



CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND

SIKA
FOUNDATION

EST. 2015

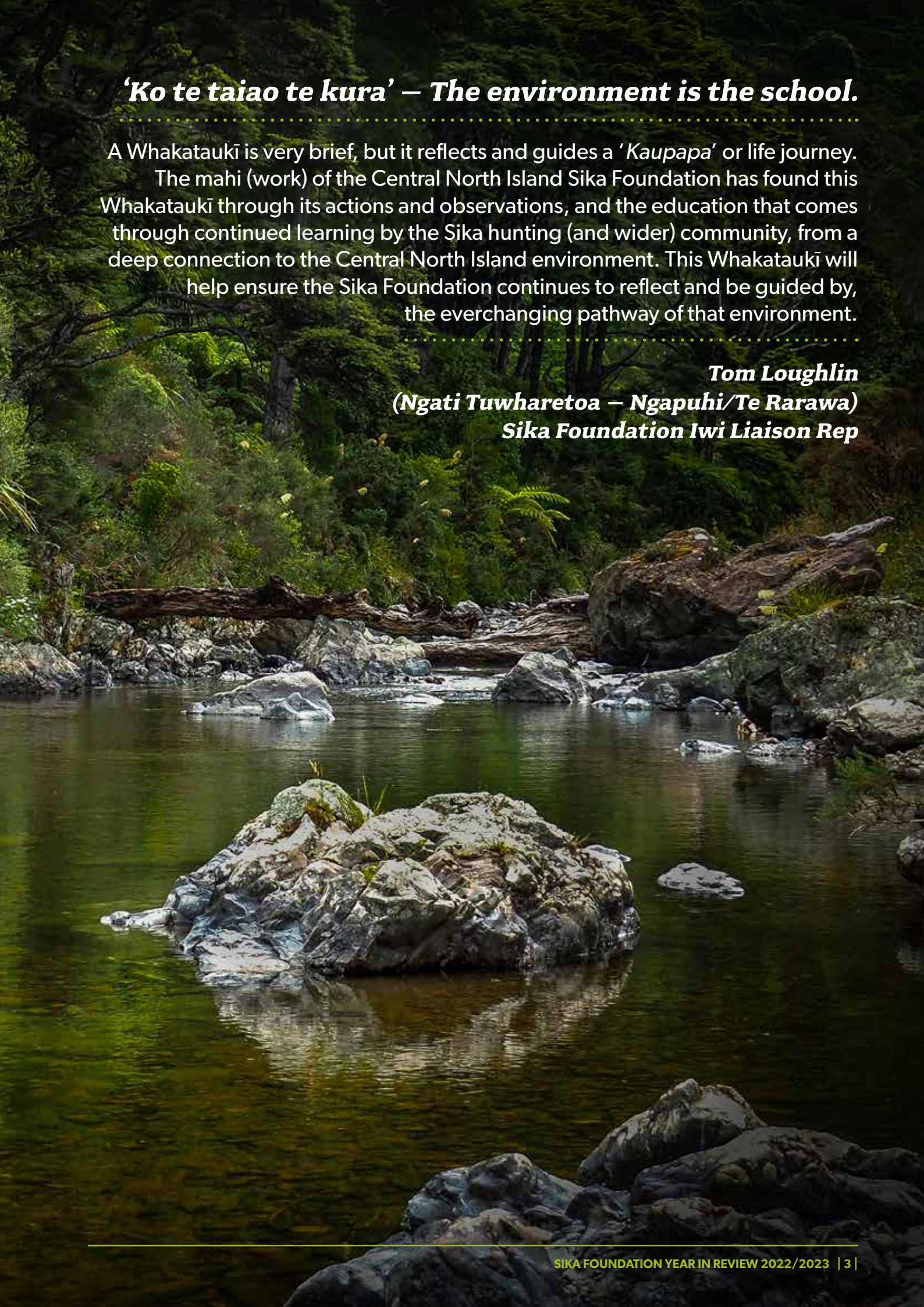


**YEAR IN
REVIEW**
2022~2023

*Cover Image: What every Sika Hunter looks forward to in April each year – a mature Sika stag sneaking in for a peek.
Photo: Supplied.*

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‘Ko te taiao te kura’ – The environment is the school.

A Whakataukī is very brief, but it reflects and guides a ‘Kaupapa’ or life journey. The mahi (work) of the Central North Island Sika Foundation has found this Whakataukī through its actions and observations, and the education that comes through continued learning by the Sika hunting (and wider) community, from a deep connection to the Central North Island environment. This Whakataukī will help ensure the Sika Foundation continues to reflect and be guided by, the everchanging pathway of that environment.

Tom Loughlin
(Ngati Tuwharetoa – Ngapuhi/Te Rarawa)
Sika Foundation Iwi Liaison Rep

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

To all our members and supporters,

The Central North Island Sika Foundation was founded in 2015 with a Sika Herd of Special Interest (HOSI) being our goal.

A change of government and those dreams were slashed. However, we decided to do the mahi anyway – without the formal HOSI title. With time and the NZ Game Animal Council (GAC)'s persistence, we are now realistically looking at a Sika HOSI proposal once again, possibly within the next 12 months.

