwife over that time. She was well known for her use of plants to prevent and cure illnesses, using a mixture of exotic and native plants. She must have had knowledge from her mother's culture and would have gained more from her 50 years in New Zealand. I was hoping to learn some of her remedies but the only reference I could find was her use of "Squaw Tea" for mothers during childbirth. This contained raspberry tea and tansy, and helped a lot of Stewart Island babies into the world. She also recommended 'Bravo duck' (shag) soup for new mothers, not something I would like anyone to try (as they are protected)! I would love to know some more of her potions and will spend some more time at the museum to see what they have.

Many locals would have noticed some changes to the town gardens with diggers putting large holes through some of them. While it was an extreme way to weed, it was necessary to repair the pipework under them. Their destruction has provided a wonderful opportunity to place a medicinal garden in a prime location in the township. This could be planted with a variety of medicinal and useful plants and would be easily accessible to visitors and locals.

I've been researching medicinal plants and have come up with some that are not suitable to plant in a garden! Bidibid was used as a tonic for kidney and bladder problems, supplejack sap was good applied to cuts and scrapes and bush lawyer tea was good for coughs. Handy plants but not very useful in a garden!!

Bush Lawyer, not a nice garden plant!

A beautiful Manuka in flower

Manuka is a plant that has many medicinal uses and in recent years manuka honey has been increasingly used for its antibacterial properties. Maori used the crushed and boiled seeds to apply as a poultice to open wounds. This would no doubt have contained high levels of manuka oil. Manuka oil has shown to be effective against 39 separate micro-organisms, in particular, streptococci and staphylococcal bacteria and fungi that affect the skin.

THE NURSERY FEATURE PLANT

As many of you will be aware SIRCET manage the Community Nursery out at Horseshoe Bay.

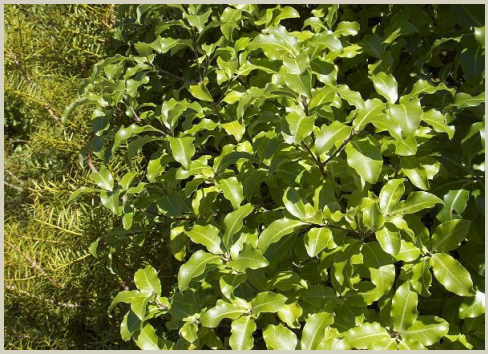
Denise and her volunteers produce thousands of plants a year that are available for a $2 donation. These plants have been used in local's gardens to attract birds, replace weeds and simply to enjoy as garden plants. They have been used on many restoration sites with over 1000 plants having been grown and then planted at Lonnekers over the last 7 years.

As a regular feature in the SIRCET News we are going to showcase one or two of the plants that are available at the nursery, outlining the plants properties, history and any interesting information about it.
This month's feature plants are....

KOHUHU
(*Pittosporum Tenuifolium*)

More of a workhorse than a rock star in your garden, this fast-growing and hardy Pittosporum is an adaptable garden plant for shelter or hedging.

It is also great to use when getting your garden started. Kohuhu will regenerate from hard pruning and maintains a more compact form when clipped. Reported to survive frosts, wind, wet ground, possums and deer.



