

# SIRCET news

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

March 2015



Stewart Island / Rakiura  
Community & Environment Trust



for people for environment



# A word from our staff

## Shona Sangster (Project Administrator)

The Stewart Island/Rakiura Community and Environment Trust's Annual report for the 2013-2014 Year has been published and distributed, and a copy is available to view in the Environment Centre. A big thank you to the Department of Conservation's Partnership team for assisting with printing. The January SIRCET newsletter is also available now from the Environment Centre.

A correction to last month's update – I wrote that our recent long term volunteer, Peta Maidens, had volunteered in the Okavango Delta in Botswana, and with the Jane Goodall Institute. She's visited both these amazing places but not as a volunteer. My apologies Peta! SIRCET would also like to thank Peta for her amazing contribution during her time here. She has worked really hard in some pretty unsummer-like conditions! At least she got to use the puffer jacket that doesn't get a lot of wear in Queensland! She has now headed back to warmer climes but we'd like to sincerely thank for all the amazing work she put in. We now have the lovely Claire Simpkin volunteering with us, and are expecting some more volunteers in March.



Big thanks to DoC and E Hayes for their assistance with volunteer accommodation.

A huge thank you to Quiz Night and the quizmistress with the mostest, Vicki, for a generous donation of \$600.00 to allow us to do some much needed maintenance to the SIRCET vehicle to keep it on the road.

SIRCET is also planning a competition soon with great prizes to be won, more details to follow....watch this space!

## 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

## 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



Contact us Shona Sangster - Project Administrator

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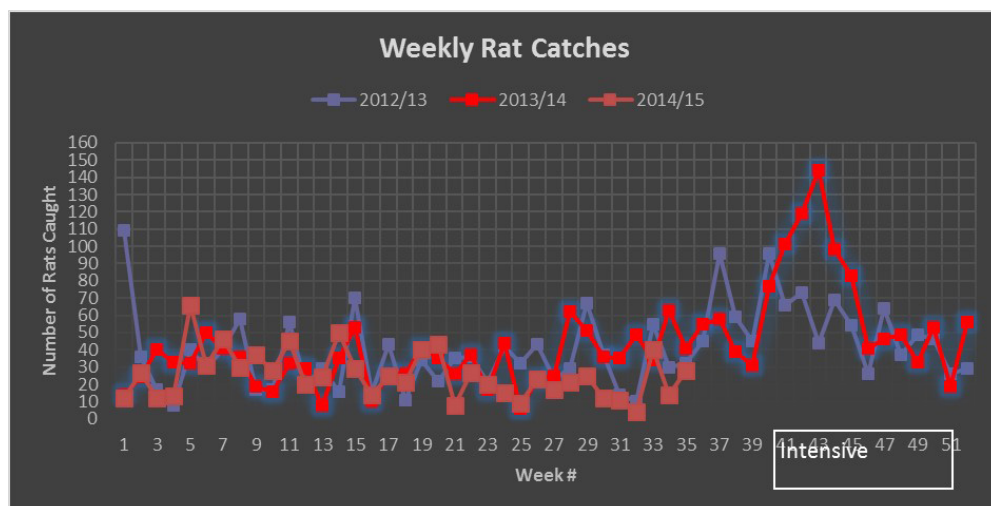
# Field Update from Kelly

It's been a busy couple of months out on the trapping front. I've been chasing my tail trying to keep up with weekly checks of the core and buffer zone rat trap lines, as well as operating the live cage cat traps for all of January and February. Rat catch numbers have been down which seems to reflect past year's trends for this time of the year, which I believe is due to an abundance of natural food source being available. Although catch numbers are starting to increase again and I'm starting to see a higher rate of Juveniles in the traps, it's great to get them young before they mature and start their own breeding cycle; also it's great to get them young whilst they are still silly enough to not be shy of our traps.

