

# BIRD CALL

January 2016 Issue 24



oroKonui  
ecosanctuary

## Chris's Column

I'm delighted to report a fantastic January with much good news; the absence of stoat scent, the young takahe putting on good weight and being seen by visitors, a new breeding pair of takahe arriving, the release of green skinks with the aim of establishing a population here and the release of the second cohort of young kiwi to grow to adulthood here.

We've been busy with visitors over this time bringing total numbers in 2015 to nearly 10,000 into the Ecosanctuary in addition to nearly 7,000 students. An estimated additional 10,000 visited the Visitor Centre only. We enjoyed welcoming the University's Hands on Otago students here in January for science and tourism projects and it was fun to see all the vintage cars in our car park when their owners dropped in for morning tea recently.

Watch out for the March issue of North and South magazine as Orokonui will be featured in it. From mid February we're also being featured in a Lotteries advertisement as an example of the great community projects that Lotto tickets support. We're now listed on the Significant Gardens register having achieved 5 star rating at the end of last year - features include our rare plants garden, our pa harakeke/flax grove, the old podocarp forest, New Zealand's tallest tree and our visitor facilities.

*Kind Regards, Chris - General Manager*



*Head ranger, Kelly Gough, and director and volunteer, Al Robinson, bring in the young kiwi.*

## Elton's Army

It's been a busy start to the year. Last week a four day hunt by a qualified dog didn't find any stoat sign and we're now very confident to say that we are currently stoat free.

During the first week of January Carey Knox and our team released 30 Green Skink into a soft release pen.

The second intake of 10 kiwi chicks arrived on Thursday 21 January.

On 26 January we welcomed the arrival of a breeding pair of takahe. This pair will hopefully settle down in the valley floor area and in years to come we will be able to give some of their fertile eggs to our display pair to maximize the production of chicks in our takahe 'farm'.



*Green Skink champion, Carey Knox, and his daughters.*

# Volunteers' Voices

December saw many regular volunteers preparing the site for the arrival of Green Skinks. The habitat manipulation involved hours of weed removal and the careful positioning of rocks that we hope the skinks will use to sunbathe on. All the hard work was worth it on January 7th when we got to see the skinks released.

Other thanks goes out to all the volunteers who have been helping with general weed control around the Sanctuary – particularly those who were tackling weeds in the furthest reaches of our NE block as they suffered through some pretty difficult terrain.

Thanks to those who assisted marketing manager, Kerry Buchan, and head educator, Tahu Mackenzie, with the preparation of our Cooke Howlison Hilux for the Santa parade. The tuatara man was very popular with children.



Volunteers, Iain Crawford-Reid (left) and Fred Haworth, working on Green Skink habitat.

## Forest of Knowledge

2015 was a very successful year for our Education Programme with more than 7,000 students participating!

We have started 2016 as we mean to go on, with the innovative Lab in a Box stationed with us at Orokonui over the summer months. The lab enables us to extend all our current programmes and develop new ones including “Forest Forensics” which focusses on DNA analysis.

Our wharekura/learning centre is also blossoming with the kind donation of 8 iMac desktop computers, thanks to Nathan Parker.

We have also been fortunate enough to work with Julia Albrecht from the University of Otago's Tourism Department on a new Hands on Otago programme for senior secondary students.

I am looking forward to another year of exciting new developments, collaborations and triumphs, bring it on 2016!



Tahu with the Hands on Otago students.

## A big thanks to

- MTF for supporting us for another 5 years
- Chris and Ian James for their contribution to the purchase of new traps
- The E G Johnstone Trust for supporting our green skink translocation expenses

## Wishlist

- \$2000 for purchase of new traps for our external trapping line.
- A qualified volunteer electrician who could help a few hours a month.
- A qualified volunteer builder who could help a few hours a month.



Open Daily 9.30am-4.30pm for Guided Tours and Self Guided Walks  
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