

# Matukituki Charitable Trust Inc.

## Newsletter

Winter 2018



### Birds Eye View - Flyover

Matukituki Charitable Trust (MCT) was established in 2013 as a partnership between the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Trust. Through the commitment of our Operations Manager Paul Hellebrekers, our team of volunteers, DOC and sponsors, the partnership has worked to greatly increase predator control measures in the West Matukituki Valley and its tributary valleys within Mt Aspiring National Park. Over the 5 years DOC and the MCT have jointly undertaken a major programme of predator control including installation and clearing of over 750 individual traps, supporting two 1080 predator control operations and established annual monitoring surveys for predators and fauna. Over 1,500 predators have been removed from the valley in logged kills and many more were removed by the 1080 operations. A highlight has been discovery of a population of longtail bats that was not known previously and recovery of the morning chorus, in the valley, that was lost 20 years ago. The Trust are rightly proud of their achievements.

*The valley now has a vibrant bird population especially in the lower valley areas and signs that recovery may be occurring with kea and rock wren in the alpine areas.*



### Annual Report

We are happy to say – **the birds are back!!!** Anecdotal and survey results confirm a big increase in numbers of birds especially the forest birds. In one report was a comment that the morning chorus was “too loud” to sleep.

This year has seen the completion of the first Phase of the long-term programme with all major trap lines in place and a move now towards refining the approach and resources to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Trust activities. We have not only reached the 5-year milestone but have secured the support of another major sponsor, The Lloyd Morrison Trust, who have made a 5 year commitment to the project.



## 2018 Operations Progress includes:

Completion of the installation of 750 traps throughout the valley from Mt Aspiring Station Homestead to the snow line. This work includes establishing a virtual barrier just above Cameron Flat, near the junction of the West and East Matukituki Valleys.

- 514 predators removed
- Supporting a second 1080 predator control programme by DOC
- Feral cat trapping- 16 cats removed
- Rabbit and hare control – DOC project
- Possum trapping in areas not covered by 1080 programme i.e. Mt Aspiring Station
- Technical review of the Project – James Reardon – DOC Science Advisor
- Forest Bird Population Survey- MCT with Mainly Fauna Ltd
- South Island Robin banding – 40 new birds banded by Heather and Stu Thorne and Flo Gaud (DOC)
- Rock Wren Survey – DOC
- Kea Banding and survey – Kea Conservation Trust fitted 4 kea with transmitters
- Completion of the DOC Community Partnership funding programme with MCT- \$112,000 funded
- Appointment of a part time Operations Manager for 2018/19- Paul Hellebrekers
- Appointment of a Part time Operations Deputy role for 2018/19- Stu Thorne
- Installation of an Information Display and donation box at Raspberry Creek Carpark

## Sponsors

We have been greatly encouraged by the support from our sponsors for the Trust and it has been humbling to receive even small amounts (\$300 from the car park donations box) from visitors to the area who realise the importance of the project and from a wide range of people who obviously share your vision. The project has cost an average of \$40,000 per year to fund so far and we estimate a cost of \$50,000 per year to maintain its activities- not including around 1500 hours p.a. volunteer activity. We have ensured that all funding is spent on the project specifics of buying and maintaining traps and no payments are made for administration or management of the trust. **Aspiring Helicopters Ltd** provided assistance with high trap line access to keep the “old volunteers” mobile.



## DOC support

We are very fortunate to have total commitment from the team at DOC Wanaka and Mike Tubbs, Central Otago Operations Manager. DOC have provided the technical and operations advice required by the Trust as well as issues such as:



- Implementation of the 1080 aerial predator control programme for the valley
- Predator Monitoring
- Beech Mast monitoring
- Availability to DOC vehicles for valley access
- Use of the Wardens Quarters at Aspiring hut for overnight stays
- Wardens assistance to clear traps
- Establishment of a display panel showing the Trusts activities at the public Carpark and a connected donation box to enable public to contribute to the project.