## Trapped Juvenile

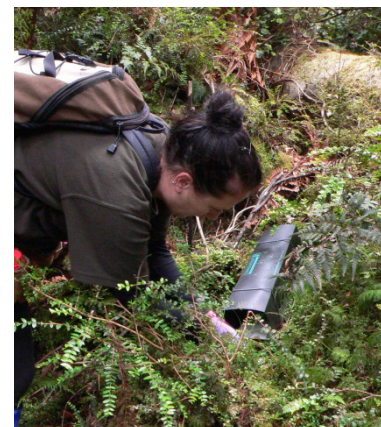
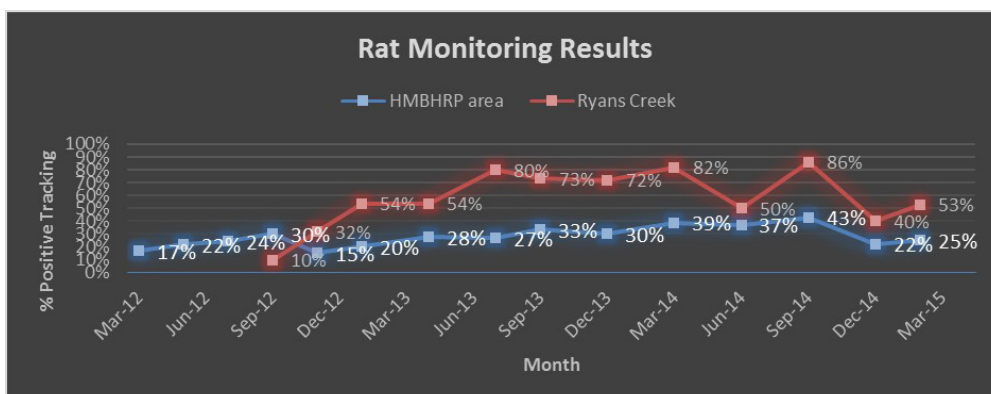


The below graph is a week by week view of the past two years and this year. Although rat catch numbers have decreased this year the trend of lows and spikes in recorded trapped rats seems to be the same. As per the past years results I would expect to see an increase with catch numbers in the coming weeks, I've already experienced an increase in trapping numbers in the first week of March so I'm preparing for a busy couple of months with commencing planned trap maintenance to have all our traps scrubbed and oiled ready for a success on every opportunity.



## Rat Monitoring

The latest monitoring results from late February / March show 25% tracking in the project area and 53% At Ryans Creek (where no rat control occurs). This is in line with our recent catch results and also illustrates the impact our trapping is having on the rat population within the project area. Fantastic!



*Claire – Volunteering for SIRCET; preparing a monitoring tunnel and a positive monitoring result*

## Volunteers

I've been so fortunate to have had Claire Simpink volunteering and giving her time to SIRCET for the past three weeks. Claire has been spending time on Stewart Island visiting her boyfriend who works for DOC, whilst here she has been giving her valuable time off as a Registered Nurse to help out SIRCET. Claire has been helping me on the trap lines and also the huge task of completing the Rat monitoring. I've really enjoyed working with Claire; her enthusiasm has been a breath of fresh air. I've been so lucky to have Claire helping me and I'm honestly going to really miss her when she returns to the mainland for work.

I also must mention the departure of Peta Maidens. Peta Volunteered with SIRCET for all of January and February. Peta has now returned to sunny Queensland, Australia. Peta was especially a real gem in the Native Plant Propagation Nursery and also maintenance on the Lonnekens restoration project. It just astounds me how much people are willing to give to our project. Peta enjoyed her time on Stewart Island she gave so much time and energy to SIRCET but also managed to squeeze in having a good look around Stewart Island including ventures on the Rakiura track and Masons bay. I will miss having her around and I'm so grateful for all the help she gave me over the past two months.





*Below; Peta ready and waiting to get out trapping. Peta in her 'heaven' with the plants at the nursery.*



## Cat traps

As mentioned I have had the live catch cat traps open for all of January and February. This has been labour intensive as they must be checked daily. I'm happy to report that I've had my first success with the capture of a feral cat not far from the Light House track at Ackers.

Five cat traps are also being operated in the Buffer zone. These traps are being opened and checked daily by members of the community volunteering their time. I can't thank them enough for giving their up their time to support our project.

## Possum Traps

I've had two recent success stories with the trapping of possums; both have been with the use of the 'Warrior Kill' traps in the Acker's core zone. I've been recently re-baiting these traps and using a cinnamon luring spray. I've also mobilised five auto possum traps in our Buffer Zone, and have plans to mobilise and trial five 'Trapintor' possum traps also in the Buffer Zone this week.

