

Kārearea

Protecting a southern land



Image: Craig McKenzie

June–July 2018

South Otago Forest & Bird

2018 AGM



The Chairman's report at South Otago Forest & Bird's AGM was a lengthy affair. But then there was a lot to report on: pest and weed control, involvement with yellow-eyed penguin conservation, growing plants, organising the Catlins Summer Programme, working with local schools, monitoring bird populations, supporting the Catlins Bat Project, running a volunteer week at the Lenz Reserve, sharing conservation ideas at branch stalls, planning our upcoming 40th birthday celebrations, and more besides.

A new branch activity – one that doesn't require participants to crawl through the undergrowth spotting penguins, go out on frosty mornings to check predator traps, or get large amounts of soil embedded under their fingernails – can be comfortably carried out indoors. Sung to the tune of *Frère Jacques*, the new branch action song received its first public performance at the AGM.

Our Wonderful World

Hector's dolphins, Hector's dolphins
Whales too, whales too
Yellow-eyed penguins, yellow-eyed penguins
Albatross, albatross

Harakeke, harakeke
Divaricating shrubs, divaricating shrubs
Kahikatea, kahikatea
Totara, totara



Richard Schofield

In the company of fantails

Working with schools



This year two teachers from The Catlins Area School, Emma Longmore and Lisa Hooker, have formed a small Envirogroup made up of primary age students. The group was keen to learn about how to track and trap predators on the school grounds.

Over a number of lunchtimes Envirogroup students worked with South Otago Forest & Bird member Jim Young to construct inked tracking tunnels, collect and analyse the footprints and decide which type of trap they would need to reduce numbers of predators on site.

Students learned about variables and ran two trials with the tunnels to determine if changing the bait would alter the results. The results showed that there was a large population of hungry hedgehogs as well as a few rats.

Students then worked with Jim to learn about how to set traps. We will continue to monitor predator numbers on site throughout the school year.

The group also have a number of other community projects lined up for later this year including developing a "Borrow a Bag" system with the local Owaka Four Square Supermarket. *Emma Longmore*



Jim and Roy had lots of piwakawaka company when servicing the traps at Otanomomo Scientific Reserve in May. This bird actually stopped to look at the process of getting a dead rat out of a trap (it didn't think it was much fun). One of 15 rats (rats in 25% of traps) caught, along with a ferret. *Roy Johnstone*



Year 9 and Year 13 South Otago High School students have been doing some practical sustainability education at Otanomomo. They weren't all that keen on dead rats either, but coped well with the challenge.

Predators trapped by South Otago Forest & Bird for the 12 months to April 2018

NB A number of mice were also killed, but they are not specifically targeted with the traps that we use.

About 12 people-hours a week are spent on servicing the traps.

| LOCATION | Feral Cat | Ferret | Hedgehog | Rabbit | Possum | Rat | Stoat | Weasel | TOTAL KILLS | NO. OF TRAPS |
|--------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|-----------|----------|-------------|--------------|
| Otanomomo | 7 | 7 | 8 | 0 | 4 | 146 | 5 | 1 | 179 | 68 |
| Pounawea | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 43 | 3 | 0 | 51 | 34 |
| Owaka Heads | 3 | 1 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 27 | 26 |
| Hinahina | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 3 | 0 | 17 | 10 |
| Penguin Bay | 1 | 1 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 21 | 12 | 0 | 47 | 42 |
| Cosgrove | 5 | 0 | 32 | 3 | 0 | 12 | 12 | 1 | 53 | 63 |
| Long Point | 7 | 0 | 7 | 8 | 1 | 27 | 15 | 2 | 67 | 80 |
| Tautuku | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 71 | 30 | 0 | 106 | 145 |
| TOTAL | 23 | 9 | 78 | 15 | 5 | 336 | 83 | 3 | 530 | 468 |

Myrtle rust and its potential impact on southern New Zealand

An update from Brian Rance

Myrrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) is a fungal disease that impacts plant species of the Myrtaceae family. It's thought to have come to New Zealand through westerly winds from Australia. The initial New Zealand discovery was from Raoul Island to the north of New Zealand in March 2017. In May 2017 myrtle rust was discovered in Kerikeri (Northland), the first site on mainland New Zealand. It is now known from Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Taranaki, Manawatu, Wellington and Tasman districts. To date (May 2018) there have been approximately 693 confirmed sites of myrtle rust infections detected in New Zealand.

New Zealand has 29 native taxonomic groups in the Myrtaceae family which have been formally described, with an additional eight kinds of manuka which are not yet formally described. These native myrtle species include iconic tree rata species, manuka and kanuka. In Southland and Otago there are eight native myrtle species that are naturally occurring: southern rata (*Metrosideros umbellata*), rata vines (*M. diffusa*, *M. perforata* and *M. fulgens*), manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*), kanuka (*Kunzea robusta* and *K. serotina*), rohutu (*Neomyrtus pedunculata*) and rohutu (*Lophomyrtus obcordata*).

