



Mokomoko Newsletter

Number 7
31 August 2009

Hello everyone

The Fences

Construction of the predator-proof fence is now finished! The fence is 2 m high and protects 0.23 ha from all mammalian pest species, including juvenile mice. The fence is located at

██████████ This will provide a safe haven to test whether we can successfully translocate and re-establish a self-sustaining population of Otago skinks.



Looking across the gully at the fence

Construction of a herbivore-proof fence right next door to the predator fence is also complete. This fence protects 14 ha from rabbits, hares and sheep and will be our focus for weeding and native re-planting over the coming years. One day we may extend the predator fence into this rehabilitated area for other animal re-introductions.



Herbivore-proof fence

PO Box 418, Alexandra
Phone + 64 3 440 2936 Fax + 64 3 440 2930
www.coet.org.nz



We'd like to show you the fences, so if you can attend the field day mentioned at the end of this newsletter, that would be great.

We are very appreciative of the support of our primary 'fence funders', Central Lakes Trust, Otago Community Trust, Community Conservation Fund, and World-Wide Fund for Nature, and the various companies and individuals that have made donations and supported us.

Pest eradication

We have approval from DoC and the Ministry of Health to use toxins to eradicate the pests inside the pest-proof fence. Poisoning and trapping is now underway. We are using brodifacoum to kill mice, and cyanide to kill possums. Cats, ferrets, stoats, weasels and hedgehogs are being removed by kill-trapping. These toxins and traps are approved by the national authorities and are specially designed to minimise animal suffering and to minimise the risk of poisoning non-target species. After the eradication, pest monitoring stations will be deployed permanently to detect residual or re-invading pests.



Setting up bait stations and traps to eradicate pests inside the fence

Skink releases in November

Once we are satisfied that all the pests have been eradicated from inside the fence, we will translocate 12 captive-bred Otago skinks. This will happen around November 15. Before then, skinks will be held in DoC's quarantine facility for 6 weeks to screen them for diseases and parasites. We have approval from DoC and from iwi to undertake the translocation. We are looking forward to this momentous occasion, and will notify you of the exact date.

Over-wintering of captive Otago skinks

Skinks held in captivity outdoors in Alexandra survived the harsh winter this year. Temperatures dropped to -6°C inside the cages but this compared to a balmy minimum of $+2.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ 1m below-ground inside the buried pipes where the skinks sought refuge. Our buried pipe design seems to be a winner in combating the effects of the harsh Central Otago winters.

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Skink Van

Escape Rentals is a company that hires vans in NZ, some of which are painted in NZ wildlife. They have done a wonderful job adorning one of their vans with an Otago skink. This will help improve the public's 'empathy' for native lizards. Watch out for it on the roads.



An Escape Rentals van adorned with an Otago skink

Otago polytech

Jo Wakelin from the Otago Polytech in Cromwell is keen for her students to be involved in helping COET with our re-vegetation programme. The Polytech is kindly donating 100 silver tussocks for us to plant this spring. Thankyou Jo and the Polytech!

BBQ and field day during Conservation Week

During Conservation Week we will be holding a field day on Saturday Sep 19 to allow people to inspect the fences, help pin down the rabbit netting to the ground, and do some weeding and re-planting of native plants. DoC are kindly providing a BBQ and drinks. We will meet at 10 am at the locked gate [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Please bring shovels, weeding tools, gloves, protective glasses etc. We will send a

reminder soon and would be very pleased to see you there.

Please diary these other times we have scheduled for field days [REDACTED]

Wed Sep 30: weeding & planting
Sat Oct 10: weeding & planting
Sun Nov 15: skink releases, weeding & planting.

Thanks again for all your support.

Trustees of the Central Otago Ecological Trust.

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