



Mokomoko Newsletter

Number 9
9th February 2011

Hello everyone

Otago skinks give birth in the wild!

What a way to start off the New Year. Two baby Otago skinks were found inside the Mokomoko Dryland Sanctuary two weeks ago. It was fitting that James Reardon (DOC), who helped us get this project off the ground, saw the first baby skink. Grant Norbury missed seeing it, but half an hour later saw a different baby skink in another part of the sanctuary.



The two baby Otago skinks seen on 23rd January 2011.

Because the skinks were seen in different parts of the sanctuary, different mothers are likely to be involved. In the wild, a couple of babies are normally born to each mother so it's possible other babies are yet to be found. This is a major milestone for COET in re-establishing this species back into the wild in Central Otago.

How have the original 12 adults fared since their introduction?

To recap, in November 2009 we released 7 female and 5 male captive-bred adult skinks. Three skinks (all females) immediately disappeared, leaving 4 females and 5 males. All 9 skinks entered winter 2010 and all have been seen since. Again, this high winter survival rate is another significant milestone. We were never sure how these captive-bred skinks would handle the winter in the wild.

The next milestone we aim to achieve is net population growth, and beyond that, long-term persistence of the population.

The next phase

The Trust will now start thinking about planning the next phase of the project which may include (1) introducing wild Otago skinks into the sanctuary to introduce fresh genetics, (2) introducing other endangered lizard species, and (3) expanding the area of the sanctuary to make it more ecologically viable in the longer-term.

Awards

The Trust received two awards last year. They were: Regional winner of the Trustpower Community Award for Heritage and Environment, and the Otago Conservation Award from the Department of Conservation. COET is

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proud of these awards and accepted them on behalf of the many volunteers who have given their time and energy to get to where we are today. We are also very grateful to those individuals and organisations who have donated money and resources to the trust, and to the Department of Conservation for their tremendous support.



Some of the many volunteers COET have been lucky enough to help achieve community-led conservation benefits for Central Otago.

Field days

We held several field days last year to weed, plant natives, and maintain the predator fence. This year, there will be a burst of planting activity in autumn. In the meantime, our next field day will be on Sunday Feb 20. Meet at 10 am at the entrance to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Please bring a lunch. We should have plenty of weeding tools but bring along any of your personal favorites if you wish. We'd appreciate it if you could let Garry Nixon know if you are able to attend.

Please contact Grant Norbury at norburyg@landcareresearch.co.nz for any COET-related matters, or Garry Nixon at tigerhill@clear.net.nz for field day and re-vegetation matters.

Looking forward to working with you in 2011.

Trustees of the Central Otago Ecological Trust.

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