

SIRCET news

www.sircet.org.nz

March 2014



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

A word from our staff

Letitia McRitchie (Project Administrator)

It was with much sadness that we bid farewell to Mandy, from this role, in January. While her time with us was short her enthusiasm and hardwork left its mark and her cheery emails were always a delight!

We have a new administrator starting in April and I will just give her a brief introduction in this newsletter and then let her tell you all about herself in the next one! Shona Sangster is coming to live on the island, shifting from the bright lights of Auckland to the glowing skies of the south. Many of you may know Shona from her frequent trips to the island to visit her partner Ben Hopkins. We look forward to you coming on board!!



Denise Hayes (Pest Manager)

I seem to start many of my updates with the same words and here I go again - the last few months have been a very busy time on the pest control front! In addition to weekly checks of rat and possum traps and running the live capture cat cages, we have been busy intensifying our trap network within the buffer and core zones. The normal trap and line maintenance has been ongoing with volunteers and myself scrubbing and oiling rat traps and trimming back existing trap lines to keep them open and easy to navigate. Matt Hare has recently helped out with his chainsaw expertise at removing/clearing several large windfalls which were making our lives difficult.

As usual over the summer period, we have had a number of visiting volunteers who, along with our local volunteers, have been instrumental in helping me keep up with the work. For me, the stand-out volunteer this year was Gael Gordon (from Auckland) who was with us for four months. Gael has been a huge help in all aspects of SIRCET and took a particular interest in caring for Lonnekers. However, it wasn't all about SIRCET work for Gael – she also managed to see many parts of Stewart Island. Gael certainly made the most of and thoroughly enjoyed her time on the island – she will be sorely missed and I look forward to seeing her again in December when she returns to hut warden at Mason Bay.

As part of our ongoing environmental education aim, we have been hosting a number of visiting schools who took part in nursery sessions and nature walks to Ackers lighthouse. During these sessions, the kids had hands-on learning experiences at propagating, growing on and caring for our native plants as well as checking and clearing rat traps. They were introduced to some of our rare native plants and learned about the HMBHRP, the pests we control and how we control them as well as the native species that we are protecting.



Denise

Despite how it may sound, it hasn't been all work and no play for me either and a few weeks ago I walked the North West Circuit with my very good friend Cherie Hemsley. We had fabulous weather (on the whole), heaps of mud, sweat and laughs. We had a great time and the trip really re-enforced my love of this truly wonderful island that I now proudly call home.



REVIEW UPDATE

SIRCET commissioned a review last winter to look at how we can achieve the most effective habitat protection. Since then we have been working to implement the recommendations and we are starting to make real progress.

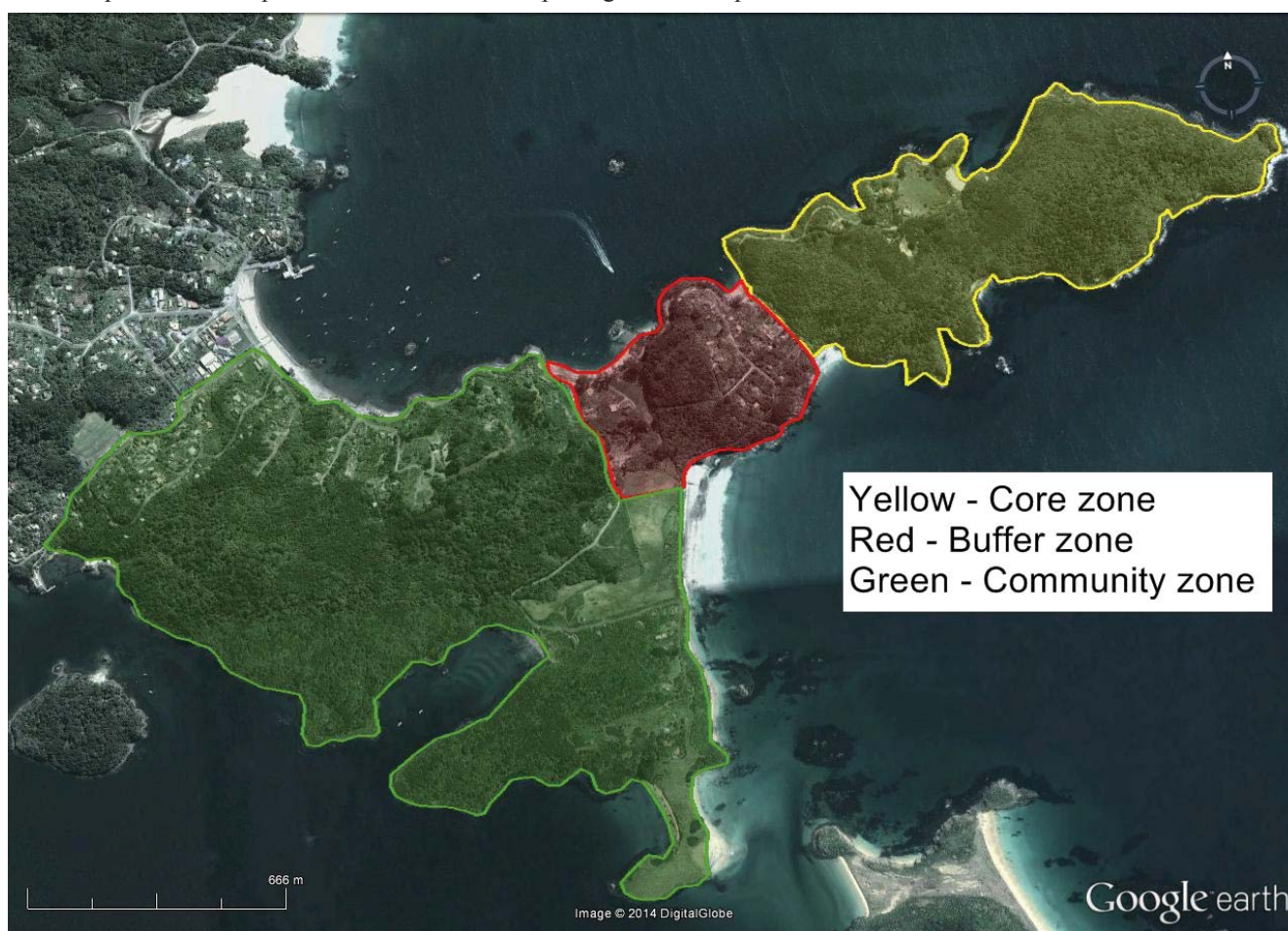
One of the key recommendations was that we should intensify our trapping network. The Trist decided that this was impractical to implement and maintain over the entire 210ha as we don't have the resources. By dividing the area up into a Core, Buffer and Community zone we can concentrate our resources into the area with the most defensible boundaries, the Ackers Peninsula. The Community Zone will continue to be trapped by volunteers and play a vital role in reducing rats migrating into the Core.

