



Stewart Island/ Rakiura Community & Environment Trust

Annual Report **1 July 2013 – 30 June 2014**

PO Box 124
Stewart Island 9846
www.sircet.org.nz
info@sircet.org.nz

Contents

Chairperson's Report	2
Volunteers.....	3
Environmental Education.....	3
Staff Development	4
Fundraising.....	4
Collaboration.....	4
Media Releases & Awards.....	5
Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project.....	5
Animal Pest Control	6
Trapping Results.....	6
Rats	7
Possums	7
Feral Cats.....	8
Deer.....	8
Pest Monitoring	8
Weed Control.....	9
Species Monitoring	10
5 Minute Forest Bird Call Counts	10
Kiwi, Weka, Morepork/ Ruru	11
Little Blue Penguins.....	11
Sooty Shearwater/Titī Monitoring.....	12
Lonneker's Beach Revegetation.....	12
Kiwi Advocacy Project	13
Community Native Plant Nursery	13
Rakiura Environment Centre.....	13
Website	14
Trustees and Employees	14
Financial	14
Funding	14

Chairperson's Report

Despite a somewhat frantic and challenging year the Trust has achieved, with the support of extremely dedicated staff, trustees and a wealth of willing volunteers both local and off shore, remarkable amounts of conservation work for which our birds, bush and community benefit. Despite many changes within the Trust our core work of removing pests from the 210 hectare project area has continued relentlessly.

The review recommendations that we adopted has been the focus this year. We targeted the 1st April for implementation of these DOC changes. Denise, Ang & Gael worked tirelessly to cut more lines, build more traps, set additional traps out in situ and establish new monitoring lines all ready for 'D day'. From early April daily checks of the newly established "Core" and "Buffer" zones were undertaken. This was extremely hard work and the final results unfortunately somewhat disheartening for Denise who had, through blood sweat and tears prepared for this assault wholeheartedly. It was not all in vain however, the numbers of rats are **very** low in the Core Zone, and we will continue our efforts to achieve our vision of completing translocations into the area and ultimately having tieke in our backyards.

During this time of high level intensity, the nursery, education, habitat restoration, monitoring and volunteer programmes all continued as in previous years. This was a mammoth effort from Denise to keep on top of these other aspects of the trusts work and a tribute to her dedication to conservation and education. Denise's resignation in late May, due to personal reasons, has been a real setback to the Trust. I wish on behalf of all the trustees to thank Denise for the outstanding job she has done for conservation with the trust. She has left some very big shoes to fill and the Trust is actively seeking a replacement.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who contribute and believe in the project as without you we could not continue in our joint efforts to keep moving forward in our strategic direction. We look forward to your continued support for the project over the coming year.

Di Morris

SIRCET Activities and Community Involvement

Volunteers

During the 2013-2014 year over 80 volunteers contributed 3,278 hours to a variety of SIRCET projects including: animal pest control and monitoring, weed surveillance and control, maintenance of Lonneker's Beach plantings, Trust administration, nursery tasks, species monitoring, and educational workshops. Volunteers ranged from dedicated local residents to visiting volunteers, DOC volunteers, visiting school groups and our own hard-working Trustees. 1,288 Hours were contributed by our small but dedicated local population. A special mention goes to Gael Gordon who was our long term volunteer from November till February and put in a fantastic effort.



Environmental Education

This year, SIRCET have been involved with our local Halfmoon Bay School and Rugrats in several different educational projects. In September 2013, our local Starfish kids helped Denise install a number of pest traps along the Lonneker's Beach restoration area. During October 2013, Denise visited the local Rugrats to help set up a rat trap near their compost area and talked about the impact of rats on our native wildlife. Gadget the rat detector dog made a special appearance. In November 13, Denise and the STARFISH group along with Ruud Kleinpaste (aka 'the Bugman'), all took part in an audio conference as part of the LEARNZ virtual fieldtrips. In May 2014, Cherie Hemsley gave the school a presentation on SIRCET's kiwi advocacy project and demonstrated how she kept track of the kiwis using telemetry. This was followed up with a colouring and writing competition.

SIRCET also hosted a number of visiting school groups again this year. Five groups took part in the Ackers Nature talk and walk. This activity involves a 30-40 minute talk where Denise introduces the kids to the HMBHRP and discusses the various pests we aim to control, how we control them and why. Denise then takes the group on a walk to the lighthouse checking rat, possum and cat traps along the way. Seven visiting school groups also took part in a session at the Native Plant Nursery at Horseshoe Bay. These sessions give the kids a chance to learn about native plant propagation and growth techniques, as well as the importance of keeping environmental weeds at bay and they are also introduced to a number of rare and threatened native plants.

The following four community workshops were held over the year and educational handouts were provided at all of them:

Lonnekers planting day September 2013

Dog workshop/evening talk on kiwi October 2013

Little Brown Kiwi school group in March 2014

Workshop at Halfmoon Bay School about kiwi monitoring May 2014



Cobham Intermediate ready to check traps



Denise helps Students to check a rat trap

Staff Development

SIRCET's Pest Manager (Denise Hayes) has been concentrating on pest control for much of the year leaving little time for staff development opportunities – she did however make time to attend a First Aid Course run over a weekend on the Island in November 2013.

