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**Stewart Island Tokoeka Advocacy, Protection and Monitoring**

**PROJECT OUTLINE**

**Updated April 2018**

**Background**

SIRCET is a strongly committed community group with a number of projects to protect and enhance the biodiversity of a remnant patch of coastal forest between Golden Bay and Ackers Point, Stewart Island, by managing the threats posed by possums, rats, cats and weeds.

SIRCET controls and monitors these pests, monitors native species (including kiwi) and re-vegetates the 210 hectare area. Kiwi are naturally occurring within our Project area and an additional eleven adults were translocated in 2013. Presently we have 20 cat traps in the area. As they are live capture traps they require daily checks during months when kiwi, titi and little blue penguins are especially at risk.

A large part of our work is communication; educating the community about threats to our ecosystems and increasing their local conservation knowledge and skills. This includes encouraging volunteers, publishing conservation stories, holding community events and hosting Kiwi Avoidance Training days for local and bach owner's dogs.

**Objectives**

* To provide enhanced protection for juvenile kiwi by trapping feral cats
* To undertake call count monitoring within and outside the Project area
* To provide two Kiwi Avoidance Training workshops per year
* To engage the community and visitors in Kiwi Conservation

**Project Description**

**Transmittered Kiwi**

Eleven kiwi were translocated into the Project area in February 2013; supplementing an existing population. SIRCET monitored their movements over the following three months and in May 2013 seven received new transmitters. The kiwi were tracked fortnightly between that time and the end of 2015. By March 2014 four birds still had functioning transmitters and were still within the Project area. One pair are known to have produced a chick in December 2014. Four adults from three pairs received new transmitters in May 2014 and one of these pairs produced a chick in December 2015. Transmitters were removed in December 2015.

The kiwi were monitored for advocacy purposes. We do not have the resources to undertake scientific study of the birds ecology and threats, so were limiting the aims to advocacy only. We used the results of the monitoring to further engage and inspire the local community and visitors about the kiwi that we have living in our backyard. This will lead to increased community support and ownership for their conservation.

**Cat control**

Eleven new cat traps were purchased in the 2013/14 year and have been distributed throughout the Project area, taking our cat trap network to twenty traps. These are opened as set times in the year to target breeding of kiwi, titi and little blue penguins. Traps are checked daily.

**Call Count Monitoring**

Kiwi call count monitoring was undertaken between 2011 and 2015, at which point five yearly monitoring was intended. The counts were conducted at eight sites, four within the Project area (where pest trapping is taking place) and four ‘control’ sites outside of the Project area. The intention was not only to understand and record gross changes in numbers over time, but also to provide volunteer opportunities for locals and visitors to Stewart Island. Kiwi calls increased in both the Project area and control area during the monitoring period. The Trust intends to undertake the next monitor in 2019.

**Kiwi Avoidance Training workshops**

Regular twice yearly Kiwi Avoidance Training workshops are held with Sandy King (Paws 4 Conservation) as trainer, increasing our coverage with both locals and dog-owning visitors to the island. SIRCET continues to use the ‘e-kiwi’. Approximately thirty dogs attend each workshop; with an estimate of sixty dogs trained each year.

**To engage the community and visitors in Kiwi Conservation**

The results of the monthly monitoring and updates on breeding status were written in articles in the monthly Stewart Island News, and displayed in our Rakiura Environment Centre. We were able to film a pet cat (identified by its collar) investigating the burrow where our kiwi chick hatched (and subsequently disappeared). This has been shared with the local community to help raise awareness of the impact pets have on kiwi. Each year SIRCET hosts a Great Kiwi Morning Tea by way of a bake stall, with the funds going towards SIRCET's kiwi protection work.

**Schedule**

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| Protection | Cat trapping | November 2018 - June 2019 |
| Kiwi Avoidance Training days | October 2018 and April 2019 |
| Monitoring | Kiwi Call Count monitoring | Between May - July 2019 |
| Advocacy | Articles in Stewart Island News | April, Oct/Nov and February |
| Website, Facebook, community notice board and Rakiura Environment Centre updates | Five per year |
| Educational visits to the school | Once per year |
| Volunteer opportunities | Throughout the year |
| Great Kiwi Morning Tea | October 2018 |
| Reporting | Interim Reporting | April 2019 |
| Final Reporting | July 2019 |

**Volunteer Opportunities**

Volunteers are enlisted to help check cat traps. For those living in the project area we have offered them a cat trap that can be permanently set at their house. Other volunteers check the traps for some of the time that they are open. Volunteers will also undertake call count monitoring.

The volunteers will be able to share their experiences with other members of the community and this will lead to greater knowledge of the kiwi and their threats.