Denise, volunteers and Ang Steffens have been busy intensifying the traps lines in the core and buffer. Extra rat traps have been placed along the existing lines so the traps are now spaced at 25m apart. We have also started putting

in additional trap lines so that the gaps between the lines are reduced to no more than 75m apart. We aim to have the additional lines completed by the end of March. In addition to the new traps and lines, we have also installed additional rat monitoring lines to help give us a better picture of rat activity across the project area.

The review team recommended that we get this intensification in place before the rat numbers get to their peak and then run some intensive trapping to get on top of the rats. We plan to start in April with daily checks of the core and buffer and run that for 2 – 3 weeks, monitoring as we go, until we achieve knockdown. Then we will drop the frequency of checks.

We are very thankful to the Department of Conservation who gave us significant funds to enable us to purchase the materials for this intensification and hire additional staff to assist Denise. With sustained trapping in the core and buffer and continued reduction of rats with volunteer effort in the community zone, we hope to see real progress in reducing rats to low enough levels to see translocations occur. Watch this space!!



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RATS, RATS & MORE RATS

Gross, furry, hungry, scary, smelly, dirty, disgusting rats that repulse us with their long tails and sinister habits! But some would argue they can be cute, clean, fun and entertaining – even Michael Jackson had a pet rat named Ben!

So why it is that SIRCET is waging war against rats? Rats prey on birds, birds' eggs, reptiles and invertebrates. They also dine on seeds, shoots, flowers and other vegetation which in turn poses a serious threat to our ecosystem.

Three species of rats have been introduced to Stewart Island. It is reported that Kiore (*Rattus exulans*) arrived in New Zealand with Polynesian settlers and both Norway (*Rattus norvegicus*) and Ship (*Rattus rattus*) rats hitched a lift on the European sailing ships.

Let's take a closer look at the three different species.

Kiore *(also known as Pacific rats)*

The Kiore is the world's third most widely distributed rat having been spread by people throughout the Pacific. These rats were introduced to New Zealand by the 12th century and were used by Maori for food and their pelts were used to make traditional cloaks (what a tedious job that would have been!).



Some interesting facts:

- The smallest rat we have.
- Kiore adapt easily to living in a wide range of conditions and habitats but are not confident swimmers.
- They shelter underground among rocks and in tree stumps but don't seem to excavate tunnels or nests.

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



- They are most active at night and tend to lead a solitary life. Males only associate with females when they are mating.
- Diet – seeds, fruits, leaves, lizards, centipedes, spiders, earthworms, ants, beetles plus eggs and chicks of some birds.
- Less aggressive than the Norway and Ship Rats.



Margaret Hopkins caught this rat a few years ago, weighing in at 237gm, it was a whopper!

Ship Rat

- Ship rats are skilful climbers in the forest and can scale rough vertical surfaces. Ship rats are a real threat to forest birds due to their climbing ability.
- Their tail is larger than their body and their ears cover their eyes when pressed forward.
- Diet – beetles, spiders, moths, stick insects, lizards, fruits of trees and their special delicacy – BIRDS' EGGS AND CHICKS!