Fundraising

SIRCET has had another successful year, fundraising from a variety of sources. A focus this year has been the kiwi advocacy project with funds raised from donations at Kiwi avoidance days, using Trademe to auction the opportunity to name a pair of kiwi and financial support from Richard and Jill at the local 4 Square who provided a very generous donation to enable the purchase of two new kiwi transmitters. The Sponsor a Hectare programme continues to grow with increasing donations. Real Journeys continue to provide a donation from each Ackers nature walk and support travel for SIRCET related activities. Donations from nursery plants, and donation boxes at the Environment Centre and Ackers have shown steady increases. Extra effort has been put in to sell weka cards and this has seen increased revenue. Thomas Sandoz (an annual visitor to the Island) has once again provided a very generous donation towards the development of cat trap technology.

Collaboration

In October 2013, Denise assisted staff from the Department of Conservation to run possum monitoring at Pegasus. She also assisted when DOC ran the bi-annual possum monitoring within the HMBHRP area for the Trust in May 2014.

DOC, SIRCET and The Dancing Star Foundation co-hosted Conservation Week in September 2013. All environmental groups and anyone interested in conservation on the island were invited to the Nursery to see first-hand the great work currently being achieved and to mix and mingle with each other. This venue also provided a networking opportunity to share ideas and projects that are coming up. A great BBQ was enjoyed by all despite the weather!

Trustees Letitia McRitchie and Diana Morris both attended the Biodiversity Expo held at the Southern Institute of Technology during July 2013 and also the Living Legends Planting day at Sandy Point in August 2013. Letitia also represented SIRCET at the Conservation Inc. Conference in Dunedin, held from the 17-18 October. This conference provided a great opportunity to network with community conservation groups from all over New Zealand. Thank you to Real Journeys who kindly provided the transport for these over the ditch events.

Media Releases & Awards

SIRCET News editions were printed in August and December 2013 and in March and July 2014. We are grateful to the Southland District Council for their continuing support in producing this newsletter through professional graphic design and printing.

SIRCET submitted the following articles to the Stewart Island News:

- ▶ July 2013: Start of Kiwi project, notice of AGM and SIRCET welcomes new Project Administrator, Mandy Foster;
- ▶ September 2013: Reminder about planting day at Lonneker's, Living Legends Planting Day, Kiwi Advocacy update, success with Lotteries Community Grants Funding Application, Nursery community work days;
- ▶ October 2013: Save Kiwi Week, Trade Me auction to name kiwis Matatika and Ngaio, Kiwi Advocacy update, notice of the upcoming Kiwi Dog Aversion training and public talk on Kiwi;
- ▶ November 2013: Kiwi Advocacy update, report on Kiwi Dog Aversion training;
- ▶ December 2013: Kiwi Advocacy update;
- ▶ January 2014: Kiwi Advocacy update, farewell from Mandy Foster, new Cat text trap, visiting volunteers Gael Gordon and David Streit;
- ▶ March 2014: Kiwi Advocacy update, notice of upcoming Kiwi Dog Aversion training, appeal for new Trustees, Nursery plant of the month featuring Native Celery (*Apium prostratum*);
- ▶ April 2014: Kiwi Advocacy update, Maori Medicinal Garden article featuring Koromiko, notice of upcoming Kiwi Dog Aversion training;
- ▶ May 2014: Kiwi Advocacy update, , SIRCET welcomes new Project Administrator Shona Sangster, trapping update, report on Dog Kiwi Aversion training, Kiwi Hui, 5 minute bird call count, Nursery plant of the month featuring Kohuhu (*Pittosporum tenuifolium*)

November 2013 saw long term volunteer Gael Gordon and Denise give a radio interview with Radio NZ for their program on volunteers in conservation. In April Denise was also interviewed by Radio NZs Cosmo Kentish Barnes for their Country Life program where she discussed the HMBHRP with a particular focus on pest control.

Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project

The Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project (HMBHRP) is SIRCET's primary project focusing on pest control and species monitoring on Ackers Peninsula. Pest control initially started in 2003 at Ackers Point to protect sooty shearwater/ tītī and little blue penguin colonies, and has since expanded to protect 210 hectares from Ackers Point to Golden Bay Road, Oban.

The project's recently (June 2013) updated Goals are:

- To increase the native bird population within the Halfmoon Bay project area;

- To provide a safe habitat for re-introduction and survival for Stewart Island species (both plants and animals); and
- To educate and involve the community in conservation activities

Animal Pest Control

The main form of pest control used is trapping, utilising Victor snap traps and a smaller number of Goodnature self resetting traps. Following a formal review of SIRCET's HMBHRP by the Department of Conservation, the Trust made the decision to split the 210ha project area into three zones – the core zone, buffer zone and community zone as shown by the map below. The trap lines within the community zone continue to be checked by local volunteers allowing SIRCET staff to concentrate their efforts within the core and buffer zones. Following one of the review recommendations the trap network has been intensified within these two zones. Denise Hayes along with Ang Steffans and volunteers have decreased the distance between rat traps along all existing trap lines to no further than 25m apart. In addition, 15 new trap lines have been installed within these areas so that no line is further apart than 75m. New traps have also been installed along all roads within these two zones. This has seen the number of rat traps across the project area increase from around 700 to over 1,000 traps.



Map of trap lines within the HMBHRP area showing the three zones...note the trap intensification of the buffer and core zones.