We have put together an adaptive herd management plan and secured funding to put that into practice within the Remote Experience Zone (REZ) in the southern Kaimanawas. Jobs for Nature funding has allowed us to employ one full time staff to lead our project in the REZ, and heading into the second year of operation we are already starting to see some very encouraging results. Herd Health Indicators are starting to show value (and big changes). From 50% of hinds pregnant to 90% of hinds pregnant already with the reductions in deer density achieved.

Ground based hunting contractors headed back into REZ in July for the first of three 10-day stints culling hinds to further reduce stress in that area. We continue to learn how to better look after our Sika herd, by looking after their habitat.

Our Whio Recovery Project is booming. We now have more than 500 traps protecting 36km of whio river habitat, with a further 100 traps

to be installed over another 5km of river terrace habitat.

Blood Origins – an international hunting advocacy group – provided a massive \$39k of funding to fund our trap lines for the next 12 months. Blood Origins crew visited NZ and our trapping project in April.

A film crew of 2, Cam, Josh, Tim and Robbie Kroger (Blood Origins founder) headed to Cascade hut to do some filming of the trap line and to learn all about the mahi the Sika Foundation and volunteers make happen in the Kaimanawas. From this, a film will be put together that will premiere at the 2024 Sika Show.

Hunters & Habitats, an organisation that has promoted ethical hunting practises and responsible firearms ownership since the 1980s and has supported us since day one, was disestablished in 2023. The remaining funds, \$22,500, were donated to the Sika Foundation Conservation Trust.

Our Mince for Foodbanks project is getting huge support, with now over 4660kgs of mince from hunter's efforts going back into the community where its most needed, through local foodbanks and churches. Alongside this, the corporate and local business donations for processing is a massive help. It really warms the soul to drop a big load of venison mince at a foodbank and see the look on the faces as it goes into the freezer.

Volunteers are a massive part of the Sika Foundation, and we wouldn't



“...we are now realistically looking at a Sika HOSI proposal once again, possibly within the next 12 months.”

even be halfway to where we are now without them. Logging no less than 6000 volunteer hours per year across all our projects is a huge effort, so a big thanks to each and every one of you.

We have an awesome committee who put in endless hours of their time to lead projects and make sure things flow smoothly, so great work team! I am incredibly proud to lead such a dedicated group of hunters and conservationists.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'John Cook'.

John Cook
Central North Island
Sika Foundation President





*Sika spiker in summer coat.
Photo: Fiona Duley.*

OUR VISION & OBJECTIVES

Whether you hunt for meat, trophy or both, there is no denying that Sika present the hunter with challenges and interactions like no other deer species.

Their vocal and inquisitive nature, combined with their ability to learn quickly from mistakes and adapt to hunting pressure makes them one of our most exciting and addictive big game animals to hunt. It is these traits that make the Sika one of New Zealand's iconic hunting resources.

To help facilitate a process of engagement with the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Game Animal Council (GAC), the Central North Island Sika Foundation was formed in 2015.

Our Vision is:

A healthy Sika herd, thriving in resilient natural habitats, valued by stakeholders.

Our Objectives

A set of general objectives have also been developed for the Central North Island Sika Foundation, which include:

- To actively manage the Central North Island Sika herd in order to provide enhanced benefits to hunters and a higher level of protection for the habitats in which they live.
- To advance a management regime that involves a collaborative partnership between recreational Sika hunters, the Game Animal Council, the Department of Conservation, local Iwi, interested landowners, and other stakeholders.
- To achieve and maintain consistent, appropriate harvest levels of healthy Sika by better coordination of recreational Sika hunting and additional harvest effort where this is required.
- To increase the understanding, by recreational Sika hunters, of the Sika herd through better information and education.

The Sika Foundation recognises the important role young women sika hunters play in the future of the Sika herd – Emma Speedy with a fat winter sika hind.



THE SIKA FOUNDATION CODE OF CONDUCT

The Central North Island Sika Foundation promotes a Hunting Code of Conduct to ensure all hunters respect these important forests. The following key messages have been developed by the Sika Foundation to help with ongoing education and advocacy, and to encourage compliant hunter behaviour.

The hunting culture that this Code is designed to uphold is one of Sika hunters as Guardians or Caretakers of these forests and mountain lands – who hold a strong sense of respect, obligation and responsibility.

For too long, many Kiwi hunters have been simply end-use consumers of our forests and mountain land – consumers that hold a strong sense of entitlement based on a lifetime of just doing whatever they want, wherever and however they want.

The Sika Foundation seeks to de-emphasise this historic sense of entitlement and rights; and re-emphasise a sense responsibility and obligation in Sika hunters. The future of this cherished hunting resource depends on that culture shift.