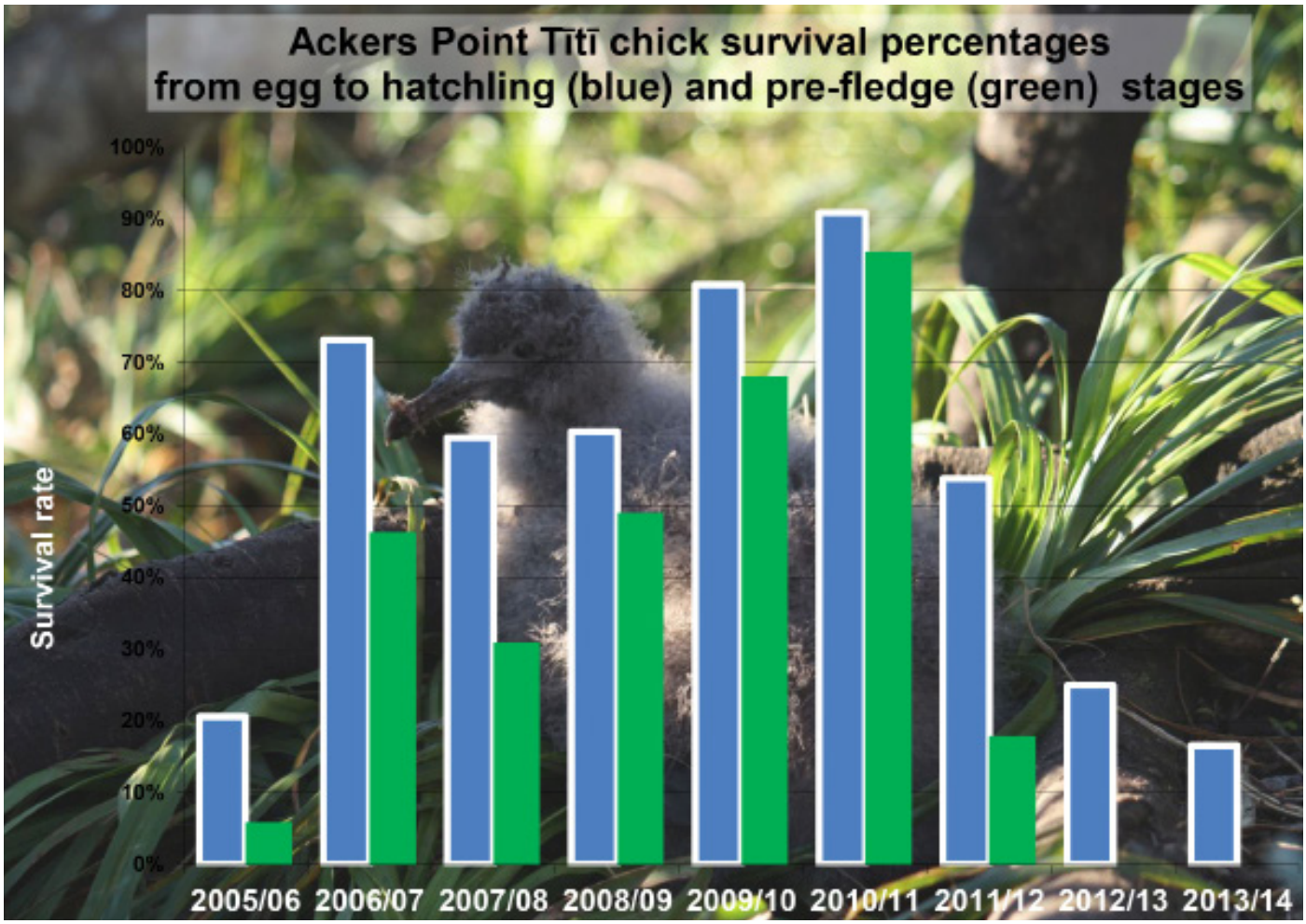
RAUHUIA; NEW ZEALAND LINEN FLAX
(*Linum monogynum*)

Linum monogynum produces lots of pure white flowers (sometimes tinged pale blue) from late spring through to the end of summer.

The petals are up 10-25 mm long. The small bluish leaves are narrow, leathery grey to green and are spear shaped. With its wispy, refined appearance, rauhuia seems at odds with the ferocity of the coastal environments in which it is mostly found. Its small bluish leaves just don't look up to receiving the attentions of a salty gale, but nevertheless, this compact shrub takes its place as one of the many beautiful details that adorn cliffs and rocky ground of our coastlines.

Rauhuia is an easy plant to grow, but requires some thought in its placement, due to its relatively short lifespan. It is ideally suited as a gap filler or a floral highlight, rather than as a structural shrub. Like its fellow coastal native species, Hibiscus richardsonii, Senecio radiolatusand Senecio sterquilinus, this plant also has significant potential for annual bedding flower displays. Plants seed themselves freely within suitable conditions, providing gardeners with a continuing supply of material for following seasons. After plants have set seed, it is best to trim the longer stems, to encourage a compact form.

Titi/Sooty Shearwater at Ackers Point



Contractors recently competed SIRCET's yearly monitoring of the population of these seabirds within the Halfmoon Bay project area. Sadly they are reporting the third disappointing year in a row for the titi/ sooty shearwater colony at Ackers Point, with no chicks being discovered within the four plots in the final stage of monitoring, after an initial 19 nests were discovered.

In addition, there were some very unusual results, especially in the second stage of monitoring. In this stage, adults were found still remaining in 16 of the burrows, despite initially delaying the investigation until the final week of the allocated window, due to their continued presence when the monitoring was initiated. Generally by the beginning of the investigation window, the eggs have hatched and any surviving chicks are old enough to be on their own whilst parents return to sea to collect food. With adults present and blocking a clear view of any chicks or eggs, we cannot be sure how many chicks survived to this second stage of the monitoring. For example, if the presence of adults reflects eggs which have not hatched due to infertility and adults persisting in their attempt to incubate them, then the chick tally is lower. If it reflects late hatching or adults brooding very young chicks, then the tally could be as high as 16 chicks found at this stage. SIRCET is considering a number of recommendations relating to these results and how to best conduct future monitoring. It may be there is a lasting shift in the timing of titi breeding and the monitoring sub-project may need to reflect this.