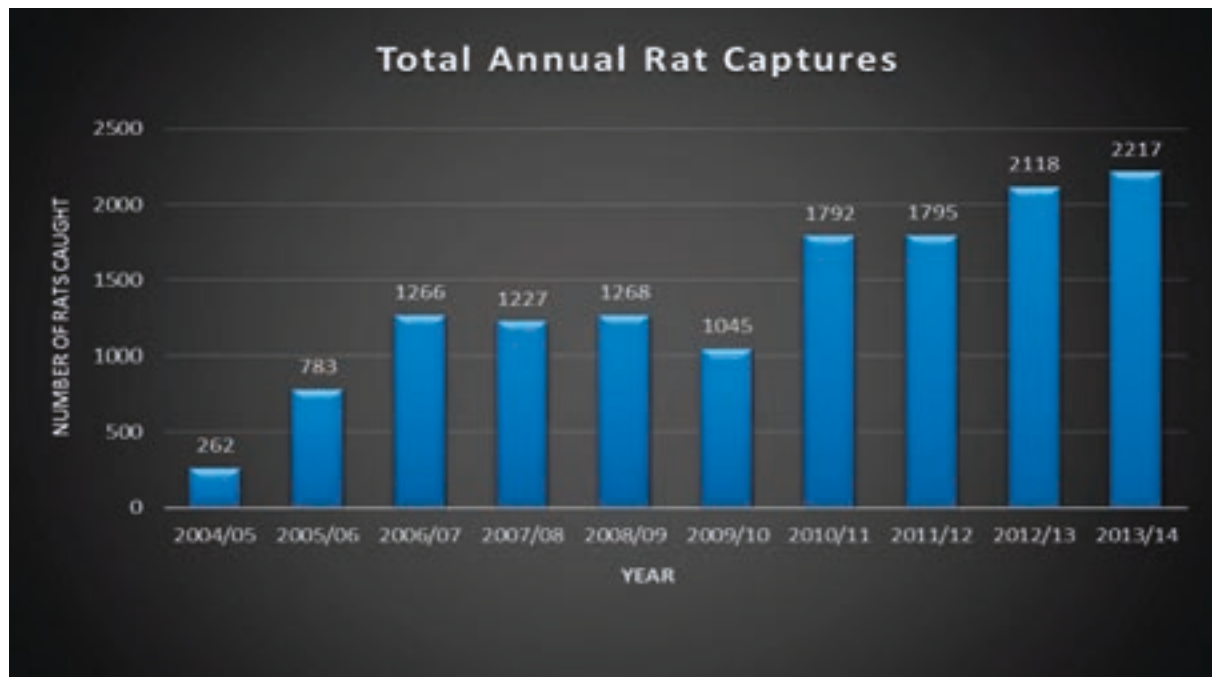
Trapping Results

The total number of pests trapped within the project area in 2013-14 was 2,244.

Target pest	Number trapped
Rats	2,217
Possums	22
Feral Cats	5
Deer	0

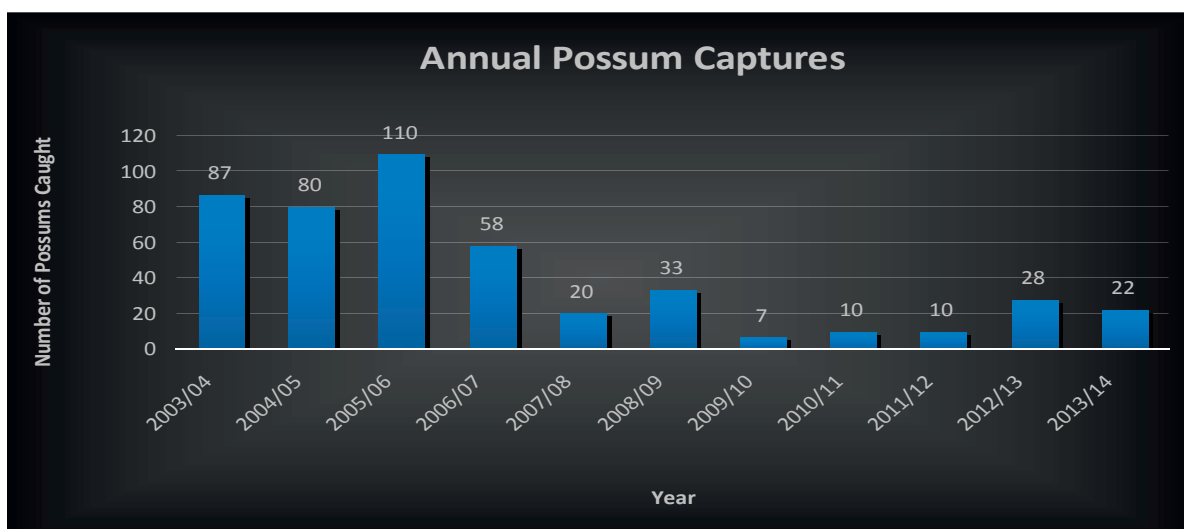
Rats

A total of 2,217 rats were caught during this financial year which is once again a record. During early autumn, the trust made the decision to undertake intensive trapping within the core and buffer zones. A trapping assistant was employed and all traps were initially checked daily for around 10 days. This was then decreased to checks every 2nd day and continued through to the end of May 2014, where trap checks are now occurring twice weekly where time allows.