We are also very enthusiastic about the increased Government support for DOC and predator control and see that as a positive for the long-term relationship.

## Primary sponsors

Those who have supported the Matukituki Charitable Trust are:

- Southern Hemisphere Proving Ground - a foundation sponsor
- The Lloyd Morrison Trust
- Stuart and Coleen Landsborough
- Department of Conservation – Community Conservation Partnerships Fund- 4 years support plus DoC 1080 programme and staff and vehicle support
- New Zealand Alpine Club
- Randall and Allison Aspinall
- Aspiring Helicopters
- Longview Environmental Trust - John May
- Forth Paddock – Peter Teal
- MCT team of inspirational and enthusiastic Volunteers- you know who you are.
- Gillian and Derek Crombie, Paul Hellebrekers, Stu and Heather Thorne



## Control Activities

MCT volunteers have cleared an average of 600 traps through the year plus installed another 150. Traps below the bushline are generally cleared monthly during the spring, summer and autumn and every 6 to 8 weeks during the winter period. The alpine traps are cleared six weekly between November and April. Clearing and rebaiting takes on average 1 day per person for 30-35 traps.



We have used in the order of 300 dozen eggs plus the same number of bait pieces.

Total predator kills for the season (October 2017 – May 2018) are 514 covering:

Species	number	Species	number
possum	72	Hedgehog	277
Rat	61	Stoat	43
Cat	16	Mice	46
Rabbits	6	Geese – by DOC	hundreds

These numbers are conservative as some kills are removed by other predators and exclude kills from 1080 poisoning which would be considerable.

## Monitoring

Two significant monitoring surveys have been conducted. The first is a repeat of the MCT Bird count by Mainly Fauna Ltd, and the second a rock wren count which has now been completed 3 consecutive years by DOC. Both surveys indicated good increases in bird counts but given this is only the second and third year of surveys respectively trends are not available.

**Mainly Fauna report:** Detections increased for Bellbird, NZ Falcon, Fantail, grey warbler, Kea, Long Tailed cuckoo, South island Robin, shining cuckoo, and South Island Tomtit. However, detections decreased for kereru, yellow crowned parakeet, rifleman and silvereye. Kea Conservation Trust have conducted three surveys in the valley and managed to install transmitters on four Kea so we should have a good report on nesting sites. Kea have been seen around Aspiring hut regularly and numbers exist on the upper slopes so we are hopeful they are increasing in numbers.

Hut Wardens Stu and Heather Thorne have worked in the valley for over 10 years and they advise the number of South Island Robin have increased significantly from the 30 birds released to now being widespread throughout the valley. Many reports of other species being seen again include Kea, Kaka, Kakariki, Fantail, Tomtit, NZ Falcon and even Rock Wren nesting on the Rob Roy track area. The 80,000 to 100,000 visitors to the valley now enjoy a great variety of birdlife that was missing previously.

## 2019 Programme

The coming year is intended to be a year of consolidation on the trap clearing, focus on feral cat removal, maintenance of older traps and installation of additional traps in sensitive areas. Paul Hellebrekers and Stu Thorne have agreed to share the management of the programme. Our volunteers are continuing to show support and still enjoy the field trips and support provided by the trust.



We look forward to the coming breeding season and a summer of increased activity. It is certain that our combined efforts have made a difference to the birdlife in the valley and with our continued effort it is certain that we will pass on the valley in a much better condition than it was 5 years ago.

## Join us in this quest for a unique valley experience.

The MCT Trustees and volunteers are ready for the coming season and looking with trepidation on the task ahead.

Many thanks for your support  
Derek and Gillian Crombie  
For Trustees Matukituki Charitable Trust Inc.

For further information on the Trust or the project please contact us:

Trust Website: <http://www.mctrust.co.nz/> or email  
[matukitukicharitabletrust@gmail.com](mailto:matukitukicharitabletrust@gmail.com)

Or donate to: Matukituki Charitable Trust (Bank Account) 03-1594-0586292-000