Norway Rat

- The biggest rat we have!
- Their tail is thick and shorter than the body and the ear of this rat does not reach the eye when pressed forward.
- Norway rats are able to breed every 2-3 months and can produce litters of up to 12 off-spring each time!
- Diet – birds, eggs, lizards, invertebrates and a wide range of plant material.

The terrestrial habits of Norway rats make native animals which live, roost or nest on the ground particularly vulnerable. The rats take eggs and nestling and are also large enough to kill adults of a number of the sea-bird species.

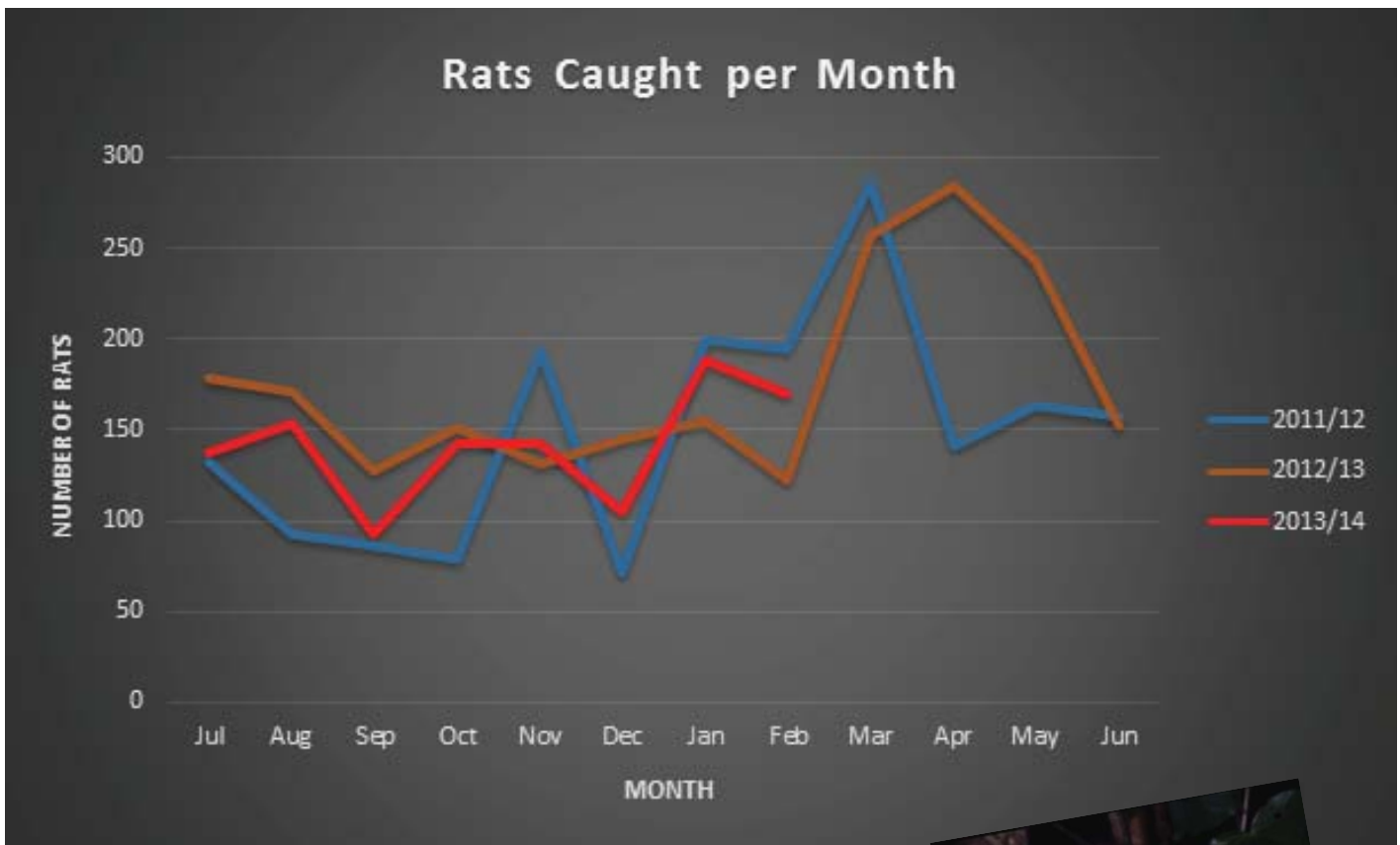
SIRCET is on the attack in the war against these pests and with a projected Rimu masting this year, time is of the essence. With an intensification of traps and a lot of effort, we aim to keep this plague low!