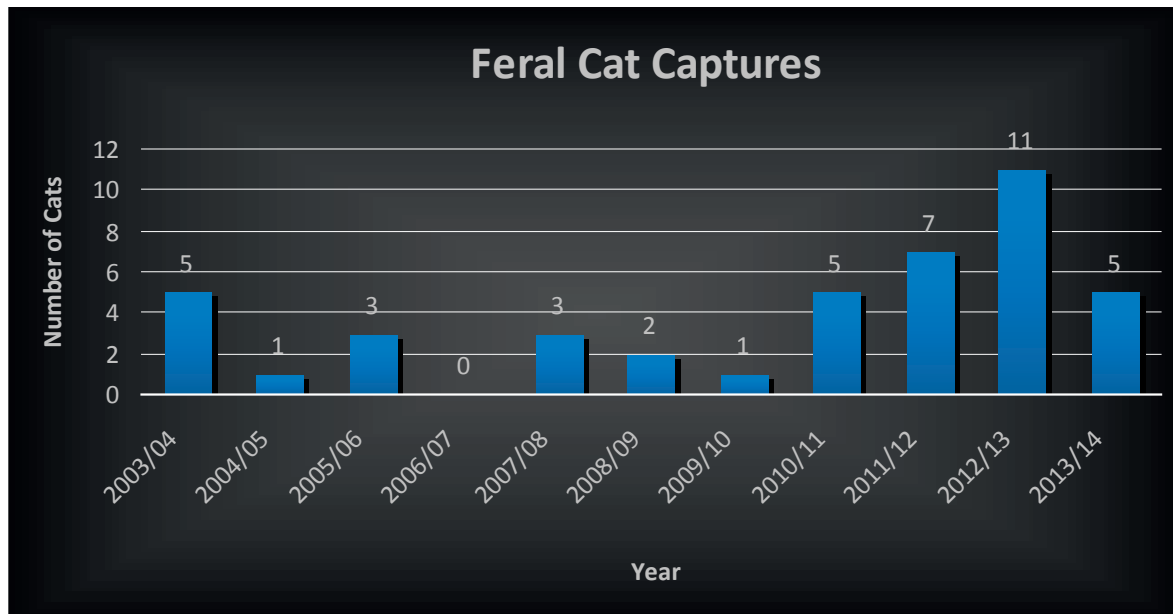
Possoms

Possum traps have been opened and checked periodically throughout the financial year and total of 22 possums were caught. Of these eight were caught in live capture cages, 13 were trapped in the warrior kill traps and one was caught by a leg-hold trap during the monitoring operation. All animals caught alive were humanely dispatched upon discovery.



Feral Cats

SIRCET have continued to increase the number of live capture cat cages spread across the project area and there are now a total of 20 cages permanently on site. The traps have been periodically opened throughout the year and have succeeded in trapping five feral cats. A further eight cages are available to respond to individual cat sign and are also lent to residents upon request.



Deer

Historic deer control, consisting of irregular hunting, has not been sufficient to reduce deer numbers to a low enough level to regenerate the forest. SIRCET have therefore decided to formalise a deer control plan following the deer survey undertaken the previous year. Work that has occurred over the year has been a survey undertaken with the use of field cameras. The information from the survey has been incorporated in the deer plan which is at the draft stage.

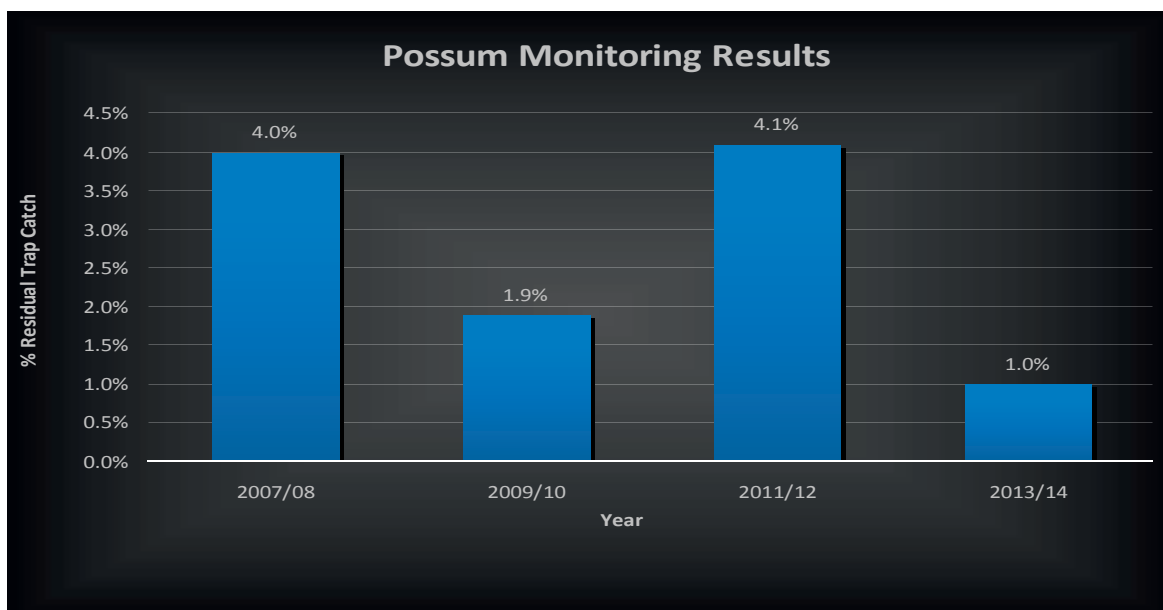
Pest Monitoring

Rat monitoring across the HMBHRP area and the untrapped Ryans Creek control area was undertaken in September and December 2013 and, March and June 2014. Monitoring was also undertaken in the buffer and core zones during April and June 2014 to monitor the effects of the intensive trapping that took place during this period. Overall, the results were consistently higher in the Ryans Creek area where, in March 2014, they peaked at 82% compared to 39% in the HMBHRP area.