The Sika Foundation seeks your support in abiding by the following Hunter Code of Conduct:

HUNTER CODE OF CONDUCT

- Plan and prepare.
- Wear contrasting clothing.
- Follow the Arms Code.
- Always get a permit and abide by its conditions.
- Respect the rights of private landowners.
- Never spotlight on public land.
- Take care to protect native plants and animals.
- Ensure your dog has avian aversion training.
- Remove all your rubbish.
- Bury your toilet waste carefully.
- Keep streams and waterways clean – and always CHECK, CLEAN, DRY.
- Consider others who may be present or follow after you.
- Carefully consider the most appropriate animals (sex and age) to remove from the herd in your chosen hunting area.
- Kill animals as humanely as possible.
- Wherever possible, take a jaw and always carefully complete the jaw data card.
- Submit your hunting data forms with accurate data.
- Join the Sika Foundation and support sustainable hunting.



SIKA HERD OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Under the Game Animal Council Act (2013) the Minister of Conservation may designate Herds of Special Interest (HOSI) for specific game animals in New Zealand, subject to certain provisions.

The NZ Game Animal Council (GAC) has a role to assess the need for such Herds of Special Interest and to assess the merits of proposals put forward from individuals and/or organisations.

Since the GAC legislation was enacted, there has been limited progress on how such herds might proceed. In fact, a previous Minister of Conservation actively restricted any progress in developing HOSI under that legislation.

However, in the past two years, the Department of Conservation has undertaken a significant process planning analysis on how HOSI might be proposed, assessed, consulted on and potentially designated. A range of templates are under development to assist different stages of what is a complex public planning process.

There are several criteria that proposals must meet, and matters that must be considered, when assessing whether a herd might meet the requirements for designation as a HOSI. These include that:

1. The herd exists on public conservation land.
2. The herd can be defined by species and place.
3. The herd is of special interest now or has potential to be of '*special interest*' in the future, as a result of management. Factors contributing to special interest include, but are not limited to:
 - Trophy value
 - Meat value
 - Hunting opportunity
 - Land status
 - Training opportunities
 - Historic value
 - Economic opportunity
 - Threats to the herd
 - Threats posed by the herd.
4. Management is achievable.
5. There are resources available to undertake management.



*Promising young Sika stag left to mature.
Photo: Gary Harwood.*

Sika are an iconic New Zealand hunting resource targeted by up to a third of New Zealand's estimated 65,000 deer hunters annually. Sika hunting generates an estimated \$18 million in economic activity each year, much of it spent in provincial parts of the Central North Island. Recreational Sika hunting has historically been (and still is) the single highest public use of both Kaimanawa and Kaweka Forest Parks.

However, Sika can impact on important natural habitats if not carefully managed in terms of herd densities and sex ratios. There is significant potential to better manage many aspects of the Sika herd to achieve improved outcomes for both conservation and hunting, as shown through the outcomes of the Kaweka Mountain Beech between 1998 and 2015.

The Sika Foundation Jobs for Nature Project is continuing to explore how this might be better achieved with the 'Adaptive Deer Management Programme' within 15,000ha of the Remote Experience Zone (REZ) of the Kaimanawa Forest Park (2022 – 2025).



*Sika hind and yearling enjoying the sun.
Photo: Gary Harwood.*

There is a strong belief among many Sika hunters that a Sika Herd of Special Interest will provide positive benefits for a wide range of partners and stakeholders. These benefits and outcomes have potential to be significantly better than the 'status quo' in many parts of the Sika range that occur on Public Conservation Land, where no formal management currently takes place.

The Sika Foundation has been working with GAC and the Department of Conservation on the development and refinement of a formal HOSI planning process. While there are several herds around New Zealand that might eventually meet HOSI criteria, the Sika herd is seen as a potential first 'test case' to put through the process.

What a Sika HOSI might look like has yet to be determined, but the work the Foundation has done over the past eight years – including the adaptive deer management in the

“There is a strong belief among many Sika hunters that a Sika Herd of Special Interest will provide positive benefits for a wide range of partners and stakeholders.”

REZ; the long-standing jaw analysis programme; and development of herd health indicators linked to forest health monitoring – has laid the groundwork for exploring a Sika HOSI further.

The process requires a wide range of issues to be considered and consultation with iwi partners and stakeholders. As DOC's HOSI planning process is further refined, the Foundation looks forward to testing the possibilities of giving Sika formal status as a HOSI game animal under the GAC legislation.

2022/23 SIKA MANAGEMENT HUNTS & JAW PROGRAMME

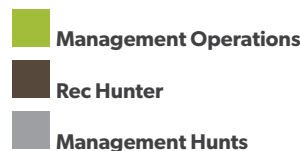
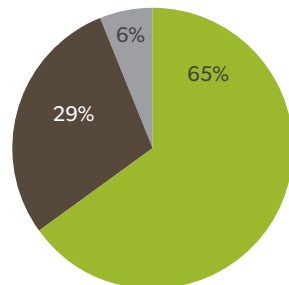
DATA COLLECTION & MANAGEMENT

The Sika Foundation gathers valuable forms of data through three different avenues. Professional management operations, Sika Foundation Management Hunts (facilitated recreational access) and recreational hunter contribution. Recreational hunters are encouraged to drop off jaws at jaw boxes located around the Sika range, fill out the jaw card and data sheet, then attach it to their jaw. Jaws and hunter data sheets can also be sent in.