The national response to date has been led by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) with support from DOC, local/regional authorities, iwi and others. All infestations to date have had infested plants removed and destroyed followed by delimitation surveys to determine their extent. The response by DOC includes:

- Undertaking surveillance in natural habitat in high risk parts of New Zealand,
- Collection of all native myrtle species throughout New Zealand,
- Control of the infestation on sites on Public Conservation Land as they are discovered,
- Reviewing the threat status of native myrtle species – all are soon to become listed as threatened species reflecting the predicted impact upon each species.
- Developing response plans.

Myrtle rust requires warm conditions to reproduce (10 consecutive days at 15 or more degrees). Therefore southern New Zealand is thought likely to be beyond its ecological preference, however the extent of its impacts remains to be determined. Myrtle rust can be spread by a number of vectors including wind, animals/birds and by people. It is anticipated to be difficult to eradicate. The ability to control or contain myrtle rust is dependent upon early detection of new infestations.

Therefore if anyone suspects that they may have found a new infestation of myrtle rust (or any other potentially new disease or weed) should notify MPI immediately.

I think that myrtle rust will get to Southland and Otago. Hopefully it will be less damaging than further north, but we still need to be prepared.

The collection activity in Southland and Otago involves collection of each native myrtle species from the following areas: Coastal Otago (Catlins through to North Otago), Central Otago, Fiordland, Southland, Stewart Island and Auckland Island. The seed is processed and stored for long term storage in the National Seed Bank at Palmerston North. This seed will be available for future restoration planting if required. ■



Looks like Brian may need to practice his climbing skills. These intrepid DOC rangers are collecting seed from carmine rata, a Northland vine.

Jenny Campbell feels privileged to have been able to attend Bill McKibben's Wellington presentation during his recent tour:

Fossil Free Acceleration

Despite looking quite tired – not surprising, perhaps – Bill conversed with his audience of about 500 in a calm and conversational manner as he outlined how the 350.org movement began over 10 years ago. He and seven undergraduate students joined forces and each student took a continent to start the movement. The movement exploded, and when there were 370 rallies around the world at the time of the launch, Bill realised that people out there cared and could make a difference. He reminded the audience of several significant events, including Adani coal mine and Standing Rock, that involve indigenous people. BUT CO₂ emissions are still increasing.

Bill's three MUSTs are:

1. Fast and Just Transition to 100% renewables
2. No new fossil fuel projects
3. Not a penny more for dirty energy

To achieve these goals he believes we need to go outside our comfort zone!

One person who continues to do just that is our own Coal Action Network Aotearoa (CANA) Organise group member, Rosemary Penwarden, who had the privilege of sharing the stage with Bill because of her commitment to various projects and movements in Aotearoa related to stopping climate change.

In her unassuming way, and with a gentle chuckle and alluring smile, she told us about the various actions in which she has been involved as an instigator, activist and promoter, that have brought dramatic changes, particularly in Dunedin.



Not only did Bill inspire people with his international stories of action but Rosemary put an Aotearoa perspective on just how much local people can do to make a difference right in their own backyards. She is a 'star' on the home front.

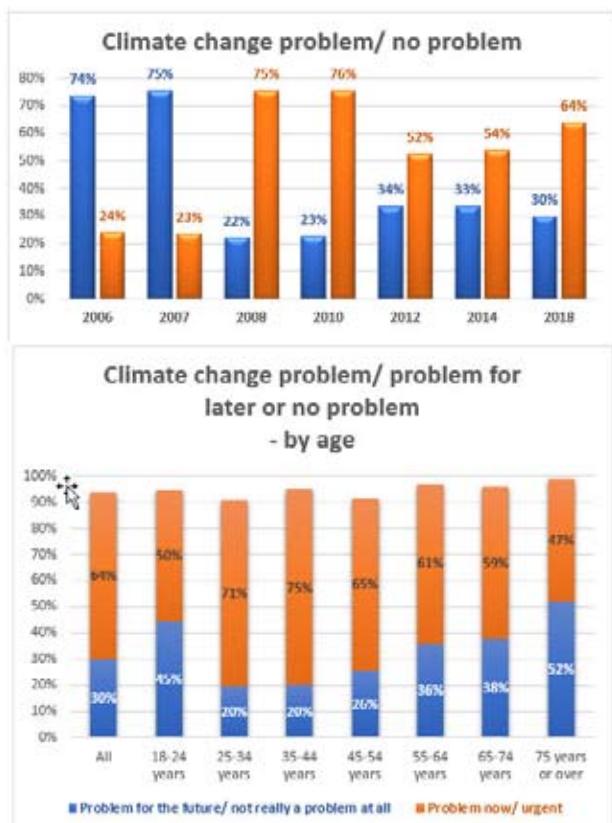
Rosemary has made her personal commitment to stopping climate change by various actions but her main three are 1. Not flying 2. Living frugally and building an electric car 3. Working with 350.org.