Graph showing monitoring results to June 2014

This year also saw DOC (with assistance from Denise) run the bi-annual possum monitoring within the HMBHRP area. Monitoring was undertaken according to the National Pest Control Agencies (NPCA) protocol which sets out the standard trap-catch method used across New Zealand. The results were very low at 1% RTC (residual trap catch) which is well within SIRCET's target of 5% or less.



Weed Control

Weed control has been undertaken this year with a particular focus on some of the more invasive weeds such as *Bomarea*, Darwin's Barberry, Tree Echium and *Gunnera*. Weeds that have a high visual impact, such as Gorse, have also been controlled along public walkways including the Lighthouse Track at Ackers Point. A five-year operational plan has been developed, which provides methods for control, monitoring and reporting on future weed control. Thank you to DOC for assistance in producing the weed plan.



Volunteer David Streit and Denise Hayes deal to Bomarea January 2014

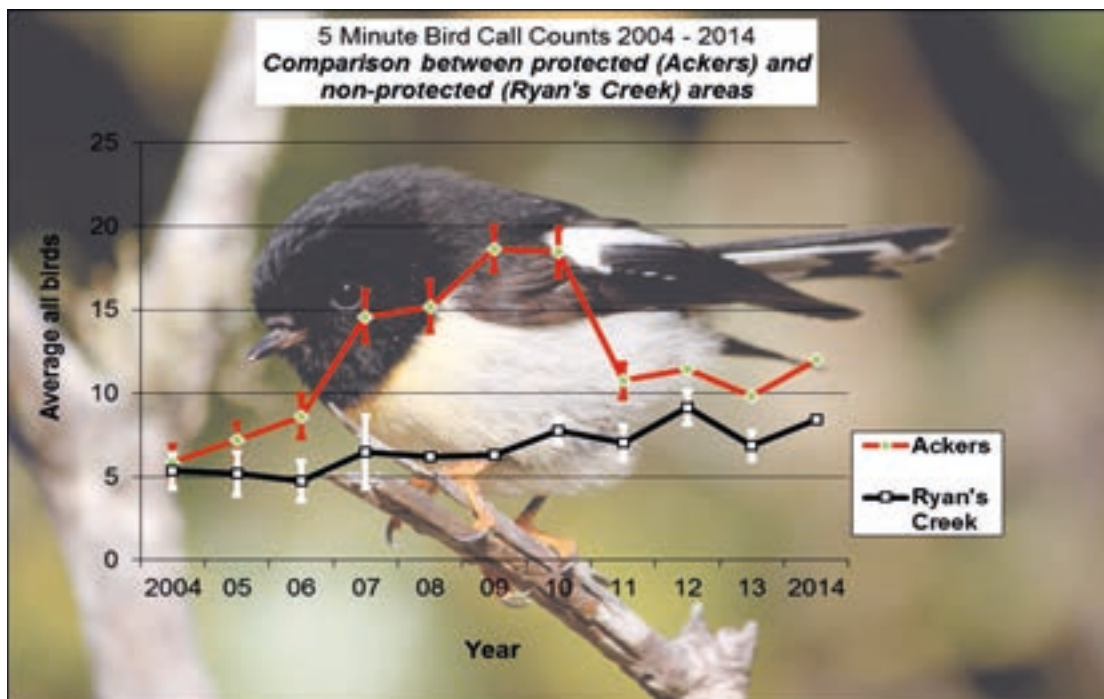


Volunteer Gael Gordon tackles a huge Gunnera

Species Monitoring

5 Minute Forest Bird Call Counts

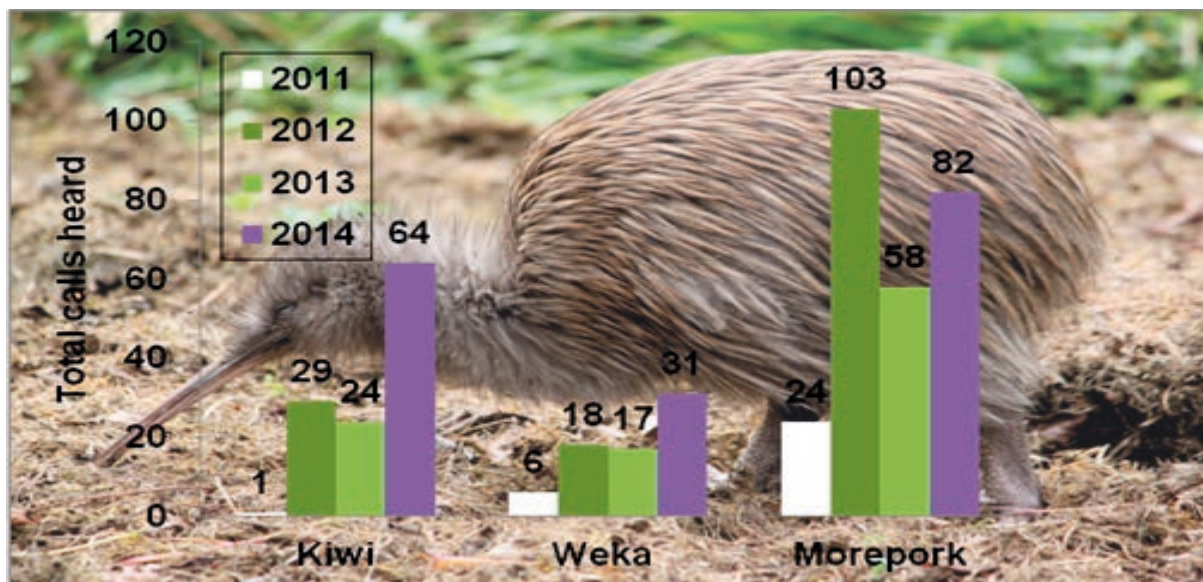
The annual 5 minute bird call count was conducted in April 2014 in the project area at Acker's Point and also in the Ryan's Creek control area. The results indicate an increase in bird numbers in both the project and control areas. The increase in the project area brings it to the highest number so far recorded since our change of contractors. Results over the last three years indicate that we are consistently detecting more birds within the Project Area than outside of it, an indication that our pest control is enhancing the bird population.