Jaws get aged by the Sika Foundation crew, and hunters get sent their jaw results back with points of note in comparison with measurement averages. With several years of data now under the belt since the inception the Foundation, and increased data intake through professional management operations, framing up management units to capture this data for analysis is essential. Management units have been framed up based on habitat

“Recreational hunters are encouraged to drop off jaws at jaw boxes located around the Sika range, fill out the jaw card and data sheet, then attach it to their jaw. Jaws and hunter data sheets can also be sent in.”

400 Jaws Processed July 2022 - June 2023



KKFP Management units.

type and associated susceptibility to impact, hunter access and pressure.

Management units under “active game management” can also have FPI (faecal pellet index) & SRI (seedling ration index) data aligned. This helps to understand the full picture – vegetation and habitat condition, herd health indicators and recreational hunter harvest data.

As more data (including historic data) gets fed into these management units, we will be able to drill into trends and compare different management units side by side, highlighting areas of good and poor herd health indicators, with the associated recreational hunter data.

JAW PROGRAMME, HERD HEALTH INDICATORS AND DATA SHEETS SUMMARY

Deer jaws are a key part of understanding herd health indicators as with the jaws, the animal’s age and relative skeletal size can be ascertained. This is particularly insightful with hinds, due to their limited home ranges.

Jaws taken from animals in poor habitat with poor nutritional intake during the crucial growth years are smaller in size (all skeletal growth occurs in the first 3-4 years).

This, aligned with reproductive information “in milk and/or in fawn” and condition scoring, provides an insight into reproductive output and the full picture for the herd health at place.

Hunter datasheets provide wildlife and general observations, hours hunted, animals contacted and animals shot in areas throughout the Central North Island Sika range.

Understanding hunter habits and the harvest by sex ratio are key parts for understanding the impact recreational hunters have on the herd across the Central North Island.

Yearling Sika on the tops.
Photo: Fiona Duley.



SIKA FOUNDATION MANAGEMENT HUNT DATA – 2022/23

AREA/BLOCK CATCHMENT	TOTAL HOURS HUNTED	DEER CONTACTED BUT NOT SHOT	STAGS SHOT	JUVENILE STAGS SHOT	HINDS SHOT	JUVENILE HINDS SHOT
Upper Kaipo	17	2				
Mangatainoka 2	80	8				1
Cascade Hut	60	9				
Paemahi	95	10	3			1
Mangatainoka 1	120	10	1		1	
Boyd Hut	43	23	1	1	1	1
Kens Hut	100	20	2		1	
Pikiawatea Hut	67	25			2	1
Pukehuia	65	48		1	1	
TOTALS	647	155	7	2	6	4

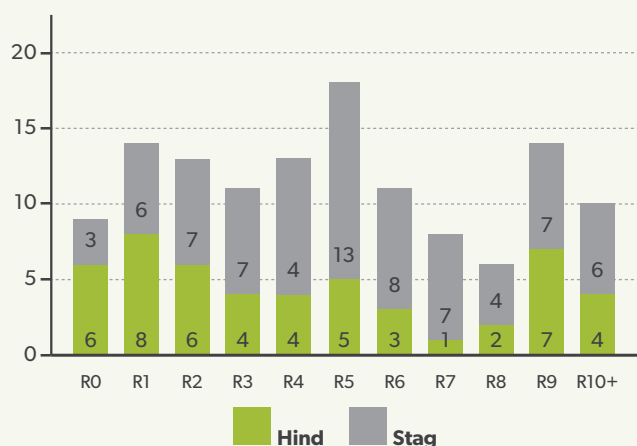
2022/2023 DATA SUMMARY

Out of the 400 jaws that have gone through the Jaw Programme from July 2022 till July 2023, the average heel length for a mature Sika hind is (198mm) and (210mm) for a mature Sika stag.

It's worth noting that this annual jaw analysis includes measurements from adaptive deer management operations from within the REZ.

For the recreational hunter data sample, the average age of deer harvested from is 5.3Yo for a hind and 4.7Yo for a stag. Stags were 61% of the annual harvest with 59% of stags being harvested in April alone.

REC Hunter Harvest by Age & Sex July 2022 - June 2023





TOP: New jaw box installed at Helisika hangar.

ABOVE: A hunter's jaw with card and data sheet attached.

JAW BOX NETWORK EXPANSION

Jaw boxes are located at Clements Mill entrance (Sika Lodge), the Helisika Hangar and the Tauranga Taupō garage.

The Helisika jaw box has been upgraded to a larger box, and the Sika Foundation is working on a further three locations to be established around the Sika range during spring 2023 to encourage further jaw and hunter data sheet collection.

We'd like to say big thanks to our data collection partners and for the hours of mahi that Sika Foundation volunteers have put into ageing, measuring, entering the data and sending back results to hunters.



*Hinds are the primary target during Management Hunts. This Sika hind was spotted at close range on the Te Iringa Track which is located off Clements Road in the Kaimanawa Forest Park.
Photo: Gary Harwood.*

MANAGEMENT HUNTS SUMMARY

Management Hunts remain a key educational tool and an effective way to concentrate hunters into areas to encourage hind harvest. Some of these landing sites are strictly accessed for management purposes.