Finally, for unrelated reasons the total burrow count was conducted just after the final scoping investigation period, as opposed to all previous years when it was conducted around January. The significance of this was not realised until partway through the count, when it began to register that the contractors were finding several burrows which were quite obviously still active, with down or feathers at a well-used entrance. A total count of these burrows was not made but an estimate indicates 5-7 burrows were still active. One of these had clumps of feathers at the entrance, which could indicate a struggle with feathers torn out; however the others appeared to indicate normal movement of chicks to the entrance and back. Given the monitoring results indicated 0% survival of chicks, this anecdotal evidence is heartening.

University of Auckland proposing research into Sooty Shearwater

This is a pilot study to investigate whether there is evidence that radioactive cesium from the damaged Fukushima nuclear reactors in Japan has entered the ecosystem of New Zealand via migratory birds such as the muttonbird. Detection of gamma rays from the element cesium-134 would demonstrate that some adult muttonbirds have spent sufficient time in their winter home in the waters off of the east coast of Japan to accumulate cesium in their feathers. New Zealand is a world leader in sustainable sea bird harvesting, so it is important to check how a catastrophe near Japan may have affected Stewart Islands' favourite world travelers.

BUSINESS SPONSOR-A-HECTARE

SIRCET is a large organisation to run, managed by volunteers but we employ one full time and one part time staff member and several contractors.

External funding covers much of our staff and contractor costs but without the generous annual sponsorship from individuals and business's 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?

A $250 Business 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.

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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

Kaka Retreat Island Paradise

Stewart Island Water Taxi & Eco Guiding

Sails Ashore Kowhai Lane Accommodation Sails Tours

Genera Ltd

The Fernery Gallery & Gift Shop

Bay Motel

Aurora Charters

Pete Ross Automotive

Ulva's Guided Walks

rakiura charters & water taxi

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.

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 and your name on a our SaH map in the Environment Centre.

People First Southland District Council Te Rohe Pōtae O Murihiku

Community Trust of Southland Te Pou Arataki Pounamu o Murihiku

This newsletter is produced with the support of the Southland District Council and the Community Trust of Southland.

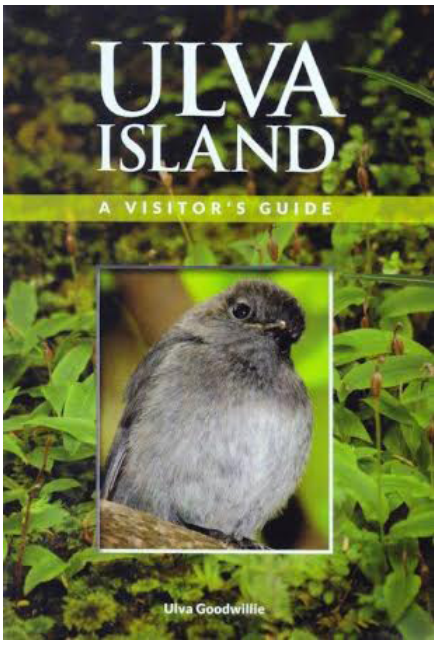
ULVA'S GUIDED WALKS

What better introduction to Rakiura (Stewart Island) could you wish for than a guided walk with local Stewart Islanders who have a specialised insider knowledge of the world of Ulva Island bird sanctuary?

Ulva Goodwillie started Ulva's Guided Walks in 2000 when there was an obvious and requested need for visitors to have guides on Ulva Island Bird Sanctuary. Ulva is an articulate, friendly, well-informed Stewart Islander who is passionate about her home and committed to giving visitors a special insight into Rakiura/Stewart Island National Park's unique attractions.

Ulva bears the name of the lovely island sanctuary situated in Waka o Te Wera (Paterson Inlet, Stewart Island), also the wildlife sanctuary of Ulva Isle in the Hebrides of Scotland, just off Mull and very near to Iona. A highlight of her walking programme is a leisurely ramble which introduces visitors to Ulva Island's history, scenery and spectacular birdlife.

After intensive research and writing during the winter months, Ulva Goodwillie has just published a beautiful visitor guide to Ulva Island. There are 160 pages of brilliant photography covering forest, coastal and sea bird and wildlife and fabulous photos of the podocarp forest.



If you'd like to order a copy, it's available from the publishers: www.craigprint.co.nz for $NZ 39 + postage.