



Mokomoko Newsletter

Number 12
22nd November 2013

Hello everyone

The Central Otago Ecological Trust has reached a major milestone by raising \$450,000 for the next phase of the project. We plan to build a 1.6 km pest-proof fence to protect 14 ha of dryland habitat from introduced pests in the Aldinga Conservation Area. We will re-establish populations of Grand and Otago skinks, and ultimately other endangered lizard species. The skinks will be sourced from the progeny of wild populations in the western part of their range where they are currently unprotected from predators. These skinks are genetically distinct from those in the east where they are protected by the Department of Conservation. The Trust will therefore be making a substantial contribution to the conservation of western forms of Grand and Otago skinks.

Our major funders are:

Central Lakes Trust	\$150,000
Lotteries Grants Board	\$110,000
Landcare Research	\$50,000
Otago Community Trust	\$40,000
Jean Malpas Estate	\$40,000
Department of Conservation	\$30,000
Transpower NZ	\$30,000

Also, Canon has kindly donated four cameras and zoom lenses to allow teams of people to simultaneously monitor skinks inside the fence. Skink monitoring will be more challenging from now on as animals will be dispersed over 14 ha. We will also need volunteers to monitor the condition of the fence on a regular basis, and to check traps and tracking tunnels to ensure the area remains free of pests.

We are very grateful to these organisations, as we are to other groups and individuals who have helped us financially in the past, and to our volunteers who donate so much of their time to conservation.

Expected timelines

Consents	Mar 2014
Fence construction	June 2014
Pest eradication	Aug 2014
First skink translocation	Dec 2015

We will monitor the fence for 18 months to ensure the area is pest-free before starting the lizard re-introduction programme in late 2015.

The existing 0.3-ha fence will remain a separate entity to use for various experimental releases. It has served us well to this point by providing useful information on how to successfully translocate skinks. This information has been a critical part of our recent funding success.

National Trustpower Community Awards, 22 -24, March 2013

Report by COET trustee, Tom Lamb

It is difficult to focus on this event as a whole as there were so many wonderful aspects. The people, the area - Waitangi, our hosts Trustpower,

the programme they had arranged, the activities, the friendships. Grant, Tony Lepper (our mayor) and I flew north, and on Friday we were given an overview of the Far North district's cultural and historical background. The second day was taken up with the presentations and judging of the 24 finalists. For almost the whole day we were watching presentations by enthusiastic community based people who brought special projects for all of us to judge. There was an expert judging panel that accounted for 50% of the marks and we, the participants, accounted for the balance. We were the second last presenters and just sitting listening to the wealth of effort made me consider that all of these projects were far more worthy than ours. However, it was mentioned many times over the weekend that all the projects were winners and this weekend was set aside by Trustpower to acknowledge that - and that was the feeling we came away with. The highlight for me was the welcome onto the Marae. Whilst I have visited Waitangi several times, the welcome was a first. Trustpower hosted us in a manner that had absolutely everything covered to the extent that you might even consider changing your power supply company! A special time for all and a privilege to attend. You can watch our presentation on:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEXUrnYNPbk>



Grant Norbury, Tom Lamb and Central Otago District Council Mayor, Tony Lepper, on safari after giving their presentation.

Field days

Volunteers have been working hard as usual on weeding and planting in February and September this year. Briar control is progressing well with judicious use of herbicide, and survival of planted shrubs has been pleasing. We have on-going problems with the odd hare inside the herbivore-proof fence nibbling planted shrubs, but we try and remove them whenever we can.

Exciting times are ahead for lizard conservation in Central Otago!

Thanks for your support.

Trustees of the Central Otago Ecological Trust