

SIRCET news

June 2016

A word from our staff

Shona Sangster—Project Administrator



Would you like to own this beautiful picture? Phill Waddington (inventor of the DOC150 and artist) has kindly donated this picture to SIRCET for fundraising. We'll be conducting a charity auction on Trade Me, so keep an eye out for it. SIRCET have been nominated for the 2016 Southland Community Environment Awards. We were really pleased to host the judges and show them round our project area. The award winners are announced on the 28th of July so we are keeping our fingers crossed. SIRCET's 2014-2015 Annual report is also now available on our website or you can get a hard copy from the Environment Centre next to Glowing Sky or by emailing shona@sircet.org.nz. For National Volunteer week, which was 19-25 June we held a midwinter Christmas pot luck dinner. Thanks to all who came along, it was a really fun night!



Bill Oddie, conservation spokesperson, ornithologist and comedian recently visited Stewart Island. In addition to recounting some of his stories at the South Sea Hotel, he visited SIRCET's Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project at Ackers Point. *Photo by Letitia McRitchie*

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.

For more information or to get involved please check out our Facebook page and website:

www.sircet.org.nz

Kiwi monitoring update for June

from Sandy King

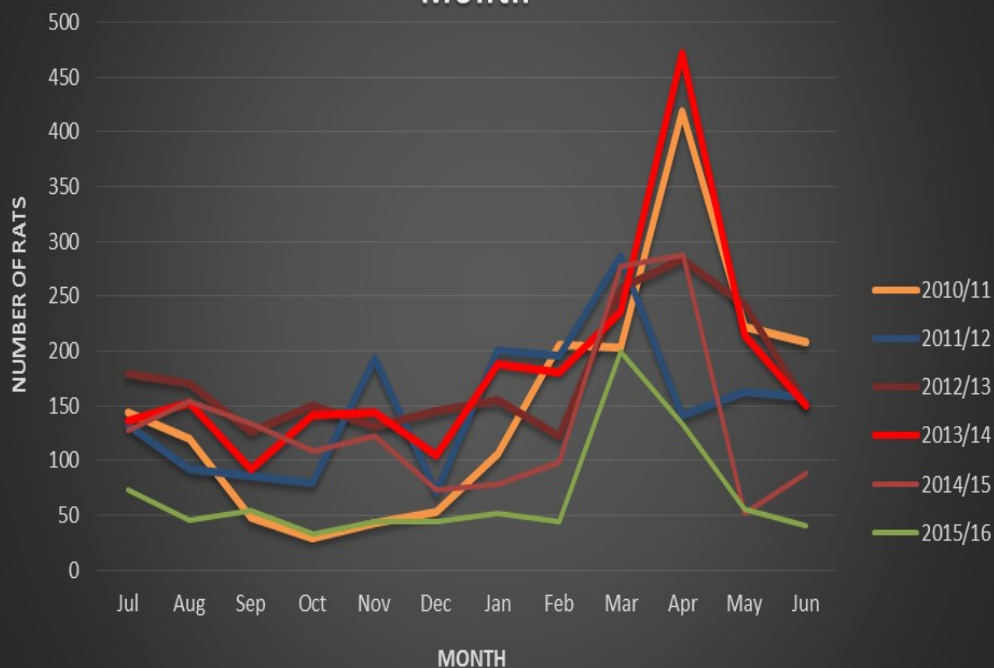
This will be the last report on the progress of kiwi released at Ackers Point in 2013. Following last summer's busy breeding season the monitored birds settled into their non-breeding routine. The female Takiti and her mate Tx52 headed off across the golf course, spending their off-season time between Wohlers Road and the Deep Bay – Halfmoon Bay track. Ngaio and Matatiki, and Kaihuka stayed closer to home, still hanging out on the Ackers Point peninsula.