5 Minute Bird Call Counts 2004 – 2014 Comparison between protected (Ackers) and non-protected (Ryan's Creek) areas graph

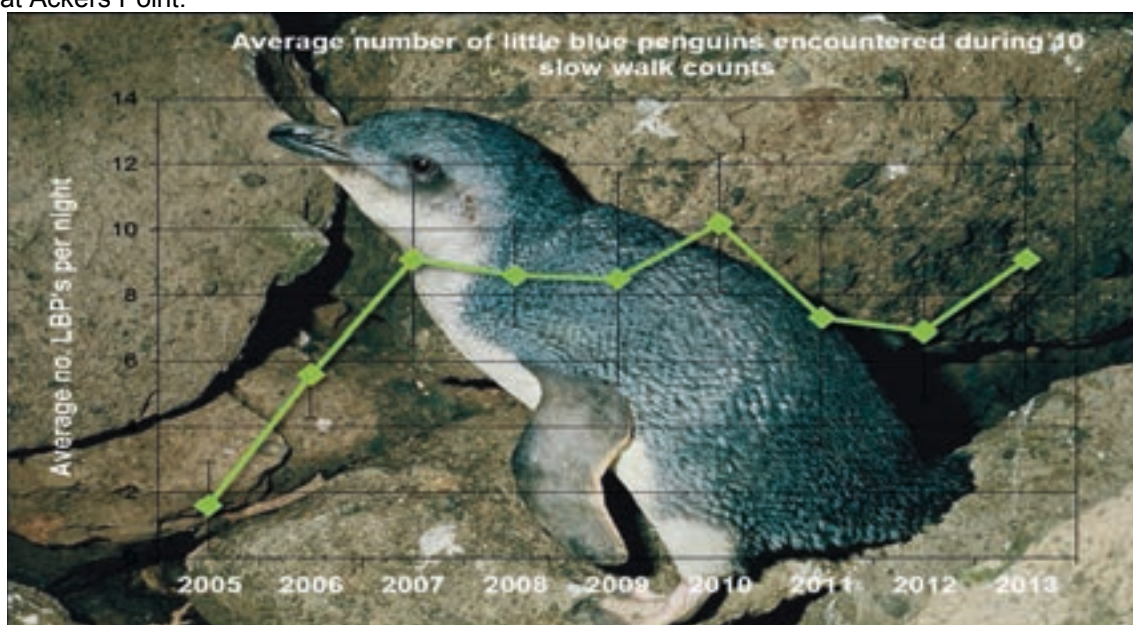
Kiwi, Weka, Morepork/ Ruru

Kiwi, Weka and Morepork/Ruru monitoring was conducted in May/June 2014 with continued financial support from Kiwis for Kiwi. Kiwi calls have increased to their highest number since monitoring began. Weka calls appear to be increasing over time but have large variations ie 200% increase, 5% decrease, then 82% increase. Ruru/morepork calls are highly variable from year to year, with a 354% increase, 43% decrease, and a 41% increase and appear to be unpredictable.