The landing sites located through the Kaimanawa Forest Park and Northern Kaweka were made available at a reduced price through Helisika and the cost was further reduced for Sika Foundation members.

The Management Hunts in October and November 2022 were cancelled due to the weather, but the March and June Management Hunts in 2023 went ahead.

A big thanks to Sika Foundation members and Helisika who worked together to replace the Kaweka locations with private blocks, due to post Cyclone Gabrielle closure through Kaweka Forest Park which enabled the Management Hunts to go ahead.



REZ Stag late May, 2023.
Photos: Tim Maule.

REZ ADAPTIVE DEER MANAGEMENT & RESEARCH

With assistance from the Game Animal Council (GAC), the Central North Island Sika Foundation Conservation Trust applied for and was granted funding through the Government's Jobs for Nature Programme to deliver deer management and conservation projects over the next three years (year one starting in 2022).

Enabled with further funding from DOC, the Sika Foundation continues a focus on the 15,000Ha REZ (Remote Experience Zone) within the Kaimanawa Forest Park.

Due to historic sustained overpopulation, some habitat within REZ is in a poor state which impacts on mountain beech forest regeneration following natural canopy dieback and resulting in a further lack of palatable understorey.

From 2017 to late 2019, OSPRI contracted Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research to carry out a deer survey in the southern Kaimanawa Range to confirm the area to be TB free. The survey involved helicopter harvesting and recreation hunter contribution over the three years.





Poor quality REZ 2022 stag cull. Aged at 70 Months/5.8 years old.

While no TB was found a total 473 deer were shot, 82% were females and a large proportion of the males in the sample were provided in the recreational sample. 316 deer where from within the REZ.

This data set provided a valuable insight into the poor condition of the herd in the REZ; 48% of the hinds of breeding age were barren and 76% were in average to poor condition.

This highlighted the need for more active herd management.

2022/2023 DEER MANAGEMENT

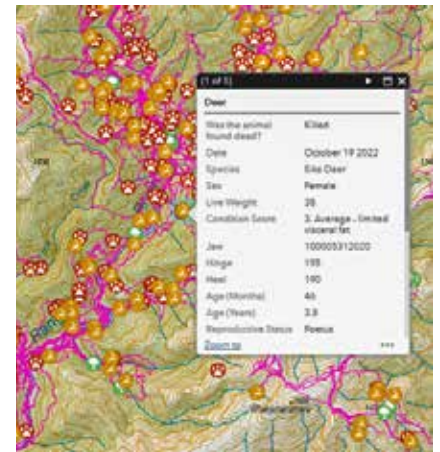
Management in the REZ has been a combination of facilitated recreation hunter access and professional culling operations.

The Sika Foundation successfully negotiated four helicopter access and landing sites for recreational hunters to access the REZ for the 2022 Roar (28 March – 15 May) and again in 2023 (27 March – 7 May).

This opportunity was a privilege and was granted by DOC as a part of Sika Foundation’s adaptive deer management and research plan in response to increasing reports of deer impact on beech forests in the catchment.

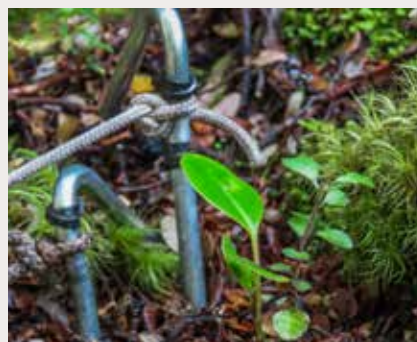
Participants provided data sheets containing wildlife observation of native species, information on hours hunted, animals contacted and shot (54 deer shot in total). Hunters also assessed reproductive status, animal condition and removed the jaws of animals to contribute to the dataset and understanding of Herd Health Indicators in the REZ. In 2022, the Sika Foundation ran a prize competition for the most hinds shot, to incentivise hind harvest.

A further 290 deer were removed from hind-focused professional culling operations in the REZ throughout the winter and spring of 2022. The operations were a



combination of ground hunters and a 10-hour conventional/thermal assisted search and destroy in June. Jaws were removed alongside collection of Herd Health Indicators with further extensive autopsy data (location, whole carcass weights, paunch contents). Wildlife, biodiversity observations and animals contacts (escaped or stags let go) were also recorded.

MANAGEMENT BREAKDOWN	HINDS SHOT	STAGS SHOT	TOTALS
Facilitated Recreational hunters 2022 and 2023	16	38	54
Ground culling (Spring 2022)	155	105	260
10h aerial trial (June 2022)	28	2	30
TOTALS	199	145	344



TOP: *Myrsine divaricata* center photo sits amongst heavily browsed small leaved coprosma "Deer lawn" in the southern REZ.
Photo: Theresa Moore (DoC).

ABOVE: REZ seedling and fern biodiversity.
Photo: Theresa Moore (DoC).

TOP: Mountain beech seedlings (*Fuscopora Cliffortoides*).