*Below; Claire preparing for trapping. Setting of a 'Warrior Kill' Possum trap*

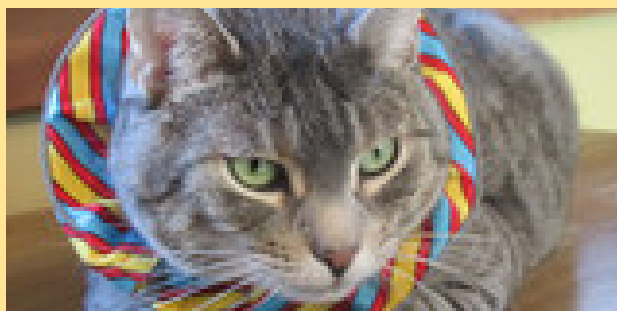


## BIRDSBESAFE CAT COLLARS

*Do you want your outdoor cat to stop catching perching birds such as fantails, tomtit, silvereye?*

A new kind of collar can help! This product from the USA is the clever solution of a Vermont woman who stopped her own bird-obsessed cat from catching birds. She used songbirds' colour vision sensitivity to make her cat more visible, and the birds flew away. When it worked to stop her cat nearly 100%, she decided to help others protect birds too.

The patent-pending Birdsbesafe® collar cover is a tube of fabric, held onto your cat's neck by a cat collar that is placed inside it. It's safe for your cat to wear because its breakaway collar releases under pressure, allowing both the collar and fabric cover to fall free. Reflective "piping" (trim) on the Birdsbesafe® collar cover helps protect your cat from cars at night. Cats can groom and feed with it on. A scientific field study at St. Lawrence University was conducted in the fall of 2013 and spring of 2014. Birdsbesafe cat collar covers were called "highly effective at reducing bird deaths" and the researchers "strongly support" its use.



Overall, the estimated percentage of reduction of birds caught by cats in one year would be 87%, based on study results. The authors' conclusion: "The conservation implications are clear: if owners of outdoor cats choose to use Birdsbesafe® collar covers, a significant factor in the decline of bird populations would drop precipitously." However, it only works for perching birds (order Passeriformes), and nesting birds or fledglings are still vulnerable.

If you would like to order one, they are available online at [www.birdsbesafe.com](http://www.birdsbesafe.com) and yes, they do ship to New Zealand.

# How to attract lizards to your garden

## Prepare your garden

Untidy gardens are great for lizards. They need places to hide and cover when hunting, feeding and resting, they also need shelter when it's really hot or really cold. Lizards like to squeeze into body sized holes no more than 5-19 mm wide. They like plenty of holes because many lizards are territorial so they need their own space. They like their homes to stay in one place too. If it's disturbed, they'll move out and they might not have anywhere else to go. Lizards need escape sites and they don't really mind what they're made of. Any old non-toxic building like old roofing iron can become a good home for lizards. Plants can grow around or over them so they can look quite tidy. Look around your backyard and find a warm, dry, sunny place. The most important thing for lizards is cover. You can use rock or wood piles to create some cover.

## Use rock piles to create cover for lizards

Use old concrete, bricks and stones and stack them loosely so there are plenty of cracks and holes. Spiders, slaters and beetles will head inside, especially when it's cold. That's good news for the lizards that feed on them. Smear yoghurt on some stones and lichens might grow. If your rock pile turns into a rockery, plant bulbs like crocuses between the rocks. Your insects will have an early nectar and pollen supply.

## Use wood piles to create cover for lizards

A good pile of dead wood is an adventure playground for lizards. Pile up a few logs and bits of wood and leave them to slowly rot, undisturbed. Let the fungi grow! It takes hold and helps recycle rotting wood by breaking it down. It makes good food for slugs and snails which in turn attracts birds.

## Make an Onduline lizard home

Onduline is an extremely tough, lightweight corrugated roofing and cladding product made from organic fibres saturated with bitumen. Sheets are 2 m long and can be cut into smaller pieces (290 mm x 400 mm or larger) with a handsaw or skillsaw. These should be stacked two or three-high with small stones in between the layers. Place your lizard home in a warm, dry sunny area with good cover such as divaricating shrubs, tussocks and rock piles. Once in place do not disturb your lizard home. Prospective tenants will abandon habitat that is frequently disturbed.