In her own inimitable style she showed slides and described some of the effective actions she has been involved in more recently. These included a Shell AGM featuring our 'elephant in the room', in which the group shut the meeting down. This made the Dunedin Mayor very grumpy!

'Block the Offer' was another protest opportunity event held across Southland and Otago, which Rosemary helped organise. This campaign spread all around NZ with local groups picking up the protest and submitting against the Block Offers.

After lobbying from 350.org, the Dunedin City Council became the first one in NZ to divest from fossil fuels. Actions protesting about the ANZ bank funding the NZ Petroleum summit began in the north and took place the length of the country, with the protest in Dunedin being the last one. Unfortunately the Dunedin police were very hostile to the activists, which was unpleasant. Three months later Otago University signed the fossil free declaration.

Rosemary believes that every letter, every banner and every action makes a difference – even Valentine cards to the Mayor! Her dream is that 'us oldies can put five years into making a difference. The consequences of our small actions and their ripple effects, we don't often know.' ■



<https://horizonpoll.co.nz/page/504/climate-con>

From around the country

Total of 12 dead sperm whales found on South Taranaki Beach

The first group, of eight whales, washed up overnight near the Kaupokonui river mouth. Locals described the event as 'unprecedented'. The whales were all dead when discovered, so it's possible the deaths occurred out to sea.



DOC considered it unlikely that seismic surveying in Taranaki had contributed to the deaths. www.stuff.co.nz/national/104249829/unprecedented-whale-strandings-reaches-11-

Bernard Spragg

End of logging plan a victory for nature

Old growth West Coast rainforest has been saved after local government backed down from plans to open it up to logging. When the Government ended native forest logging on crown land eighteen years ago, West Coast council authorities received a \$120 million development package to help the region move away from extractive industries. Forest & Bird Chief Conservation Adviser, Kevin Hackwell: "This is a battle that most people thought was over with the close of

the 20th century, and I hope this ill-conceived plan is now laid to rest ... We have so little old growth forest left in New Zealand and any logging strips the ecosystem of the resources it needs to sustain itself." <http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/what-we-do/publications/media-release/end-logging-plan-victory-nature>



Jim Young

It's official! For the first time in more than 150 years, a New Zealand sea lion/rāpoka breeding colony has established on mainland New Zealand, at Stewart Island/Rakiura. The annual pup count has revealed 55 new-born pups this season, and now that the numbers have been consistent for several years, it can be declared a breeding colony. Otago coast pup numbers are also up this season – estimate of 15 – but there's a way to go before Otago can be considered a breeding colony. (Pic shows a crèche on the Peninsula.)

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2018/first-new-nz-sea-lion-breeding-colony-in-more-than-150-years/>



A new home for jewelled geckos

In March, Central Otago Ecological Trust volunteers, working with Wildlands herpetologist Carey Knox, began the DOC-approved translocation of 60 jewelled geckos from the Lammermoor Range to the Mokomoko Dryland Sanctuary. This will reintroduce the animals to their historic range in Central Otago. They will be monitored until winter when they will go into hibernation. No problems with identifying individuals – their markings are as unique as as fingerprints. <https://www.odt.co.nz/regions/central-otago/release-jewelled-geckos-momentous-occasion>



Carey Knox

Hoiho killed by dog at Long Point Reserve, Catlins

At a time when every yellow-eyed penguin counts if the mainland population is to survive, it's distressing to learn that there have been two totally preventable deaths. Evidence from dog tracks at the scene was backed up by necropsy findings that showed bite marks, and by the detection of dog DNA. Signs at the Reserve clearly indicate that dogs are not allowed. Both DOC and the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust (which owns the Reserve) are calling on owners to keep their animals under control. <https://www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz/news/media-release-hoiho-killed-dog-long-point-reserve-catlins/>



Donald Trump & Climate Change



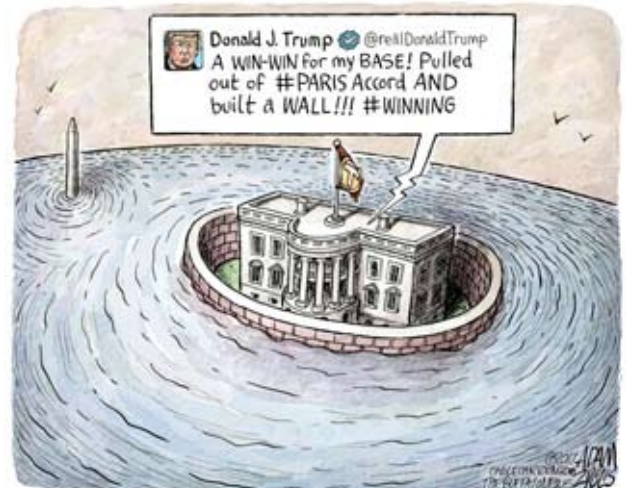
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Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust

www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz

New Zealand Sea Lion Trust www.sealiontrust.org.nz

Kārearea: protecting a southern land

Contributions welcome. Copy for Aug is due on 31 July.

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Steve Stack Minneapolis Star Tribune



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