CENTRE: *Griselinia Littoralis* and *Myrsine Divaricata* seedlings.

ABOVE: A REZ cull hind absorbs back into the whenua creates nourishment.
Photo: Theresa Moore (DoC).

VEGETATION AND DEER DENSITY MONITORING

Through Jobs for Nature Funding, the Sika Foundation employed four monitoring staff over the 2022/2023 summer months, and in collaboration with DOC established SRI (seedling ratio index) and FPI (faecal pallet index) lines throughout the REZ. Due to weather and Cyclone Gabrielle impacts, monitoring mop up stints occurred in May/June 2023.

Monitoring lines were also established in the Clements Mill Road management unit. Clements Mill is a location with high hunting pressure and strong Herd Health Indicators, both observed through the Foundation's Jaw and Data programme. This monitoring provides a secondary monitoring location and will span

over the project term to provide further understanding of the other side of the coin. Establishing these monitoring lines is a key component to get an understanding of the current state of the habitat in direct correlation with relative deer abundance.

This baseline is critical to be able to track deer density and response in the vegetation to management efforts with management units that are under active game management (REZ).

The heart of the Kaimanawa
REZ. Trick Creek tops looking
east towards Whakamarumaru.



HERD HEALTH INDICATORS, STRUCTURE AND HARVEST

Hinds of breeding age shot from the REZ (R2+) from mid-September through till early December 2022 showed an increase in herd health. Reproductive rates have improved from 52% in fawn and 76% “average to poor” (2017 – 2019 TB dataset) to 85% in fawn and an average condition score of 2.75 (out of 5 in 2022).

It is worth noting that for the 2017-19 TB data set, the majority of samples were taken in November and December where the 2022 samples were taken from mid-September to early December. This is during the seasonal lack of vegetational growth and while there is increased demand on hinds due to sustaining a foetus if they conceived.

This demonstrates densities removed through the 2017 – 19 TB survey and subsequent Sika Foundation management operations are having a positive influence on the herd health. Hind focused management

operations reduce the reproductive output of the herd and associated future management demands. This is the most effective way to reduce stress on the habitat caused from hinds (living in matriarchal family groups with limited home ranges). Stags of poor quality are also removed.

This management model not only reduces the stress on the habitat but having fewer hinds in better condition creates competitive rutting behaviour to compliment a low-density high-quality recreational hunting resource.

2023/2024

Following the 2023 facilitated recreational hunter opportunity, professional management operations will continue in the REZ through late winter and spring of 2023 targeting hinds and cull stags, gathering valuable heard health indicator data.

SRI/FPI Monitoring operations for the 23/24 season will continue in

“A healthy Sika hunting resource, thriving in resilient natural habitats, valued by stakeholders.”

Clements Mill and aim to cast the net further into the upper Oamaru/ Northern Kaweka management unit, to get an understanding of current deer abundance and associated impacts on habitat in this part of the Central North Island Sika range.

It is important to acknowledge the efforts of contractors, monitoring staff, DOC and Helisika who have been instrumental to the project.

The Sika Foundation is proud to work in partnership with local Iwi, DOC, the GAC, NZDA and other stakeholders to achieve a win-win for hunting and conservation in the Kaimanawa Forest Park.

REZ ROAR HUNTER DATA ANALYSIS 2022 & 2023

Facilitating recreational hunter access not only removed animals contributing to the Adaptive Management and Research programme but gave hunters an opportunity to be a part of the “journey”.

This has been instrumental in the social licence gained for this project, and support from the hunting community.

The locations were strategically picked to focus hunter effort on the more seldom hunted areas. The Rangitikei river and ecology stream valley floors are difficult for hunters to access without facilitated helicopter access.

HUNTER DATA

Due to some hunter data sheets being not handed in, and/or data not being provided, missing data has been averaged out against provided data (numbers in RED); 2022; Number in party = average of 3. Total hours hunted = averaged @ 25 hours per hunter. Deer seen but not shot = average of 5 per hunter.

“The locations were strategically picked to focus hunter effort on the more seldom hunted areas. The Rangitikei river and ecology stream valley floors are difficult for hunters to access without facilitated helicopter access.”

WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS 2022/2023

During both 2022 and 2023 all four locations had consistent who sightings. A lone karearea in Trick Creek, and keruru sightings localised in Eco Junction. During 2022; an ecology exclosure crew heard kiwi late April, saw fresh kiwi probing’s and live Powelliphanta were found in Trick Creek. Tomtit, fantail and bush robin scored highest in terms of bird observations across the board, with localised sightings of a pair of karearea and kaka in Upper Eco.

Low numbers of possums across the board and a stoat seen in Eco Exclosure. Poor rutting activity with little single calling were noted. Several teams noting poor quality of the deer, and poor condition of understory.

During 2023; there were no teams of Eco Exclosure in 2023. A kiwi was heard in Trick Creek. More possums were seen per hunter against 2022 data. A participant in Eco Junction who was in the same location the previous year made particular note of noticeable change in the regeneration of palatable vegetation, that was still untouched.

Reports around rutting activity in general was substantially more territory with some single calling across all three sites.

