

MILESTONE REACHED IN TRAPPING AND REPORTING ACTIVITY!

In early February the trapping volunteers captured and reported the 1000th predator within the trapline network which surrounds the Orokonui Ecosanctuary. The project's trapping activity began in 2015, and with the introduction of the online portal in 2017, recording of trapping data became much easier.



*Volunteers preparing trap tunnels to be placed along trapline.
Photo Craig McKenzie*

This milestone reflects the sustained hard work of a dedicated group of volunteers who regularly check and report on the status of the traps which are located in a series of trapline tracks within the Halo Project area. While it is important to eliminate predators to ensure safe habitat for native flora and fauna, it is also important to report on all trapping activity to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the trapping programme.

We are grateful for the effort made by volunteers to enter their data into the online portal, <https://traps.haloproject.org.nz/>.

Some Reminders for Trapping Volunteers

As you head out to check your trapline a few things to remember:

- Have you contacted the landowner to gain permission (if required)?
- Do you have your trapping supplies including gloves, lures and first aid kit?
- Have you informed someone of your whereabouts, intended path and approximate return time?
- When setting or unsetting traps be sure to use correct technique, be very careful of your hands especially and never place them inside a set trap box. Wear gloves and exercise correct H&S with regard to hygiene - use hand sanitiser or wash hands thoroughly before eating, drinking or touching your face.
- After checking and maintaining trap please make sure the lid of the trap is securely fastened.
- Please take the time to record your trapping activity on the online portal. If you would like refresher training on using the portal please call or email. You can also email the data to info@haloproject.org.nz or call and we can arrange to collect it.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer trapper please contact us. We would love to hear from you!

INTRODUCING NEW TEAM MEMBERS

Jonah Kitto-Verhoef - Predator-Free Operations Manager

Jonah has returned to Otago after a long absence, having most recently spent time on Waiheke Island working as a conservation ranger. In that time he was Chair of the Hauraki Islands branch of Forest & Bird, and a driver and founding trustee of our sister Predator Free project, Te Korowai o Waiheke: towards a predator free Waiheke. Jonah is looking forward to working with local communities towards a predator-free Halo area.

John Fisher - Source to Sea Environmental Educator

John comes from a background in education, having held the role of principal of Macraes Moonlight School and worked with local schools. Residing in Osborne, John volunteers his time to the predator-free trapping activities within the Halo Project area. John is really enjoying working with the schools and is looking forward to developing students' interest in their local catchments.

The Halo Project is supported by:

PROJECT UPDATES

Seabird Habitat Restoration

In February two surveys of little blue penguin populations were conducted as part of an ongoing long term monitoring programme which first started in 2016 building on historical data going back to 1991. The first of the two 2019 surveys ran along Doctor's Point through to Mapoutahi. Volunteers and staff spotted 8 live birds in 13 active burrows, and 2 deceased birds. The second survey was along the Long Beach / Potato Point area with a total of 14 penguins counted.



Volunteer, Jo Monks, surveying a penguin burrow. Photo Rhys Millar

Long term monitoring is an important part of the puzzle in protecting our native species. With only a few years of data it is still too early to draw too many conclusions, however it is worth noting that the Doctor's Point/Mapoutahi survey appears to show a decline in the number of live birds observed, compared to previous years.

Thank you to those who took part in the surveys!

What can you do to protect penguins:

- If you find sick wildlife please report immediately to DOC at 0800 DOC HOT (0800 362 468).
- Consider walking your dog on a lead when on or near the beach. Even if your dog isn't known to attack wildlife their presence can still be very stressful to animals, which impacts breeding and eating.

- If you spot wildlife on the beach take time to inform others of the sighting and make sure you give the animals plenty of space.

Source to Sea

The Source to Sea project works with students from local schools to develop a greater understanding of their local waterways through a cultural, historical and ecological lens. The programme goal is for the students to appreciate and be able to describe the values of their waterway clearly, understand the concept of a catchment and relate it to their own stream, describe challenges facing the stream and their causes, and share and compare their findings with the other schools involved in the project, and the wider community.

In early February field trips were held for three local schools; Waitati, Warrington and Purakaunui. The enthusiastic students, teachers and volunteers ventured along their nearby waterways to explore the aquatic and adjacent ecosystems finding a range of freshwater creatures and birdlife.



Purakaunui School investigating their local catchment area. Photo John Fisher

Over the coming months students will be working collaboratively to formulate a sustainable action plan to enhance or protect the health of their catchment. They are looking forward to visits from local academics, educators and environmental champions to support their journey.

Predator-Free Featured Trapping Activity

With a combination of backyard trapping and trap networks, Purakaunui Township is a hub of predator-free activity. A group of volunteer trappers take turns regularly checking, re-baiting and reporting on trap activity. Katrina McKenzie, a Purakaunui resident and volunteer, has been coordinating the Purakaunui Township trapping group since 2017. Katrina has a background in trapping in the Aoraki/Mt Cook area with a DOC trapping programme, and hopes to one day see kākā in her pohutukawa tree. There are 45 traps along the Purakaunui Township trapline

and no shortage of keen volunteers offering their time to check and reset the traps. Additionally, residents use backyard rat traps to expand the activity beyond the established trapline network. The combined effort has proven to be very successful – over 117 predators such as rats, stoats, possums and hedgehogs have been trapped and reported on since the first trap was set in 2017. This means the community is well on its way to being a safer place for our native flora and fauna to flourish.



Purakaunui Township volunteers preparing traps. Photo Craig McKenzie

Forest Habitat Restoration

The Halo Project continues to work with three landowners in the greater project area to develop case studies on best practice habitat restoration along coastal Otago. These case studies are critical to developing a process for working with other landowners in the near future.

We are currently seeking interest from landowners to take a collective approach to working with Ministry for Primary Industries to access resources available from the One Billion Tree initiative.

We are also looking to develop a seed sourcing initiative for planting in 2020. If you are interested in seed sourcing and propagation activities please email James at james@haloproject.org.nz or call 03 395 9753.

THANK YOU!

The Halo Project would like to thank the following companies for their ongoing support:

Zeagold for providing free-range chicken eggs which the predator-free project uses as lures for traps.

Port Otago for providing office space located in the heart of Port Chalmers.