The non-breeding time is when monitored birds are caught for their annual transmitter and health check, but this time their transmitters were removed bringing monitoring to an end. The transmitter batteries were due to run out and the transmitters needed to be replaced if monitoring were to continue. Funding shortages and complex permit requirements had to be addressed before new transmitters could be purchased and attached, so the decision was made to wind up the project. Kev Carter (DOC) and Sandy King caught all three birds one fine Saturday and removed their transmitters. All birds were in good health, with female Ngaio weighing in at a whopping 3.57kg, slightly heavier than her release weight of 3.55kg. The males Tx52 and Kaihuka were lighter, 2.6kg and 3.0kg respectively, but males are generally smaller than their egg laying mates. Tx52 was slightly lighter than when released, and Kaihuka slightly heavier but now their body condition was considered good as opposed to "poor" when caught on Ulva. This shows that conditions for them in their new home are at least as good as on Ulva, and the monitoring project has shown that kiwi are able to survive and breed in the Halfmoon Bay area. SIRCET would like to thank Sandy for all her hard work monitoring these kiwi and updating us on them.

Pest Manager results

As we all are aware, this time of year often sees a spike in rat numbers. Over the last few months, SIRCET have been diversifying the kind of traps we are using, especially in the Core zone, in order to make the most efficient use of Kelly, our Pest Manager's trapping time, reduce H & S hazards and also to try and get at the hard core of rats who are very shy of our old Victor snap traps. We are now using a mix of Victor traps, Goodnature A24's and DOC 150's. This implementation has paid off as you can see from the Four Yearly comparison below! In our regular monitoring of rat numbers conducted in May, the Project area recorded only 4%, while our control area at Ryan's creek measured a whopping 73%!

Four Yearly Comparison of Rats Caught per Month

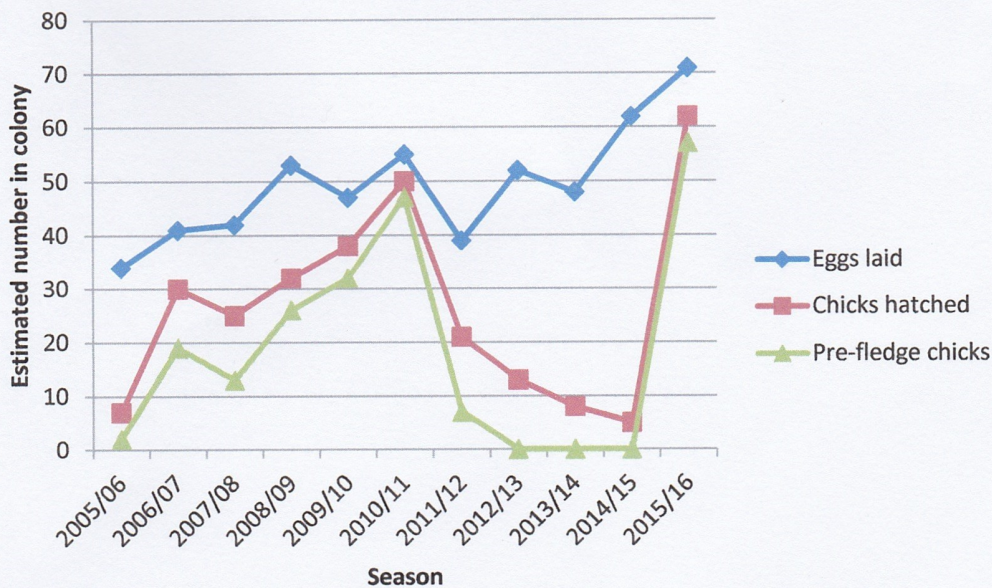


Pictures at right: dead rats under Goodnature traps in the Core zone. *Photo by Pip Fraser-Wilson.*