COST

All hunters that participated in the 2022/23 opportunity paid for all their own costs. There was no cost on the Sika Foundation or DOC for animals removed. It is worth noting

that against the 2022 ground hunter operation, the cost to remove one deer is approx. \$750, removing 16 hinds would cost the Sika Foundation and/or DOC \$12,000. For all deer removed, this would have been a cost of \$40,500.

SUMMARY

There were substantially less hunters involved and deer shot in 2023 (6) in comparison with 2022 (48). Data and hunter observations collected indicate fewer animals contacted with a lower percentage of animals shot versus contacts.

The increased rutting behaviour in comparison with 2022 was apparent in the reports from the datasheets for 2023. This reflects the hind focused deer management efforts in 2022. Having fewer hinds in better condition creating competitive rutting behaviour.

This model also reduces the reproductive output of the herd and associated future management needs and stress on the habitat. The recreational hunter contribution towards the the Sika Foundation’s Adaptive Deer Management and Research Plan has been instrumental to grow and maintain the social licence from stakeholders and the hunting community for this project.

Animal data, associated jaws and hunter observations all contribute to the “REZ” dataset and have been a key part to help further understand the changes in response to management in both animals and environment.

NUMBER IN PARTY	AREA/BLOCK CATCHMENT 2022	TOTAL HOURS HUNTED	DEER SEEN BUT NOT SHOT	STAGS SHOT	JUVENILE STAGS SHOT	HINDS SHOT	JUVENILE HINDS SHOT
3	Upstream of Eco	75	15			1	
3	Upstream of Eco	18	15			3	
3	Upstream of Eco	75	15	1			
2	Upstream of Eco	50	10	4			
4	Upstream of Eco	112	20	2	1		
3	Ecology Exclosure	180	16		1	2	
3	Ecology Exclosure	114	10	4		3	
2	Ecology Exclosure	47	10	3			
3	Eco Junction	120	10	1			
3	Eco Junction	70	15	2	1		
3	Eco Junction	92	5	2		2	
4	Eco Junction	50	23	2	1		
4	Trick Creek	70	10	2	1		
3	Trick Creek	75	10	4		2	
2	Trick Creek	50	10	1	1	1	
5	Trick Creek	80	36				
47	TOTALS	1278	230	28	6	14	0

NUMBER IN PARTY	AREA/BLOCK CATCHMENT 2023	TOTAL HOURS HUNTED	DEER SEEN BUT NOT SHOT	STAGS SHOT	JUVENILE STAGS SHOT	HINDS SHOT	JUVENILE HINDS SHOT
2	Upstream of Eco	20	3	1			
2	Upstream of Eco	78	6				
3	Eco Junction	30	15	3		1	
2	Eco Junction	60	4				
4	Trick Creek	46	6			1	
4	Trick Creek	90	4				
2	Trick Creek	48	8				
19	TOTALS	372	46	4	0	2	0

HUNTING DATA SUMMARY		
ITEM	2022	2023
Hunter participation	47	19
Deer shot	48	6
Hunting hours total	1278	372
Deer contacted but not shot	1 contact per 5.5 hours hunting	1 contact per 8 hours hunting
Deer shot (Per hours hunted)	1 deer shot per 26.6 hours hunting	1 deer shot per 62 hours hunting
Deer shot versus contacted and not shot	20.87%	13.04%



WHIO RECOVERY PROJECT UPDATE

Over the last year (July 2022 – June 2023), the Sika Foundation trapping network has removed a total of 518 rats, 89 stoats, 50 mice from Northern Kaimanawa to help protect whio, flora, fauna and other taonga that exist in these landscapes.

Trap Network Kills Breakdown by Location



Sika Foundation current total trapping network (36kms).

HINEMAIAIA STREAM EXTENSIONS

With easy access from the Clements Mill Rd end track to the Hinemaiaia Stream, this continues to be an ideal location for the local community to get involved in the trapping programme.

Tauhara College helped instal 30 Sika Foundation double set BT200's heading upstream to establish the trap line in July 2022, and have been servicing this line under the guidance of Senior Outdoor Education Teacher Shanan Harrington as a part of their curriculum for the past a year.

This line has removed an impressive 125 rats, 2 stoats and 19 mice.

In May 2023, the NZDA Taupō Branch helped install 23 double set BT200 Sika Foundation traps downstream on the true right to further extend the protection for whio.

NZDA Taupō members will be servicing this trapline. A big thanks to our volunteers for their work in the trapping space, our local NZDA branch, and Tauhara College for their mahi.



Hinemaiaia trap line network with first check on newly installed downstream true right traps NZDA will be servicing.



TOP: Matua Shanan running students through servicing a Hinemaiaia trap.



ABOVE: Adult female whio with ducklings.

WHIO SURVEY SUMMER 23/24

The Sika Foundation is working to line up a Whio Survey over the 23/24 summer months for the trapping network. With the Whio Recovery Project running since 2018, and thousands of hours and mahi put into removing hundreds of predators, we look forward to the results. This will provide a snapshot of current populations.