The latest rat trapping and monitoring results

Trapping

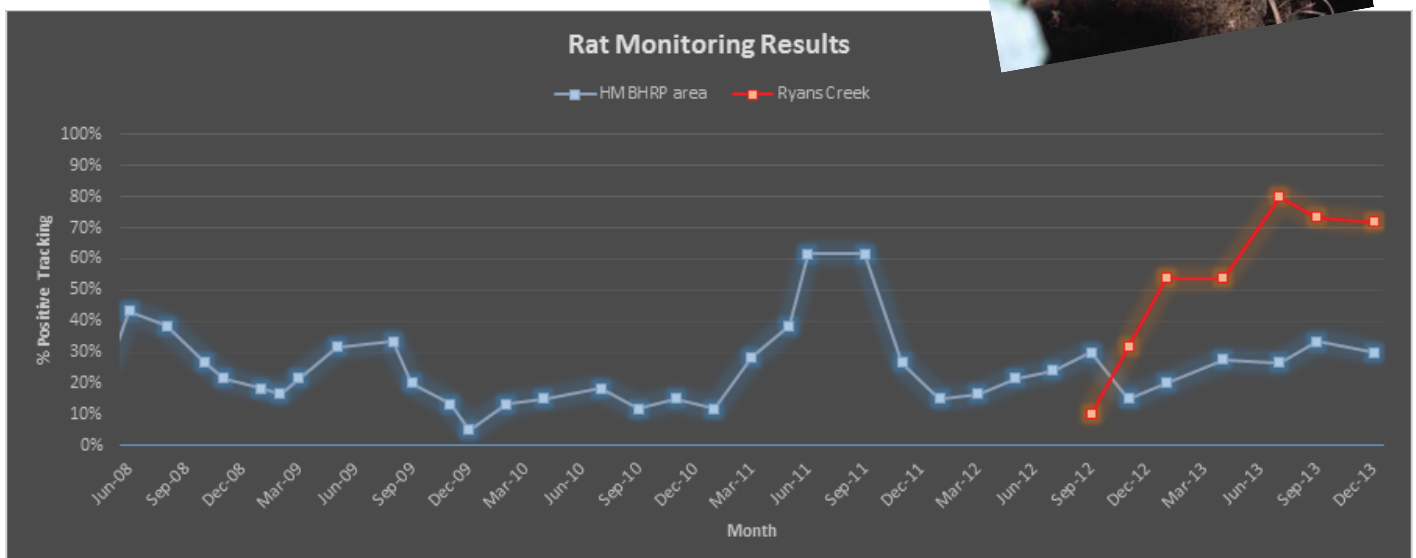
Since the 1st June 2013 we have caught 1131 rats, which is very similar to the same time last year. Juveniles are starting to be caught in large numbers now and the next three to four months are traditionally the time when we catch the

highest number of rats. Traps are being checked weekly by volunteers and Denise and in April we will start intensive trapping, beginning with daily checks of all the core and buffer traps.



Monitoring

The latest rat monitoring results from December show 30% tracking in the project area and 72% at Ryans Creek (where no rat control occurs). This illustrates the impact our trapping is having on the rat population within the project area, great if you live there!! The graph also shows the increase in rat numbers over the autumn and the big rat winter of 2011



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 the Kiwi Dog Aversion workshop back in October and we are looking at running the next workshop at Easter. We encourage all those who participated last time to come along and also owners and their dogs who have not yet undertaken the training. For the sake of 15 minutes of your time you could save a kiwi's life.



Matatika and Ngaio's baby, trail cameras are great at recording images but not of a very high quality

SIRCET Kiwi advocacy update November 2013

By Cherie Hemsley

Monitoring this month of the kiwis that were released into the Ackers project area in February has shown some kiwi doing disappearing acts!!

TX12 may have moved into some new territory with a potential new mate number 3! She has officially packed her bags and left Leask Bay heading toward the city, she was last located from the golf course. Was she 'wooded' by a golfing townie? Hopefully we find out next month. And what of her ex TX87? Will the bush boy follow her to the city? Or has he already meet a new bird who likes the easy pace of bush living? I can't wait to see where he ends up!

Further towards Ackers point we have a male bird TX18 that has popped back on the radar after an almost 3 month

sabbatical! Without disturbing him, I managed to track him to a possible burrow in a dead tree hollow. Next month I will check to see if he is the same place, a good indication he is nesting. I'll be keeping a close eye on who he's trying to court! Is he looking for a fellow 'releaser'? Or a local Ackers bird? I will let you know who I find!

Also out at Ackers we managed to get a peek at TX22! He was having a moi under some crown fern! It was quite a highlight for Claire who had come along with me for the day as a volunteer. We also located two more transmitters that had fallen off birds. These are designed to fall off after a few months and it's good to know that the birds are not carrying them around longer than necessary.

Like sands through the hour glass.....

These were the days of Ackers kiwi.....

Until next month, Ka Kete.

Cherie

SIRCET Kiwi advocacy update December 2013

By Cherie Hemsley

Monitoring during December of the kiwis that were released into the Ackers project area in February 2013 has made my Christmas!!!

