



Mokomoko Newsletter

Number 2
22nd February 2007

Hello everyone,

It's been a while since we communicated, sorry about the silence but it's been pretty busy.

Funding

Over the last few months we have submitted 3 funding applications:

- ◆ **Enterprising Communities** (for a project manager)
- ◆ **World Wide Fund for Nature** (for project manager)
- ◆ **Transpower Grants** (for boosting our captive lizard population).

Thus far we've only heard back from EC and they suggest we undertake a feasibility study. Although we already have a business plan, we think a feasibility study is a good idea and will not do us any harm. EC consider our proposed lizard breeding and education facility project as high risk, so we need some professionals to have a look at what we are trying to do. We will submit our application for a feasibility study to Lotteries by the end of the week. This will improve our chances of funding agencies supporting us in the future. Our annual accounts are currently being prepared for audit.

If you think it's taking forever getting momentum, remember the trust behind Orokonui formed in 1983!! By the

way, Grant Norbury visited Orokonui on the weekend and was taken around by their operations manager, Elton Smith. Their fence is just about complete and their first reintroduction will be kaka, after they eradicate the pests in winter.

Captive lizard update

We now have four Otago skinks in our outdoor cages i.e. 'Goldie' who survived last winter and three others from Palmerston North (kindly donated by captive breeder, Richard Brosnan). All are males and some are fighting so we have moved one indoors. The three outdoor skinks are in the middle cage. We also have four Duvaucel's geckos, two in each of the outer cages. The geckos are nocturnal so are hard to see, but you might see the odd one out from a distance during the day if you approach the cage very slowly.

The three skinks on public display at the Alexandra Museum were checked recently by Trent Bell. All skinks have grown slightly in length, but more so in weight. The new skinks brought in from Richard Brosnan were also checked by Trent, and two of the three have grown significantly since arrival, both in length and weight.

Altogether the Trust holds seven Otago skinks but we have only two females, therefore we need to source more breeding stock soon.

Winter refuge

We plan to build a concrete block shell under the cages and fill it with soil. We'll then insert small wooden boxes filled with straw etc deep into the soil and provide tubes for the skinks to go down and access the boxes during winter. We might even

PO Box 418, Alexandra
Phone + 64 3 440 2936
Fax + 64 3 440 2931



PO Box 418, Alexandra
Phone + 64 3 440 2936 Fax + 64 3 440 2931

move the cage to a sunnier position before winter, or put the new cage donated to us from DOC in a sunnier position and move the lizards there.

Weeding Day

We had a good day last October at Aldinga, replanting Carex's and weeding. TV1's Rural Delivery programme did a story on us and it showed on national television. We should have another weeding day at Aldinga. We're pretty busy over the next few months. Tentative date April 21st or 22nd. Will confirm.

Community involvement

There has been quite a bit of community involvement in the project:

- Lizard sculpturing by Jenny Knowles during Alexandra Thyme Festival. Jenny called the sculpture "Mokomoko Sanctuary" and it attracted the highest price at auction of all the displays. The Alexandra Museum purchased the sculpture and it is now on public display.



- Also during the Alexandra Thyme Festival, Grant Norbury led a public tour of the Aldinga Conservation Area to talk about pre-human ecology – included proposed site for Mokomoko Sanctuary.
- Alexandra Primary School students raised \$150 for COET during their 'walk-a-thon'.
- Otago Skink poetry has appeared in the book 'The Grasshopper' by Shirley Grave
- Pam Chapman is preparing a children's book on Otago skinks. The artwork is yet to be finished and the book will be published.

Raffle

You would have seen in our local paper that artist, Rebecca Gilmore, from Endemic Art Gallery in Roxburgh, has generously donated a framed print of her painting of Otago skinks to the trust for raffling. It's a superb piece. It's on display in the museum and closes 15 April. \$2 a ticket. We need your help to sell some tickets, so please come into the Landcare Research office (Portacom building next to DOC) and we'll give you some. Rebecca is also donating to the trust \$25 for each print she sells.





PO Box 418, Alexandra
Phone + 64 3 440 2936 Fax + 64 3 440 2931

Alexandra Museum

Museum staff, Brian Patrick, Elizabeth McAllister and Adrienne Boyd, are very supportive of the trust. They helped display promotional material during the Alexandra Blossom Festival, and they display brochures, T shirts, and skink paintings and sculptures. We very much appreciate their support.



Web page

Given further delays in appointing a project manager, we need to get on with even a basic web page where people can pick up information about the trust. This could attract more foundation members too. We are making inquiries regarding this becoming established.

Thankyou for your ongoing support.

Trustees of the Central Otago Ecological Trust.

Conferences

Grant Norbury and Trent Bell recently attended the bi-annual conference of the Society for Reptile and Amphibian Research. There was a lot of focus on grand and Otago skinks, and a lot of discussion about inbreeding problems and the need for captive breeding programmes to maximise the genetic diversity of animals.

Grant also attended a conference on “Restoring the Drylands” run by the NZ Ecological Restoration Network and gave a presentation on “Central Otago Sanctuaries”, which of course included the Mokomoko project.

Calendars

Trent has designed a very nice self-standing calendar featuring excellent photographs of NZ native frogs and reptiles. They cost \$15 ea. Email Trent at bellt@landcareresearch.co.nz