## Grow plants in your backyard that will attract lizards

Plant thickly is the rule. Lizards need safe habitats to run to when cats are on the prowl. That means thick ground-cover, vines and dense plant growth on banks. Berry or nectar producing plant species are good, especially native divaricating shrubs, and if you have a range of plants the lizards will have



plenty to eat, all year round. Coprosma species and kawakawa provide fruit and flax, while mānuka and rātā give nectar. Ferns, tussock grasses and rengarenga provide thick ground cover and attract insects for the lizards to eat. Plants like speargrass and the shrubby tororaro offer protection from predators. Vines like New Zealand clematis and climbing rata connect habitats, and cabbage trees form in clumps for good cover.

The community nursery at Horseshoe Bay has a range of plants native to Stewart Island and if you grow organically or limit the sprays you use, your lizards will do very well indeed.

## More tips

- Mulch your garden heavily – it will improve water retention for plants and also create a humid environment for lizards and their invertebrate prey.
- Try growing organically or minimise the use of sprays to ensure that insect populations thrive. Allow vines to grow a long way up walls or steep embankments, so animals can easily move up and down.
- Provide lots of debris such as rotting logs, bark chips, rock and boulder piles, untreated timber, corrugated iron and firewood, and encourage plants to grow around it.
- Design stone walls, retaining walls or embankments that have plenty of small gaps, cracks and crevices, and encourage fungi, plants and vines to grow on them.
- Be patient. If your lizards have already gone, it may be a little while before they return.

## Lizards are protected

All native lizard species are protected by the Wildlife Act and may not be captured, collected or deliberately disturbed without a permit issued by DOC. Generally lizards may only be kept in captivity or collected for scientific, educational or advocacy purposes. Getting to know the habits of these secretive critters in your own lizard-friendly backyard is a far more rewarding alternative!





# Little Blue Penguins/ Korora Slow Walk Count Monitoring, December 2014

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

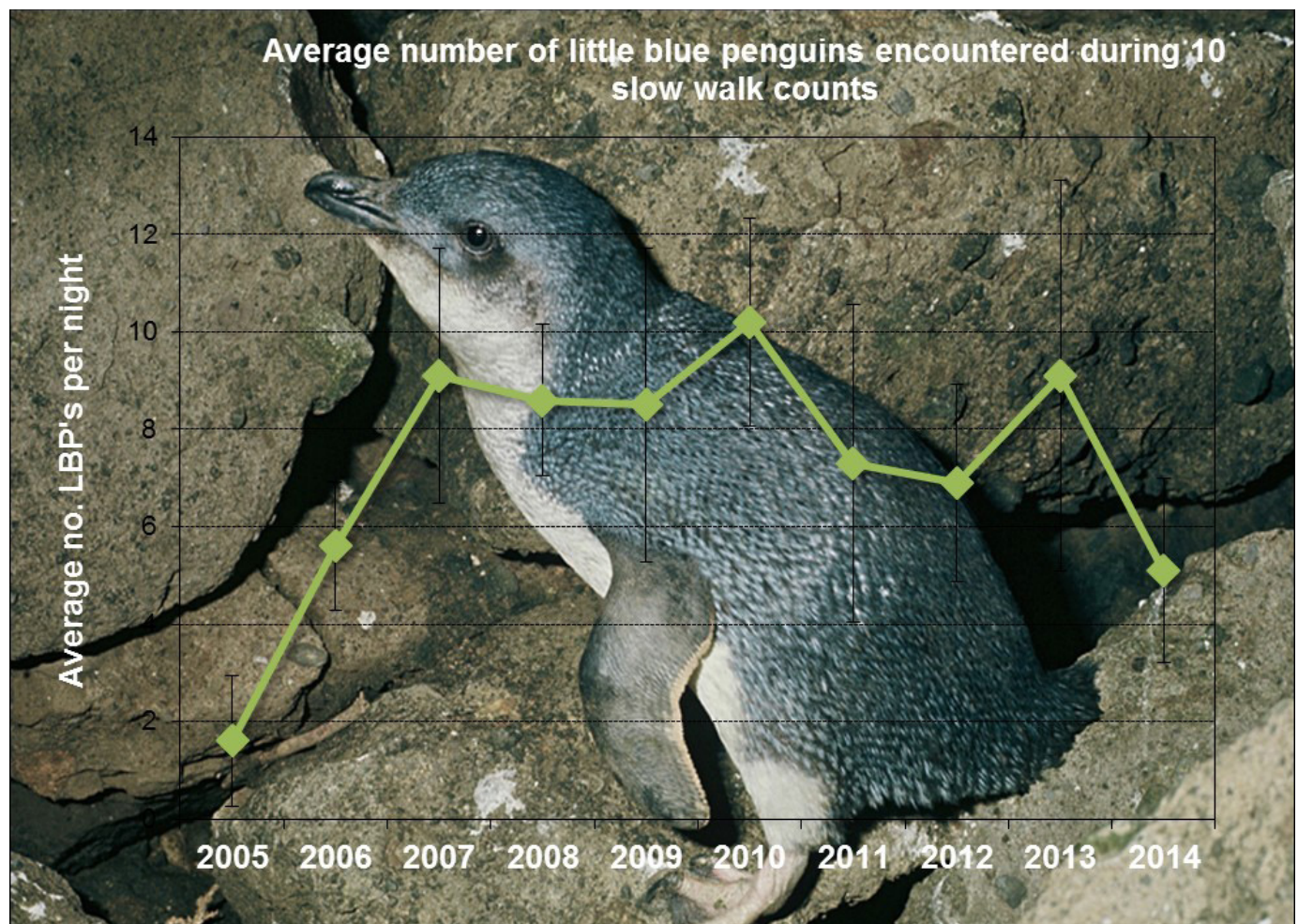
We have been conducting these counts using the same method since 2005, with volunteers walking slowly along the track after dark and recording all the penguins they see. Kari Beaven again organised the counts and the following is an excerpt from her report