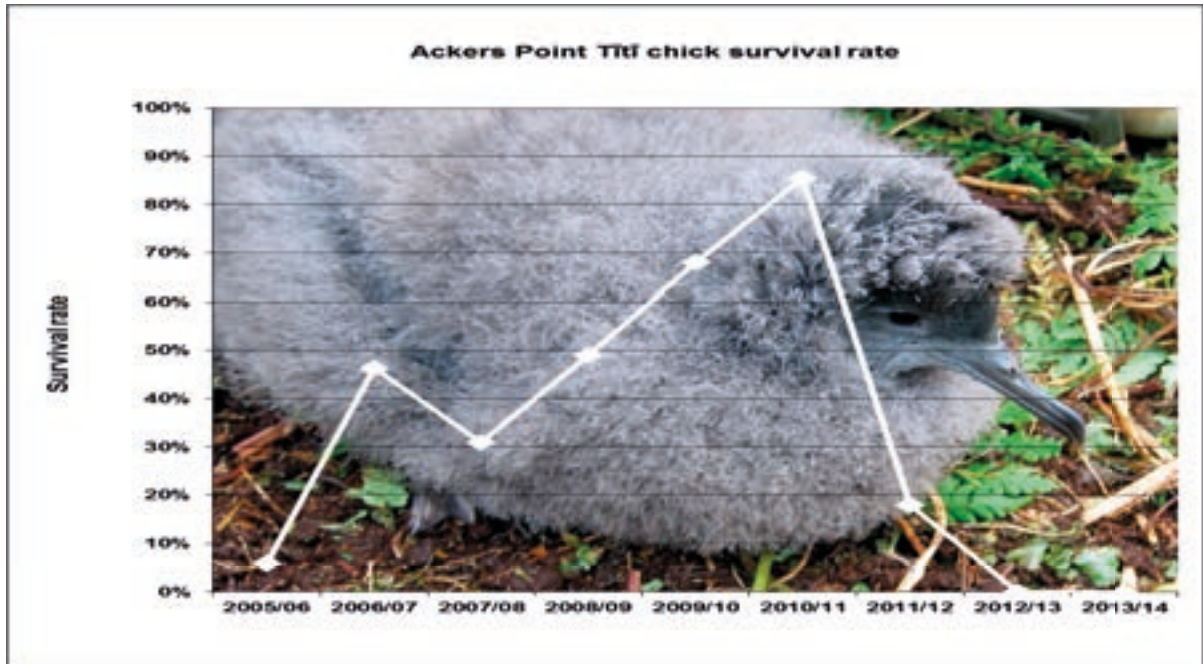
Little Blue Penguins

Environmental consultants SolutionNZ were contracted on behalf of SIRCET to carry out monitoring of the Acker's Point Little Blue Penguin colony. A total of 91 Little Blue Penguins/ Korora were seen and recorded across all ten slow walk counts undertaken by 16 volunteers this year; this is an average of 9.1 birds per night. This is a pleasing result for SIRCET after two years of decline in numbers counted. The purpose of the monitoring measure is to show 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.



Sooty Shearwater/Tītī Monitoring

SolutionNZ were also contracted to carry out monitoring of the Acker's Point Sooty Shearwater/Tītī colony. This is the third disappointing year in a row for the colony, with no chicks being discovered within the four plots in the final stage of monitoring, after an initial 19 nests were discovered at the beginning of the season. The contractors commented positively on the lack of evidence of terrestrial predation on tītī, but also noted that there was evidence of people walking around the burrows and one had collapsed.



Lonneker's Beach Revegetation

The Lonneker's Beach Revegetation Project has continued to have major work done with nearly 300 additional plants being planted over the year. A community planting and weeding morning was held in September 2013 where 196 plants were planted and visiting school groups from Canada and America spent 1 ½ days in March 2014 planting a further 92 plants and removing weeds. Long term volunteer Gael Gordon also spent many hours at the project mainly weeding and replacing dead plants. The plants continue to thrive and look good. There is a mixture of 28 different species including the following rare plant varieties – native spreading iris (*Libertia peregrinas*), punui (*Stilbocarpa lyalli*), native ice plant (*Disphayma austral*) and sand spurge (*Euphorbia glauca*).



Students with visiting Little Brown Kiwi school group get stuck into some serious weeding and planting

Kiwi Advocacy Project

2013-2014 saw SIRCET undertake some exciting new work in relation to Kiwi advocacy. Following the relocation of a number of Kiwi from Ulva to Ackers Point, SIRCET worked with DoC to monitor these birds which provided a fantastic opportunity to educate the community on the behaviour and habitat of such an iconic local species. Monthly updates on their movements and breeding behaviour have proved a firm local favourite in the Stewart Island News.

In May 2014 an educational workshop at Halfmoon Bay School gave students the opportunity to learn more about these birds and the threats to them, and try out some of the telemetry equipment used in monitoring. In conjunction with this, SIRCET ran two competitions for the children, a story competition for the older children and a colouring contest for the younger ones. The results were displayed in the Environment Centre and attracted a good deal of local attention.

Two dog aversion training workshops were held with Sandy King as trainer, and saw a good rate of attendance from both locals and visitors to the island.

Community Native Plant Nursery

This year 244 people contributed over 800 hours at the Nursery, including contributions from local and visiting volunteers, volunteer school groups, DOC and SIRCET staff. The majority of this time was spent on various propagation and growth tasks such as putting down new batches of seeds and cuttings, pricking out seedlings and potting up plants. Weeding the plants and the nursery grounds along with general maintenance tasks accounted for the remainder of the time. It is a concern that volunteer numbers and hours were down again this year, particularly local volunteers and DOC staff.

The nursery stocktake to the end of June 2014, show 2,435 plants of PB2 (planter bag) size or greater, including 251 plants set aside for the Lonnekers Revegetation Project. Another 200 plants in medium size pots are in the shade-house and these will be ready to pot up shortly. There are 73 different native plant species currently in stock. During 2013-14, a further 300 plants were supplied to the Lonnekers Revegetation Project (bringing the total plants supplied for this project to approximately 1,600). Several more plants were donated to the town gardens. This year has seen an increase in the number of plants being sold for a small donation compared to recent years. The money received from these donations is put back into the running of the nursery to cover materials and equipment. In addition to these donations, SIRCET received \$800 from the Honda Tree Fund towards growing plants. DOC continues to support the nursery with annual funding of \$3,000 towards managing the nursery. The Dancing Star Foundation also continues to very generously provide the physical ground and the 'Barn' which enables this fantastic nursery to continue.

Six visiting school groups spent time at the native plant nursery as already reported in the **Environmental Education** section of this report.

Rakiura Environment Centre

The upgraded Environment Centre continues to be an important resource which enables SIRCET to be 'visible' to the local community and the thousands of visitors who come to Stewart Island each year. Glowing Sky Ltd, generously provides this space for the trust to display and inform these visitors of our activities and plans. Information is continually updated and new ideas put forward in this visually stimulating space. In June a special display featured colouring in and story competition entries from local children at the Halfmoon Bay School, which encouraged many family members to come in to the centre.