TX12 is still hanging around the golf course area, possibly torn between two loves? Who will she choose? Bush Boy or City Slicker? I don't know about you, but I'm sitting on the edge of my seat waiting to find out! I'll be keeping a close eye on her movements this month!

Once again we located TX22 in the same area having another moi under some more crown fern!!!! He may need to work on his approach with the ladies as he seems to be on his own.

In conjunction with Trademe and KiwisforKiwi, SIRCET offered to auction the naming rights to two relocated Kiwis. This auction was won by Beyond Services (100%

Kiwi owned, multi-service organization in Auckland and Wellington). They have named TX18 Matatika and TX14 Ngaio. These two birds have fallen in love! While out monitoring this month volunteers Stacey Wilford, Gael Gordon and David Streit and I located two kiwis in the same burrow! Matatika and Ngaio!

We decided to enlist the help of Denise Hayes and set up a trail cam outside the burrow to see what we could see. We received some amazing footage, not only are Matatika and Ngaio very touchy feely with each other, but they have produced a chick!!!! I can't wait to see what how this family grows! I'll keep you posted.

And as Aretha would say,

Everyone can see we're together

As we walk on by

And we fly just like birds of a feather

We know that's no lie

We are family.....

Until next month, Ka Kete.

Cherie

SIRCET Kiwi advocacy update for January 2014

By Cherie Hemsley

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

Firstly a massive thank you to KiwisforKiwi for their contribution to this project! Their funding has enabled us to follow these birds for a year and report back to you their lives as they have settled into their new home.

TX22 that I thought was having difficulty finding a mate has possibly proven me wrong! We have located him in a burrow instead of under crown fern! This February I'm hoping to set up another camera to see what we can see, maybe he has a lady sharing his burrow?

TX12 has been tracked down to a burrow, in the company of an unidentified male. Is he a fellow release, or a local lad? With the help of game cameras I plan on finding out in February!

Matatika and Ngaio are showing the chick around their territory, and have possibly taken shelter in one of many burrows therein, as their old burrow is no longer in use and has been adopted by some little blue penguins (one man's rubbish is another man's treasure!)

Game cameras are proving to be quite a valuable tool in tracking these birds. They are allowing us a glimpse into the private lives of these kiwis with very little intrusion. That makes me feel good about what I'm doing, and allows me to show some great footage to you all!

On the whole, January has been very successful with the locations of two new burrows, and what that might mean for our Ackers Point Kiwi population.

No doubt February will give us more insight and I really do look forward to sharing this with you!

Until next month,

Ka Kete Ano E Hua

Cherie



Cherie looking for Matatika and Ngaio, assisted by her daughter Betty and Shay, Zac and Travis Chittenden

SIRCET Kiwi advocacy update February 2014

By Cherie Hemsley

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

The game camera that we had set up on TX22's burrow at Ackers has proven he has a mate!!! Lucky boy. She looks to have a band on her leg but no transmitter, which means she is more than likely a fellow releasee from Ulva, who's transmitter has fallen off. So this gives us some hope that there will be more baby kiwi running round Ackers soon!!!!

TX12's partner remains unidentified at this stage. She has moved burrows and we have yet to check the game camera that volunteers Stacy Wilford and Guillaume helped me to set up on her new location around the golf course area. Here's hoping they are still together in the honeymoon phase of their relationship!

Matatika and Ngaio are still slowly

showing their chick the ropes. Matatika likes to hang out in crown fern and astelia, while mother Ngaio prefers the shelter of LOTS of supple jack.

Mary Chittenden and her boys came out to volunteer with me on Saturday and our day started extremely well. Then disaster struck as we were locating our first kiwi of the day! I injured my knee and had to be rescued from the bush by our local SAR team!!! This would have to be the most embarrassing moment of my life to date!!! However I am very thankful for the aid I was given. Mary was also amazing and used the opportunity to talk to the kids about bush safety and what to do if you hurt yourself. Thanks so much for your help!

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall

Humpty Dumpty had a fall

All the kings' horses

And all the kings men

Helped to get Humpty safe again

Until next month,

Ka Kete Ano E Hua

Cherie

Our Valuable Volunteers

SIRCET relies on the contribution of volunteers and last year over 200 volunteers contributed 3,065 hours to the project: checking rat lines, helping at the nursery, managing the trust, monitoring species and the many other tasks that contribute to making our environment that bit more special. Our volunteers come from near and far and we would like to feature two that have recently made a wonderful contribution.

Gael Gordon (from Auckland) volunteered with SIRCET from early November to the end of February. Gael has been accommodated while here on the island with the other DOC volunteers. This accommodation has been sponsored by E Hayes and we would like to say thank you to them and DOC for their great support of our valuable volunteer!

Where are you from and what were you doing before you came to Stewart Island?

Gael: Although born and raised in North Canterbury, I've been living in Auckland for the past 25 years.

