

# SIRCET news



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

September 2015

## A word from our staff

Shona Sangster—Project Administrator

SIRCET, together with business sponsor the Stewart Island Gift Shop and Toi Rakiura recently hosted a print making workshop and exhibition organised by the Sandpit Collective. The aim was to stimulate community discussion and engagement in conservation issues through the medium of printmaking. And it was a great success! Thanks to the Sandpit Collective and to all those who came and participated or looked at the exhibition.



*The Sandpit collective: L to R Lynn, Jenny, Elsie, Ellen & Lydia*

You have probably noticed that this newsletter feels a little lighter than usual. After many years of valuable assistance, the Southland District Council is no longer able to help us out with desktop publishing of this newsletter, so we have chosen to move to a shorter format. SDC are still providing our print copies, and SIRCET would like to express our gratitude for their continued support.

Upcoming Events: October is Save the Kiwi Month! We love our Kiwi here at SIRCET so we're working with DOC to host a Great Kiwi Morning Tea on the 16th of October. So keep an eye out for some tasty goodies featuring Highlander Sweetened Condensed Milk. Another Kiwi event is our regular Labour Weekend Kiwi Avoidance training for dogs. This will be held on Saturday the 24th at Traill Park. To book a time contact Sandy ([sdk@kinect.co.nz](mailto:sdk@kinect.co.nz)), Di (0277599773) or Shona (contact details on pg 3).

The SIRCET AGM will be held on the 29th of October at 7pm, location to be advised followed by a general meeting. All Welcome

## Who is SIRCET?

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 .

## Kiwi monitoring update for August

The monitoring of four kiwi released in the Ackers Point area in 2013 has been possible because of a small transmitter attached to a leg of each bird. Each transmitter emits pulses at a unique frequency which become audible beeps when picked up by a specialised receiver and aerial. The transmitters are powered by a tiny battery which can last for up to 3 years. The battery life is extended by programming the transmitter to turn on for predetermined periods. The Ackers Point kiwi have transmitters which are 12/12, that is they are on for 12 hours and off for 12 hours each day. The 12 hours on are during daylight times – there is no point in having them transmitting at night when we are not out looking for them.

The transmitters, which weigh just a tiny fraction of the bird's body weight, are attached using hospital identification bands and electrical tape – a typical example of good ol' kiwi ingenuity which is effective, doesn't damage the bird, and is cheap and relatively easy to apply. However they do need to be checked and replaced regularly to ensure they don't wear out and break, which would mean the transmitter falling



Klaartje and TX 22



Matatika, Ngaio and chick

off and the bird being "lost". These checks are carried out annually at the end of the breeding season.

In late May Brent Beaven, Kate Richardson, Klaartje Van Schie (a.k.a Claire), Shona Sangster and Sandy King attempted to catch all four birds to check their transmitters and replace the bands. It sounds straight forward, especially when the aerial and receiver are used to track the birds' signal right to their burrow, but that is the easy part. Once the burrow has been located the occupant has to be extracted – sometimes

easier said than done. The catch team was lucky with the first bird – the unnamed male known as 22 (his transmitter number). He was tracked to a burrow which he was sharing with a female; being somewhat gallant he let her hide right at the back while he took the reachable position in front of her and was removed without fuss. Brent demonstrated the band change technique while Klaartje held the bird, which was a real treat for her being just days before she left the Island. The old band was in still in perfect condition, and the bird himself was given a quick health check and pronounced fat and healthy.

Next on the list was the pair Matatika and Ngaio who were found in one of their favourite burrows. However this turned out to be longer than anybody's arms so they remained where they were. The bonus was that they were easily viewable, along with a third bird which was snuggled up with them. The colour and size of this bird suggested that it was young, probably the past season's chick. Good news!

Finally the unnamed male 52 and his mate Takiti were tracked to a burrow opposite the golf course. Both were caught; the male had his transmitter band changed and Takiti had her failed transmitter removed. Takiti eluded capture in 2014 so her transmitter band was 2 years old but was still in very good condition, as was the male's. Both birds were also fat and healthy, showing that the habitat must be well suited for kiwi.

All in all it was a good day's work, in spite of not catching Matatika and Ngaio. The good condition of the other transmitter bands leaves little concern for the state of theirs, so there won't be any attempt to catch them until after the coming breeding season. Monitoring of all four birds will continue for another year when the project will be reassessed.



## Update from our Pest Manager – Kelly Bunce

Of course rats, cats and possums have been my focus over the cold winter months.

We have recently increased the number of Goodnature A24 Automatic re-setting rat traps; there are now 64 Auto traps operating in the Core Project area. Each trap uses a small gas canister to re-set itself after each rat kill 24 times before a gas canister change is required! Very efficient! Since the extra traps have been mobilised our monitoring results have had a significant decrease with the latest monitoring coming in at 15% which is 27% lower than the same time last year. The plan is to continue to increase the number of Goodnature traps operating in the Core Project Area.

Since the start of 2015 five wild cats have been removed from the Project area, it is especially more important to focus on cat trapping whilst their main food source (rats) are not as prominent in the area. In this time we have also trapped 14 possums, all possums

have been trapped with our Warrior Kill traps.

If you are interested in volunteering on one of our rat lines situated in our community zone or if you would be interested in operating a cat trap, please contact me on 027 838 2300.

Lumsden Primary School visited the island at the start of September; the children joined me on a Pest Control / Educational walk out to the Lighthouse at Ackers Point. They helped with checking all the traps on the Light house rat line whilst being introduced to different trapping methods and lots of fun facts along the way. They were an absolute delight to host and were super excited when we found trapped rats!

*Below: Students from Lumsden School at Ackers Point*



## 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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## 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.*



Above: Participants at workshop Below: Exhibition



## THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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



## 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.



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