Website

SIRCET's website has continued to act as a tool to provide environmental education and advocacy, as well as information on the Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project. The website is regularly updated with news and events and newsletters and annual reports are uploaded after they are produced.

Trustees and Employees

The staff and trustees have had some significant changes during the last year and most sadly our major change was that Denise Hayes, our Project Manager resigned from the trust in May 2014.

Mandy Foster was appointed to the role of administrator in June 2013, however unfortunately, due to family commitments, finished with the trust in January. Letitia McRitchie ably took up the reins in the interim until our newly appointed administrator Shona Sangster started the role in April. Denise Hayes continued in her role as Project Manager until mid June when she finished due to family reasons. Ang Steffens was appointed as a trapping assistant to help implement the review recommendations, however most reluctantly Ang resigned due to medical reasons late last year. David Parker took over this role in April and May.

Jane Everest has continued in her role as Accounts Clerk, and we enjoy the Xero accounting package that negates the Foveaux Strait issue of transferring of hard copies of files

It has been a challenging year for our Chair Di Morris who has been living in Invercargill since March. Di will return to Rakiura in March 2015. Alina Atkins continued as Secretary, until October when she stepped down and the role was then shared by all trustees, as Alina focused on her busy business over the summer months. We welcomed Alina back as the Secretary in May. Letitia McRitchie has remained our stalwart Treasurer. Cherie Hemsley has also unfortunately resigned from the trust, yet we warmly welcome Matt Hare and Sharon Ross who have joined the team as trustees. Jim Barrett who is a founding SIRCET Trustee continues to make an important contribution.

Funding

A major new funder has been secured for the next three years with a successful application to the Ministry for the Environments Community Environment Fund. The Community Trust of Southland provided year two of their three year grant. For the first time we applied to the Lottery Communities Fund and were successful with a two year grant for nursery operating expenses. A first time application was also prepared for the JS Watson Fund and this was also successful. This funding is helping to support the development of the deer control plan. DOC has continued to support the nursery, along with grants from the Honda tree fund and Project Crimson. Kiwi for kiwis have provided funding for our annual kiwi/weka/morepork monitoring and for our new Kiwi Advocacy project. This project has also received generous funding from the Mazda Foundation. Environment Southland provide SIRCET with a monthly landcare group support funding, which covers some of our administration costs.

Statement of Financial Performance

Stewart Island / Rakiura Community and Environmental Trust For the 12 months ended 30 June 2014

	Jun-14	Jun-13
Operating Income		
Donations & Grants	92,533	132,713
Possum Traps Income	157	1,482
Trap Sales Income	104	187
Weka Card Income	259	59
Total Operating Income	93,053	134,441
less Direct Expenses		
Bait	1,488	277
Employment Expenses	496	-
Field Tools / Hardware	4,138	3,026
Field Work - Contract	11,450	4,991
Freight	54	233
Motor Vehicle Expenses	1,658	1,659
Sundry Expenses	802	185
Traps	3,019	4,456
Wages	63,393	54,450
Total Direct Expenses	86,498	69,276
Operating Surplus	6,555	65,165
Other Income		
Interest Received	2,488	2,386
Total Other Income	2,488	2,386
less Administration Expenses		
Acc Levies	168	161
Accounting Fees	3,021	3,865
Administration Sundry Expenses	10	156
Advertising Expenses	-	408
Audit Expenses	40	40
Bank Charges	(5)	5
Computer Expenses	894	574
Depreciation	4,580	3,839
Office Expenses	-	407
Stationery/Printing/Postage	976	531
Subscriptions	44	44
Total Administration Expenses	9,730	10,030
Surplus (Loss) for the Year	(687)	57,522

Thanks to all our Supporters

Volunteers

Abby McMillan
Al Check
Alex Proudlock + partner
Alina Atkins
Alistair Faulkner
Anita & Nikki Geeson
Ann Pullen
Annett Eiselte & Phil Dove
Bevan Mudie
Brent Beaven
Cherie Hemsley
Klaartje van Schie
Cobham Intermediate School
Craig Beaven
Dale Jenkins
Dancing Star Foundation
David Streit

Diana Morris
Elyn Corderio
Fiona Brownley
Gael Gordon & sister in law Barbara
Gary Cocker
Greg Northe
Guillaume
Hilli Barrett
Jack Dobbins
Jacob Joachim
Jake Osbourne

Jay Manning
Jenna Nelson
Jerome & Marie
Jim Barrett
John Foley
John Poole
Karen Bowman
Karen Lewis
Lee Wadds
Leeym Thompson
Letitia McRitchie
Li & Tina
Limehills School
Little Brown Kiwi (school groups from Canada & America)
Lynn McPherson
Halfmoon Bay School STARFISH - Sophie, Jack, Liam, Harry, Timu, Billy, Marley, Emily Joy (teacher)

Margaret Hopkins
Mary Chittenden and boys
Matt Hare
Matt Jones
Momit Gianghandani
Michael Morris
Nah & Andrea
Nick
Otago Girls High School
Peter Tait
Pete Bayne
Phil Dove
Pip Green
Queenstown Primary School
Rachael Boaden
Ron Matecki
Sacred Heart School
Sharon Ross
Shay van der Hurk
Simon and Betty Taylor
Stacey Wilford
Steve Black
Trish
Viviane
Wendy Bailey



Major Donors, Supporters and Business Sponsors



Beyond