Nineteen volunteers took part in the monitoring this year. Nine of these had been involved in monitoring in previous years and ten were new to the sub-project. On half of the nights, two or more volunteers walked together, enjoying the social experience as well as the wildlife encounters. Seventeen walkers were Stewart Island residents this year, up from eight last year (of thirteen volunteers). There was again a theme of pride in having such an amazing experience so close to hand, as well as in the achievements of the project at Ackers Point coming through in discussions.

A total of 51 Little Blue Penguins/ Korora were seen and recorded across all ten slow walk counts this year; an average of 5.1 birds

per night. This is a drop from the results from previous years, which was recorded at 91 birds across the ten nights. This is a disappointing result after the past seven years have shown fairly steady results at or around 8 birds per night on average. There are not any immediately clear reasons as to why the number of little blue penguins will have dropped this year. Weather patterns and food availability at sea affecting nesting success are an option, as is perhaps an alteration in the timing of their breeding.

Thank you very much to Kari and all the other volunteers who I hope also 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 PLANTS

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

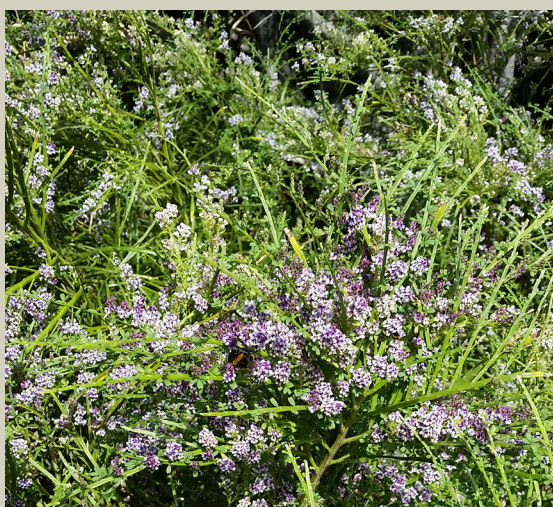
Kelly and her volunteers produce thousands of plants a year that are available for a \$2 donation. These plants have been used in local's gardens to attract birds, replace weeds and simply to enjoy as garden plants. They have been used on many restoration sites with over 1000 plants having been grown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



### *CARMICHAELIA ODORATA*

- Scented Broom



*You may have noticed some of the examples of this broom in flower around the island at the moment, there is a great one outside the DoC visitor centre.*

I often shake my head over the invasive yellow flowered Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) but this is a very attractive native with gorgeous flowers and as the name indicates, a wonderful scent. It grows to about 2 metres, and will tolerate dry conditions though it performs better with a reasonable supply of moisture. A very bee friendly plant.

