

Issue 7, June 2018

THANK YOU INDEPENDENT LINE SERVICES

Independent Line Services has been a Gold Sponsor of the Wildside Project for seven years and provides vital funding for our predator control operations, assisting with bait purchase and trapper funding.

Their ongoing and generous support is invaluable as funding sources are variable and can take many hours of application and report writing. This is not so with ILS!

ILS is also the Wildside's power line fault provider who braves wild weather to get our kettles back on!



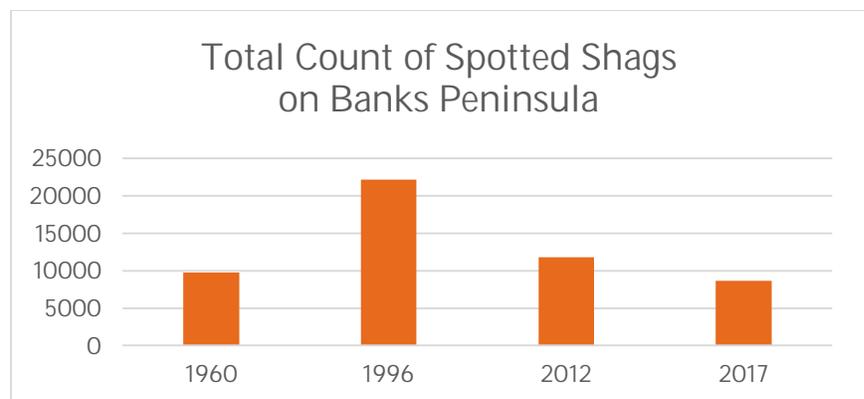
Fairy prion nesting on a near shore island off the Wildside. These delicate little sea birds are vulnerable to rats and can't breed successfully in their presence.

SEA BIRD COUNT

In November I joined CCC and DOC rangers for a day to undertake a seabird survey of Banks Peninsula coasts, primarily to count spotted shags. Banks Peninsula supports 50-70% of the global population of this species, with some of the largest feeding congregations of cormorants anywhere in the World, so the population here is pretty important and largely undervalued.

Spotted shag breeding colonies wax and wane in size and seem to move location fairly regularly. The reasons for this remain unknown, but the 2010-2012 earthquake sequence caused cliff collapse which caused a redistribution of breeding colonies. No one is sure why the 1996 count was more than double other counts, or if we are seeing a downward trend or simply natural fluctuations. Repeating the survey again soon will give a better understanding.

Seabird surveys are not nearly as glamorous as they sound; spending several days on a moving boat looking through binoculars at high cliff ledges is only for the strongest of stomachs! I stuck to looking for yellow-eyed penguin landing sites and landed on one of our predator free islands where I was overwhelmed by the seabird life, including fairy prions that are so vulnerable to rats they can only breed successfully where no rats are present.



COMMUNITY INITIATED PROGRAM – POSSUMS

The Banks Peninsula Community Initiated Program to control possums has again targeted funding towards a core area of 2500ha of private land on the Wildside, and carried out the operation reaching the target of 2% residual trap catch (2 possums caught in 100 traps) in late 2017.



The beautiful spotted shag.



The Wildside collaboration at work, BPCT, CCC, DOC, landowners and volunteers counting titi.



2018 EnviroSchools leaders camp at Koukourarata Port Levy, teaching the next generation about protection yellow-eyed penguins on shore and at sea.



Two year old Banks born hoiho (left)

This core area is adjacent to, but does not include, Misty Peaks and Hinewai Reserve that have carried out their own long term operations. This means close to 5000ha of the Wildside is down to very low possum numbers for the benefit of our indigenous biodiversity.

The results for biodiversity improvement are apparent, especially where the Wildside trapping operations are also suppressing possums between CIP rounds, with thick fresh growth and an abundance of tender tasty buds.

The general CIP possum control for the wider Wildside area will be getting underway in early June. To operate on private land the contractors need signed permission from the landowners. Let me know if you haven't had contact and I can connect you to the operations manager.

CORE AREA

Goal Four of BPCT's ambitious 2050 Ecological Vision for Banks Peninsula is: *Four core indigenous forest areas of more than 1000 ha each have been protected.* Hinewai Reserve and the surrounding linkages of protected habitat on the Wildside has been recognised as the first of these four areas, with protected public and private reserves on the Wildside already connecting at least 2500ha.

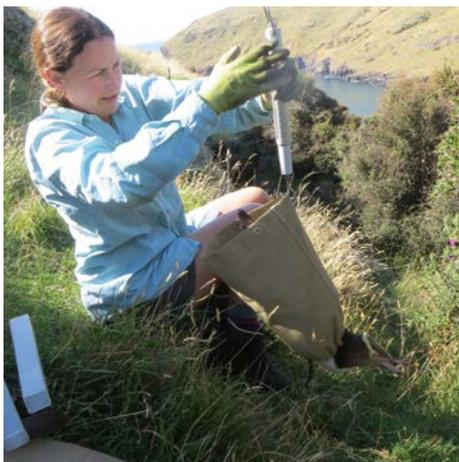
A meeting between landowners will be hosted by BPCT on 26 July to discuss this core area. We will look at how to manage across boundaries for greater benefit to biodiversity, including a new focus on how to control weeds as a joint effort. A weed plan would draw in expertise from CCC, DOC and ECan rangers and aim to leverage greater funding to work towards eradication of some weeds that are already found in lower numbers here than in other parts of Canterbury.