Prior to coming to Stewart Island I had been in a sales management position with a food manufacturing company.

What made you come to the Island and volunteer for SIRCET?

Gael: I was ready for a change of job, but not ready to simply go from the current job into a new job. I wanted to do something different before getting back into commercial life. I googled "Conservation Volunteer" and opportunities with DOC on Stewart Island was the first thing that came up. When I saw this, I simply knew it was the right place/right opportunity for me. After talking with Al Check about the DOC roles, he also mentioned SIRCET to me. After some further correspondence with Al, and a conversation and some emails with Alina, I decided SIRCET was a great opportunity and something I wanted to be part of.

Have you had experience with conservation and environmental work previously?

Gael: Not really. My interest in

conservation and the environment has been growing steadily through my love of being in the outdoors and in nature, and also with a growing awareness of the dire situation facing much of our planet environment, flora and fauna. I am also currently doing some study towards a qualification in Conservation and Environmental Management. During my time here on Stewart Island I have been overwhelmed at the abundance of birdlife and unspoiled beauty, and in working alongside Denise and the incredible experiences I have had I have learned so much more than I could ever have imagined prior to coming here.

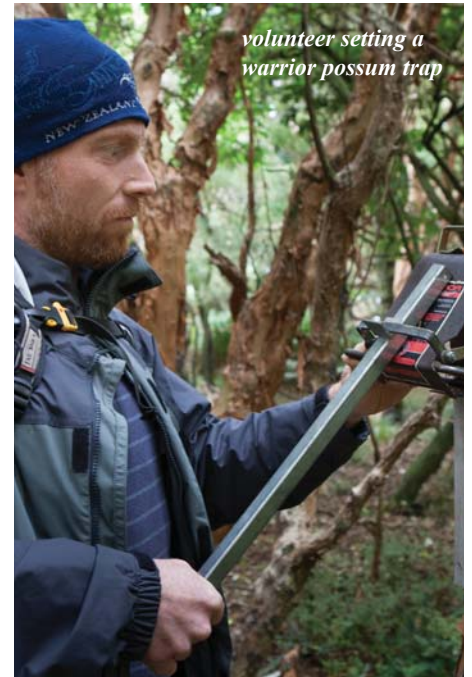
Your most enjoyable work experience to date?

Gael: The most enjoyable work experience for me has simply been being in the natural environment each day.



Gael planting at Lonnekers

While cutting gorse one day (one of the least enjoyable jobs!) dolphins came into the bay below us and after watching them feed, they went on to give us a beautiful acrobatic display. Suddenly, cutting gorse became a pretty darn good job! One day while just walking through a rat line, a kiwi popped out and very calmly walked along nearby. I've loved being entertained by the Kaka while out in the bush, or the Tui's that seem to delight in trying to scare the be-jesus out



volunteer setting a warrior possum trap

of me. And when your lunch break also incorporates splendid views of albatross skimming across the waves

What I have also found enjoying about the work with SIRCET is the variety and the opportunities to experience things that I never imagined. While rat trapping has been the major part of the work, I have also bush-bashed through some pretty rugged terrain in the process of marking out and cutting new rat lines; have worked at the nursery and come to learn more about native species; done weeding and some planting-out at Lonnekers; done general maintenance on possum and rat traps (scrubbing and oiling etc); gather information for the landowners project; had the opportunity to go Penguin Monitoring three times; been Kiwi Monitoring as well as spent a day on Ulva doing a Robin survey. All of this has served to make for an amazing experience here with SIRCET.

Your most unpleasant work experience to date?

Gael: This one would have to be the first time I had to clear a trap with a rat that had been dead for several days and was in a terrible state of decomposition. And I still don't really like getting the really manky dead ones but it's something you do kind of get used to ... eventually!



Gael tackling a very large Gunnera

What do you think of life on Stewart Island?

Gael: I have loved life on Stewart Island. Aside from the beautiful unspoiled landscape and abundant native wildlife, the thing that stands out most for me is the incredible sense of community that prevails here. People do care about and look out for each other, you can walk around at any time day or night and feel perfectly safe, and there is an evident pride and respect for the environment. Three things that have really stood out for me - the cake stall for the Philippines Typhoon that raised over \$1000 in the space of only a couple of hours one Saturday morning, Vicki's Sunday night pub quiz that raises incredible amounts of money that is donated back into the community by way of support to local organisations; and the night the NZ Ballet came to town! I have also been made to feel incredibly welcome during my time here, something I very much appreciate and certainly helped make my time here that much more enjoyable.

I will miss Stewart Island when the time comes to say goodbye but I will never forget the incredible, seemingly endless array of amazing experiences I have had here, or down-to-earth honest, warm and genuine people I have met along the way.

David Streit (from Switzerland) was with us for December and part of January.

Where are you from and what were you doing before you came to Stewart Island?