### *METROSIDEROS UMBELLATA*

- Southern Rātā



*Southern rātā is a beautiful specimen tree, well known for its beautiful crimson flowers in summer but growth can be slow unless it is grown in ideal conditions with moist soil.*

It is easily grown from fresh seed. While it is possible to grow the tree from softwood or semi-hardwood cuttings, these often prove reluctant to strike roots. It is ideal for coastal environments because it has a good resistance to wind and salt. Interestingly, research has shown that not only is Southern rātā an ancient Gondwanan tree but it is the basal species to which all other metrosideros species such as pohutakawa and northern rātā can be traced.





# KNOW YOUR TRAPS

*SIRCET is proud to use only trapping to eradicate rats in our Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration project. But what kinds of traps do we use?*

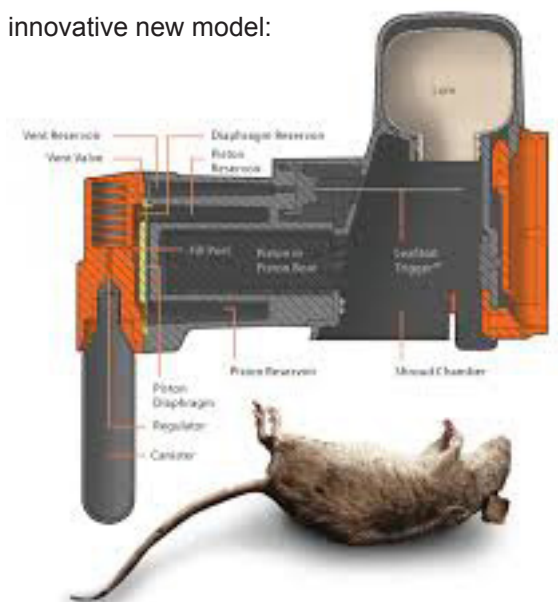
The basic:

Most volunteers will be familiar with this trap, it even featured in an event in this year's 'Stewart Island Man of the Year' contest:



A Victor snap trap attached to a piece of 4x2 with a corflute housing (the stuff real estate signs are made of), and chicken wire across the entrance to keep nosy beaks out! A perfect example of the Number 8 fencing wire mentality, this trap is cheap and easy to mass produce and does the job well. But beware! If not treated with respect this one can give you a nasty whack on the thumb!

The innovative new model:



You may have seen these around attached to trees. Goodnature traps are toxin free. They work by striking the skull of the pest animal with a steel-cored, glass reinforced polymer Piston, killing it instantly. This piston is driven by a measured volume of compressed CO<sub>2</sub> when the animal triggers the trap. Once the animal has been struck, the Piston returns, dropping the animal to the ground. The smart trap resets immediately. Goodnature traps employ 2 distinct trigger systems, the Classic and the Leaf360 depending on the target species. These Rat traps employ the very sensitive Leaf360 Trigger. As the animal brushes the leaf aside to investigate a lure, the trap is set into action. The traps use the Goodnature range of lures for extended effectiveness in the field or traditional lures applied by the user. Goodnature traps are powered by compressed CO<sub>2</sub> gas. The gas source is a small, recyclable canister that will power and reset the trap multiple times before needing to be replaced.

"The idea is that a rat, smelling the goo, which is mostly ground nuts, will stick its head into the hole, trip the wire, and be killed instantly. The rat then falls to the ground, and the device—this is the beauty part—automatically resets itself. No need to fish out rotten eggs or decaying flesh. Each CO<sub>2</sub> cannister is supposed to be good for two dozen rats or, alternatively, stoats—hence the name."

"On a per-capita basis, New Zealand may be the most nature-loving nation on the planet. With a population of just four and a half million, the country has some four thousand conservation groups. But theirs is, to borrow E. O. Wilson's term, a bloody, bloody biophilia. The sort of amateur naturalist who in Oregon or Oklahoma might track butterflies or band birds will, in Otorohanga, poison possums and crush the heads of hedgehogs. As the coordinator of one volunteer group put it to me, "We always say that, for us, conservation is all about killing things."

Basic traps are available on Stewart Island from SIRCET, contact Kelly Bunce.

