

Te Korowai o Mihiwaka
Orokonui Ecosanctuary - Otago Natural History Trust
Report by Barbara Moerhuis

Rapid progress has been made at Orokonui over the last 12 months, due to the hard work put in by staff, volunteers, and trust members.

Diane Campbell-Hunt

Diane is sorely missed by staff at the Ecosanctuary, trustees and volunteers. Condolences have been pouring in for Diane including many donations. The Trust will discuss the form of her memorial at the Ecosanctuary. Diane had delegated most of her work several months ago to Chris Baillie, General Manager, and volunteers to spend more time with her family and on her PhD. Her remaining areas were secretarial role for the Trust, speaking to community groups and the newsletter.

Fauna

The Kaka were released on 1st November 2008, few people were present in order to minimize stress on the birds. Donations have been received in last few months for transmitters.

The Lizard Hospital has brought in 5 common skinks. All had been injured, some fatally, by cats.

The Geckos will come from a site on the peninsula where habitat is being destroyed.

A translocation application for Tuatara has been submitted to DOC. The process is slow at present due to Ngati Koata involvement in treaty negotiations.

New proposals are being considered for the Parakeet, the Saddleback, Pet Kakapo and the Seabirds.

Eradication and monitoring

Predator contracting has been employed to eradicate the remaining hares. There are no further signs of possum, rats, stoats, ferrets or weasels. Mice are again at undetectable levels. They are hard to detect given their very small territories.

Restoration

Rare plant work and the Pa Harakeke are coming along really well with excellent work by David Mules and extensive volunteer input. A Community Conservation Fund has been initiated for community groups undertaking restoration on public land, the fund is being administered by DOC. They will probably give grants of \$60,000 or less. Over 3,000 plants have been put into the ground by volunteers this autumn.

Pa Harakeke

This project is a partnership between Kati Huirapa ki Puketeraki and Orokonui Ecosanctuary, being carried out with the assistance of DOC conservation corps, Te Whanau Arohanui, weavers and other supportive volunteers from the wider Dunedin community. The garden will feature over 100 different southern varieties of flax and will be a collection of cultural significance for Kai Tahu and will ultimately be available for members of the community for weaving and other purposes. This project is being directed by the Runaka who have drawn up a graceful double koru pathway around which the harakeke is being planted.

Rimu Track

Staff and volunteers are working in the return of the Rimu Track. Forest and Bird will fund this. Naylor Love has now completed construction on this except for several patches of boardwalk. Rotary continues to upgrade the Valley track with help from community service. The platform is in the midst of the old forest.

Guide Training and Tours

Guide training day has been held with risk scenario training.

David Ellison, Upoko, attended the guide training day meeting with Annie, and Barbara Moerhuis. David is keen to continue helping the Ecosanctuary and gave large amounts of printed material on loan from which staff can take stories for the guides to tell.

No great uptake on tours yet. It was agreed to keep the charges set until the end of the year and to review the charge early January 2009. The tours commenced October 2008, minimum of 8 people per guide, 1 hour per tour, \$20 per adult, \$10 per child, 50% discount for Otago Natural History Trust members.

Education

Davina and Sue are making good progress with the development of the education programme and associated resources. Stakeholder group meetings are held bi monthly.

Marketing

Fencepost inserts in the ODT and Star appear regularly in order to sell the remaining posts.

Interpretative Displays

A contract has been signed with Creative Advertising (Tony Crick) for the interpretative displays. The storyline for the displays has been finalized.

Visitor Centre

It is hoped that on-site construction work can begin on the Visitor Centre shortly. There are several ongoing issues such as road access options and costings which are to be finalized.

Native Bird Cards

Proceeds from the sale of these cards made by Geraldine artist Peter Caley contribute to the Ecosanctuary forest restoration programme.

Fence

2 slips from the last heavy rain at Orokonui cost \$2,700 to repair.

Waitati access

A public meeting was held at Waitati to outline the Trust's conditions for free entry to the sanctuary via the Waitati gate.

Bequests

The Trust has recently produced a bequests pamphlet for bequests to be made in a will to the Ecosanctuary as a way of leaving a legacy for the future, both for our children and for our unique flora and fauna. Bequests are also able to be acknowledged in some way at the Ecosanctuary by way of a fence post plaque.