SPECIES MONITORING RESULTS

Ackers Point Titi colony breeding 2005-2015



Sooty Shearwater/Titi

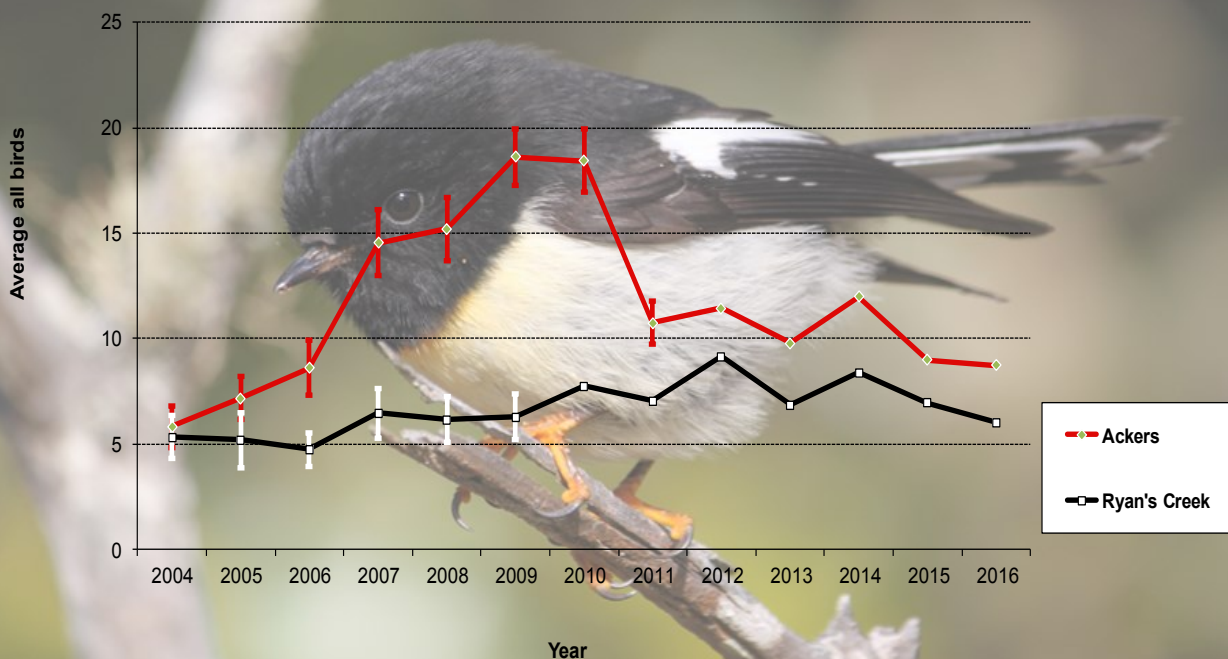
Here's an excerpt from report—"The results of SIRCET's yearly monitoring of the sooty shearwater/titi breeding colony are in—an estimated 57 chicks are thought to have fledged from the colony, the first fledging recorded in 4 seasons. 77 study plots were investigated, containing 26 eggs and from which 21 chicks are thought to have fledged. No cat sign was noted in the area. Rat sign was present but in a lesser extent than in 2014-2015. Deer sign was seen throughout the colony."

These results show a huge improvement on the last few years, with a massive increase in fledging success from 0% to 91%.

5 Minute Bird Call Counts

The main objective of the project is to protect and enhance the native bird life around the township of Halfmoon Bay, so a count of how many birds can be heard over time gives us a rough picture of the overall trends. While we have seen a dip in the year to year data, with this kind of research it is the big picture over many years that is important and it is good to see the number of birds in the project area has remained consistently higher than when we started back in 2004. 5 minute bird counts are carried out by a contractor in April each year, thanks very much to Matt Jones for all the hard work he puts into doing these counts in all weathers!

5 Minute Bird Call Counts 2004 - 2016
Comparison between protected (Ackers) and non-protected (Ryan's Creek) areas



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 some of our staff and contractor costs but without the generous annual sponsorship from individuals and businesses it would be difficult to fund the Trust's day to day expenses including:

- Management expenses
- Traps
- Rat bait
- 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 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. Contact shona@sircet.org.nz to participate

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 programme and each hectare is available for sponsorship through this annually renewable programme. Levels of sponsorship range from \$30 for 1/2 ha to \$500 for 10 hectares, at a rate of \$50 per ha.

You will receive a certificate, our quarterly newsletter and your name on our SaH map in the Environment Centre. Contact shona@sircet.org.nz to become a sponsor

Nursery Feature plant: NZ Swamp Flax, Harakeke (*Phormium Tenax*) This is one of our most distinctive native plants. It has sword-shaped leaves 1-3 metres long that grow in a fan shape. In spring,

birds – particularly tūī – flock to feed on the nectar of its tube-like flowers, which bloom on stems up to 4.5 metres long. It adds a lovely sculptural aspect to gardens with its leaves and flower stalks and seed pods. It is also really easy to grow!



THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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



Beyond



BAY MOTE!



Pete Ross Automotive



Ulva's Guided Walks
Ulva Island Bird Sanctuary Stewart Island New Zealand
www.ulvas.co.nz 04-33 219 1216



This newsletter is produced with the support of the Southland District Council and the Ministry for the Environment



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 **Kelly**