Goodnature traps are available from [www.goodnature.co.nz](http://www.goodnature.co.nz)

Excerpts taken from The Big Kill, by Elizabeth Kolbert, New Yorker Magazine 22 December 2014 <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/12/22/big-kill>



## Kiwi monitoring update by Sandy King

*Kiwi being monitored in the Ackers Point area have kept me entertained during the past couple of months.*

In January the unnamed male Tx52 had been residing in the same burrow for several weeks so a trail camera was used to record his comings and goings. This showed a pattern where his mate Takiti would arrive and enter the burrow about 10pm while Tx52 went out foraging. At around 4-5am TX52 returned to the burrow and Takiti left, presumably foraging and snoozing elsewhere. In early January I noticed a change in this pattern with both adults spending more time near the burrow, entering and exiting several times during the night. Finally, after a week or so of this different behaviour, the camera captured an image of a chick at the entrance to the burrow! Exciting news, as this is the second successful breeding record from the birds transferred from Ulva Island in 2013.

I switched the camera from still to video mode and in the following days got several short clips of the chick when it emerged for short periods each night. It looked like a fluffy tennis ball with a bill, and was quite wobbly and unsteady on its feet at first. However it became notably stronger and steadier and moved further from the burrow entrance as time went on. Eventually activity around the burrow ceased and I assume it has moved off to hang out with its parents, as our Rakiura kiwi tend to do. Tx52 has moved back to some of his old haunts above the golf course so I hope his chick isn't far away either.

Meanwhile, Tx22 and the pair Matatika and Ngaio have been moving around their territories; Matatika and Ngaio don't seem to be together during the day and the whereabouts of their chick from last season is unknown. Tx22 has been in the same area for the last two checks – maybe just in a favourite burrow, or maybe he has found a friend and is up to something? If he is still in the same place next time I'll set up the camera again and find out.

Does anyone recognise this black moggy with its red collar? It was caught on camera investigating the burrow, probably prior to the chick hatching.







***The month of March kicked off with World Wildlife Day, March 3. On the 3rd of March 2014 the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon led the global celebrations of the first World Wildlife Day and called for us to work for a future where people and wildlife coexist in harmony.***

This year, countries, United Nations and international organizations, as well as citizen's groups from across the globe, have rallied around the theme 'It's time to get serious about wildlife crime'. Illegal wildlife trade is threatening the survival of some of our most charismatic species, as well as some plants and animals you may have never heard of. And it threatens people, their livelihoods, their safety and security. The situation is serious. We must tackle the poaching, transport and consumption of illegally traded wildlife and in so doing use the same sorts of enforcement tools, techniques and penalties used to combat other serious crimes, such as trafficking in drugs or persons.

As we celebrate the beauty and variety of our wildlife let's do whatever we can – as citizens and as consumers – to bring this illegal trade to an end and secure a sustainable future for wild animals and plants, as well as for ourselves. We know what needs to be done – and by working together we will succeed.

— John E. Scanlon,  
Secretary-General of CITES



This is not only a problem for faraway places. Here in NZ our rare reptiles, like this beautiful harlequin gecko (*Tukutuku rakiurae*) can also be targets of international smugglers. Geckos are being hunted for the illegal international reptile trade.

**You can help stop this trade by reporting suspicious activities and vehicle licence numbers to the 24 hour hotline, 0800 DOC HOT (0800 362 468).**

**This World Wildlife Day  
let the world know  
it's time to get  
#seriousaboutwildlifecrime.**



**WORLD  
WILDLIFE DAY  
3 MARCH**

**Wildlife Crime: Let's End it Now**

[www.wildlifeday.org](http://www.wildlifeday.org)





## 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 ulva@ulvas.co.nz (041) 03 219 1214



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

## 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.

## CHURCH HILL OYSTER BAR AND RESTAURANT

*SIRCET is very pleased to introduce a new business sponsor, Church Hill Oyster Bar and Restaurant.*

Run by Chris and Deanne Sara, Church Hill is one of Stewart Island's best loved dining destinations. Opened in 1999, and relaunched with Deanne as chef and Chris as front of house since 2012 they specialise in the fresh seafood which attracts so many visitors and residents alike. They make creative and innovative use of much loved and iconic 'island' ingredients like paua, muttonbird, blue cod. It is also a great place to sample Big Glory Oysters, farmed by EEC, cooked or raw. And they offer the freshest crayfish around! All meals are made to order and they pride themselves in using local and fresh products in all their meals. Their commitment to homemade, local, Southland food is evident in the clever creations on their rotating specials board and the extensive kitchen garden which often inspires dishes or pairings. SIRCET would like to thank Chris and Deanne for their business sponsorship.



www.churchhill.co.nz 36 Kamahi Rd 03 2191 123