I'm from Bern, Switzerland and have been (and still am) a Student of English Language and Literature at the University of Bern. Besides that, I'm involved in a lot of different projects, such as playing in a band and organising a street festival back home.

What made you come to the Island and volunteer for SIRCET?

David: After having had a very busy summer I needed a break from everything back home. Additionally, in order to complete my studies I

have to do a practical module including working in an English-speaking country. As I wanted to use the opportunity of being able to spend a longer period of time abroad, I decided to get away as far as possible, which soon resulted in the choice of New Zealand. Being told about the beauty of New Zealand nature and Stewart Island in particular, then thought it might be a great experience to actually work in the environment and at the same time give back something to the place I visit.

Have you had experience with conservation and environmental work previously?

David: I never had an experience like that before; this was completely new for me.

Your most enjoyable work experience to date?

Probably the moment we had a break in the bush, chatting and suddenly a kiwi passed us in broad daylight. And the Penguin counts, with dusk falling at Ackers point and the sooty shearwaters returning to their chicks and us quietly sitting there. That was just pure magic.

Your most unpleasant work experience to date?

David: Cleaning and scrubbing the rat-traps after two weeks without checking them and the rats being, let's say, not that intriguing anymore



David and Denise removing a large patch of Bopuarea

What do you think of life on Stewart Island?

David: It's beautiful and unique. Stewart Island is a little universe for itself, with its own rules, stories and it's got a quality like no place I've ever been to - it's got time. Stewart Island, in a positive way, works in a different time-zone; everything is slowed down and gives time to see the important things of life - to meet, to laugh with - and to care for each other.



volunteer Sarah Woods working at the nursery

Denise and the Trustees would like to express a huge thank you to both Gael and David. In Denise's words "I couldn't have got through all the work without their help, especially installing the new monitoring lines and maintaining/checking the traps!"

We are always looking for more volunteers and you never know what you will be doing! If dead rats are not your thing, there is lots of work to be done at the nursery, maintaining Lonnekers and weeding within the project area. All the work contributes towards the ecological restoration of Ackers, and who knows, you may just have a kiwi join you!!

If you would like to enquire about volunteering, please get in touch with us at info@sircet.org.nz

Maori Medicinal Garden

SIRCET have been fortunate to receive funding from the Lotteries Community for both ongoing management of the Community Nursery and a new project, the establishment of a Maori Medicinal Garden. We felt this project fitted in well with the existing propagating of native plants at the nursery. For the project we would like to find a site in the community where we can showcase those plants that have medicinal qualities. In particular we would like to grow any native plants that have/are being used by community members for medicinal purposes. To gather this information and discuss with the community where this garden could be located we plan to hold a community meeting. This would be an opportunity to share knowledge among us.

If you have any plants that you use for medicine, I would love to hear about it. Please get in touch with Letitia McRitchie at info@sircet.org.nz

The use of plants is just one part of traditional medicine or Rongoa. A Tohunga (trained healer) used spiritual healing and the medicinal properties of plants and herbs to effect a cure. The knowledge of plants medicinal uses was considered sacred and passed onto those who were trained in its use.

The first plant to feature is Koromiko (*Hebe salicifolia*).

I had a chat with Fern Davis who told me that her father taught the family to use Koromiko, for stomach upsets/diarrhoea. He had heard that it was used in World War Two. The unopened young leaf tips are chewed. Not very tasty, but effective!

Further research shows this to be a well known and used plant. In the far south it was traditionally called Kokomuka. Early European settlers found it very effective and quickly began to use it. While it can be dried and made into tea (it was sent overseas in WW2 to soldiers) it seems chewing the



fresh leaves is the most effective. The dosage has been recommended as one bud per the child's age, up to 12 and then 12 buds for an adult. The active ingredient has been identified as phenolic glycoside.

Koromiko is a shrub, growing up to 2m tall. It is common in the South and Stewart islands and also grows in Chile. There is a similar species in the North Island. The wild plant has white to pale lilac flowers but there are many hybrids with brightly coloured flowers in shades of red, purple and blue.

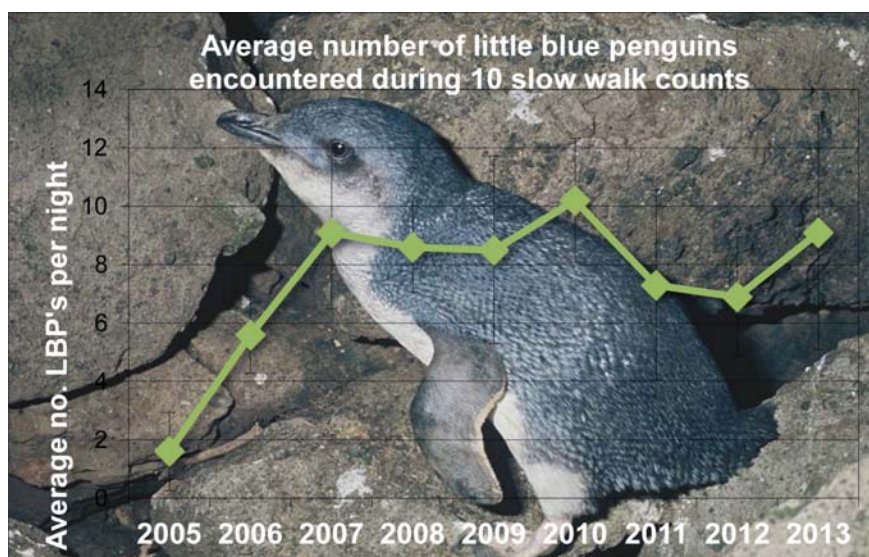
The plant is available at the nursery if you want to try growing it in your garden. It's very hardy and tolerates most conditions.