MISTY PEAKS

A reserve management plan is currently being formed by CCC. There will be a draft plan released for public consultation in October 2018 with hearings in early 2019. It is hoped that the plan will align with the wider Wildside collaboration and community goals.

TAKAPUNEKE

Onuku Runanga and the Christchurch City Council have been through a submissions process and hearings on the Takapuneke Draft Management Plan. Of national historic importance, Takapuneke was a key industrial centre for flax and trade between Maori and early European and is the site of the Te Rauparaha massacre aided and abetted by Captain Stuart of the Brig Elizabeth. This event directly contributed to the formation of the Treaty of Waitangi. Takapuneke is now recognised as a wahi tapu site but was used as Akaroa's sewerage plant and rubbish dump for many decades. With plans for walking tracks, interpretation signs and native plantings, it is wonderful to see the site being recognised and cared for to allow the people and place to heal.



Weighing yellow-eyed penguins to assess general health.



2017 Hinewai 30 year celebration, Hugh Wilson addressing the crowd and Maurice White founder, Andrew Youngson Trustee and worker, Hugh Wilson legend.

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HINEWAI CELEBRATION

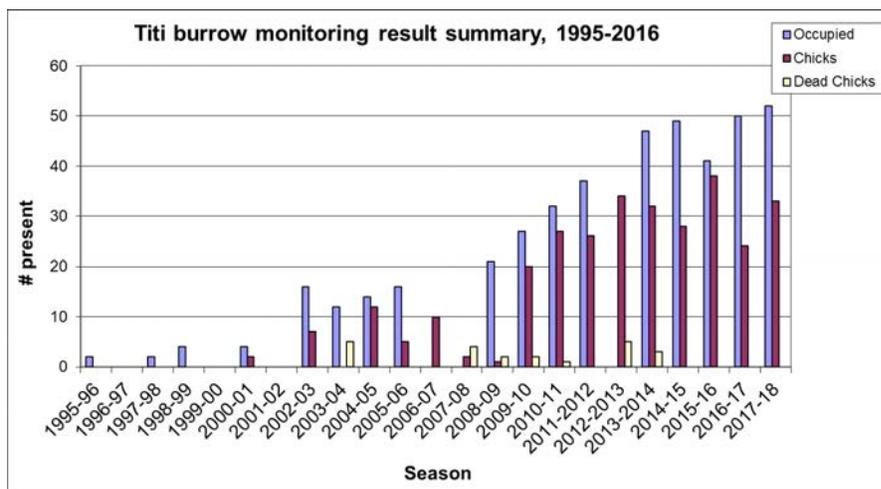
A marvelous day was held at Hinewai in November to celebrate 30 years for the reserve. It was neat to see Maurice White and Hugh Wilson celebrating such a fine achievement and legacy,. "If you are looking for a monument, look around you." Christopher Wren.

YELLOW EYED PENGUINS

2017/18 was a rough season for yellow-eyed penguins. From five nests, three failed early on. Most likely this was due to the high sea temperatures that altered both the temperature on land and the availability of food sources. Three chicks hatched with only one chick surviving to fledge after needing intensive rehabilitation from contracting avian malaria. One highlight was that a two-year-old Banks Peninsula born penguin was found going in to his second moult. This is the first recorded survival into adulthood since we started to microchipping all fledglings in 2013.

2018 TITI COUNT

Thirty-three chicks were counted in their pre fledge stage at Stony Bay in April. The predator fence is working its magic with an abundance of life; spotted skinks, cave weta and spiders, and endangered Cook's scurvy grass self-seeding. We believe that the numbers of breeding titi are higher than the 33 counted as there were a lot of active burrows with chicks too deep into the hillside to reach for counting and a few may have already fledged.



ENVIROSCHOOLS

A leader's camp was held for Canterbury Enviro Schools at Koukourarata/Port Levy in February. Activities included waka ama and freshwater monitoring. I ran an activity where the children were able to become a yellow-eyed penguin for an hour. They experienced nesting and going out to sea while facing all the myriad of hazards that our penguins face today; natural predators, habitat clearance and heat stress, noise, fishing, reduction in food supplies, pollution and plastic, introduced predators, humans and even dogs! To prevent this being too overwhelming we focused on how small changes and choices can positively impact the world around you to protect wild species and wild places. Children understand quickly that their grandchildren may never see a yellow-eyed penguin unless we change our habits.

TOXIPLASMOSIS – FERAL CATS

Toxoplasma is a very costly disease in the New Zealand sheep industry, causing a high abortion rate in pregnant ewes. Toxoplasmosis is primarily a parasite of cats, with rodents, sheep and even people becoming infected. At Cape to City, a large scale predator control operation in the Hawkes Bay, research is being conducted to test if trapping feral cats will reduce the infection rates of sheep. In their preliminary results they have up to 70 per cent of sheep infected with toxoplasmosis. Sheep become infected from oocysts from cat faeces, which are extremely tolerant and can survive in the environment for at least one year. We know feral cats have large territories and roam extensively defecating on pasture, so even low numbers of cats can infect vast areas for a long period of time. It is reported that toxoplasma occurs on 100% of sheep farms, with human infection very common. Even after many years of effort on the Wildside, feral cats remain a problem. John Stuart caught eight in Stony Bay in Autumn and eleven in Le Bons Bay over the summer.

BIOSECURITY ARTICLE MPI

The Wildside was featured in the [Ministry of Primary Industries Newsletter](#) in March 2018, with an article on Hugh Wilson 'the visionary next door' on page 8&9 and the Wildside Biosecurity Award on page 12.

MANY THANKS TO OUR WONDERFUL PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

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