Little Blue Penguins/ Korora Slow Walk Count Monitoring, December 2013

In December volunteers once again walked the Ackers track at night to do our annual Little Blue Penguin survey.

We have been conducting these counts using the same method since 2005, with volunteers walking slowly along the track and recording all the penguins they see. Kari Beaven again organised the counts and the following is an excerpt from her report

A total of 91 Little Blue Penguins/ Korora were seen and recorded across all ten slow walk counts this year; an average of 9.1 birds per night. This is a reassuring result after the past two years have shown a decline in numbers counted, although again not significant given the ranging nature of individual results over the ten nights. The purpose of the monitoring measure is to show gross changes in the numbers of Little



Blue Penguins over a longer period and as such, this year's results continue to build a picture of the colony at Ackers Point.

Thank you very much to Kari and all the volunteers who enjoyed their night out penguin spotting! It's great to see all the hard work controlling pests is giving these little birds a chance to breed safely at Ackers.

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 locals 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 plant is....



NATIVE CELERY (*Apium prostratum*)

Dating back to Captain Cook's exploration of New Zealand, this herb was used to prevent scurvy among the crew. This Italian parsley look-a-like culinary herb has a creeping habit and is found growing wild throughout the New Zealand coastal areas.

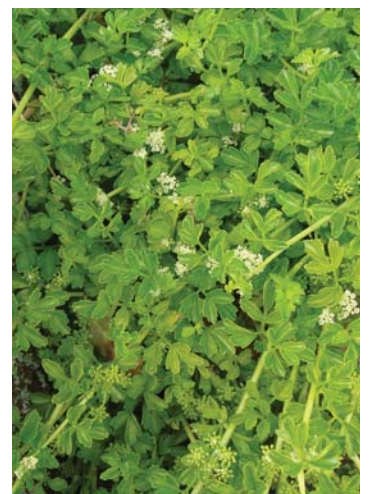
Things to know:

- Leaves and stems can be eaten raw or cooked. They can also be dried.
- Seeds can be used for flavouring
- Taste is crisp and intense and an ideal addition to a salad

- Leaves are variable with toothed leaflets and a celery like aroma
- Tiny white flowers occur in clusters
- This plant also grows in Australia where it is grown commercially, on a small scale, as a food plant

This is a low growing, ground cover plant and grows well in coastal conditions. It just needs a bit of weeding to start with to give it a chance to get going and then it's off. Check out the garden plot up the Main Road, outside Bid and Ernie's house. These plants have only been in the ground since last June and have formed a lovely dense glossy green mat. We have also planted some at Lonnekers over the last few months and these have started to fill up nicely

The plants at the nursery have recently had a trim as they were all growing so profusely! So



while they look a bit sparse at the moment, it won't take them long to get covering!!



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
- 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 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!



Genera Ltd



Pete Ross Automotive



Ulva's Guided Walks
Ulva Island Bird Sanctuary - Stewart Island - New Zealand
www.ulvas.co.nz ulvas@ulvas.co.nz 084 319 1151 0800 783 9278



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.

SAILS ASHORE LODGE/'SAILS' GUIDED NATURE WALKS & ROAD TOURS

Iris and Peter Tait have a long association with Stewart Island. Peter arrived in 1969 as NZ Forest Service Ranger in Charge.

Fishing followed forestry and was in turn followed by Talisker, a 17m charter yacht. Iris came to the Island as a visitor in 1971 and never left! The Tait's married in 1973 and Iris became the relieving district nurse, a position she filled for 15 years.

Peter and Iris decided to shift sideways from chartering into luxury accommodation 10 years ago. They offer their guests a complete packaged Stewart Island experience and they note on their website "It is a great privilege to share our home with our guests and to enjoy the Island through fresh eyes".

The Tait's have been involved with SIRCET for many years and they were initial Business Sponsor-a-hectare supporters. Peter checks his rat line regularly and has in the past volunteered for the annual 5 minute bird call survey. Recently Peter has spent a lot of hours working on the 'Tom-Cat Text Trap' and initial trials are looking promising.



www.sailashore.co.nz

taitt@sailsashore.co.nz

SIRCET would like to thank Peter and Iris for their ongoing support.