A big thanks again to all volunteers that are involved in the Whio Recovery Project, and special thanks to Helisika for their safe transport and Poronui for allowing access to drive through Poronui station to access the Oamaru and Kaipo catchments. This access is critical to the project.

If you would like to get involved in the project, please email volunteer@sikafoundation.co.nz

CLEMENTS MILL CAT TRAPS

Reports of feral cats in and around Clements Mill are common, and we have instigated a project to install cat traps through this landscape.

Cats are highly efficient predators and pose a serious threat to whio and other native wildlife. Short-tailed bats are present in this red beech forest, and feral cats are specifically harsh on these colony roosting bats (2,000+ bats per colony).

The Sika Foundation has installed two chimney boxes with Steve Allan cat traps inside. The Foundation intends to secure funding to increase the quantity of these traps throughout the area.

Trail cameras are installed on the different traps throughout the network to provide valuable insights into how predators interact with the traps. This footage is key to learning how to further fine tune approaches, to make the traps as effective as possible.



TOP: A stoat investigating a A24 up the Oamaru.

ABOVE: A cat spotted near a Sika Foundation Chimney trap.



Free-range venison mince for the foodbanks being prepared at Farm & Game Meat Processors Taupo Ltd.

OUR SUPPORT FOR FOODBANKS INITIATIVE

The Sika Foundation Mince for Foodbanks Project began in May 2020, with the Foundation paying for transport of some 1,140kg of Wapiti mince sourced from animals culled in the Fiordland Wapiti Area, funded during the first Covid-19 Lockdown by DOC, GAC and FWF, to come north from Invercargill to Taupō.

This was split equally between Taupō and Tūrangi Foodbanks. That Wapiti mince made a huge difference in our local communities at that time. Tūrangi Foodbank asked if it could continue, so the Foundation worked with MPI to develop an appropriate risk management process for donated, local recreationally shot venison to be safely provided to social support agencies on a regular basis. Arrangements were made with Farm & Game Meat Processors Ltd in

Taupō to mince, bag and label the meat into 1kg lots at a subsidised rate; Vacuum Pac bags were donated by CasPak Ltd; while the necessary labels required by the risk management process were designed and printed with the help of Print.com Ltd in Taupō. Members were then asked to help donate any spare meat from their 2021 roar hunting trips.

On 5 May 2021, the first local mince donation was delivered to Tūrangi Foodbank. Since then, a further 3,423kg of mince has been donated, processed and provided to a range of organisations including: Tūrangi Foodbank (1,459kg); Taupō Foodbank (1,441kg); Kainga Aroha Te Awamutu (177kg); Taupō Baptist Church Sunday dinners for the Homeless (170kg); Te Kuiti Foodbank post Cyclone Hale (65kg); Ngati



Our aim is to provide up to 100kg of meat per week, which will cut the local Foodbanks weekly food budgets in half.

Rangi Community Connectors in Ohakune (111kg).

Business sponsorship from Ashhurst Engineering & Construction Ltd and Genesis Energy Ltd (Tongariro Power Scheme) has funded much of the (subsidised) processing cost.

That is over 4.5 tonnes of clean, organic protein delivered to families in need, highlighting the huge value our game animals have to NZ communities. The Foundation is grateful to all the hunters, members, sponsors and supporters who have made this outcome possible and looks forward to continuing to share as much product as possible into the future.

HUT MAINTENANCE & REBUILDS



BOYD HUT 2023: Over a long weekend in June, four volunteers from the Sika Foundation flew into the Boyd Hut to complete maintenance work. The weather wasn't the greatest for the four days, but we did manage to put two coats of paint on the hut. We also replaced the top on the table inside and put concrete footings in for the new woodshed.



The guys flew back to the hut and did some more work on June 23-26. The three volunteers were Ben Gordon, Brett Stokman and Hamish Herdman. The weather still wasn't playing ball and we needed to replace the existing deck, complete the woodshed, and tidy up the chimney inside.

Day 1: It was a midday arrival at the hut with low cloud and rain which was an ongoing issue for the entire weekend. The boys quickly made short work of the old decking which was cut up into small sections for fuel for the fire to try and dry out some of our gear. Some of the sections of decking were rotten through which made them quite easy to lift. Later in the day, we had 80 per cent of the new decking done.



Day 2: We got straight into replacing the last section of the deck and put the black plastic mesh over the top securing it to the decking timber. This will provide a solid slip resistant surface to walk on. Between continual showers, we also managed to get the woodshed framing up along with the subfloor.

Day 3: We made a big push to get the woodshed finished with all three of us working together. This was all completed by late afternoon. We then applied further grout to the chimney inside the hut. Our flight out was due to arrive the following day. We were disappointed to note that someone had already carved their name into the new tabletop that we had put in on the previous trip.



We would like to thank Megan Dimozantos from the Backcountry Trust for initiating the work to be done on the hut along with providing flights and materials, also Toby O'Hara from DOC Taupō who assisted us with the flights in so we could complete the work, Anton Stokman for organising meals for us and helping with materials and organisation. Thanks also to Bevan Liddle for his help pre-cutting and ordering woodshed material.



BLACK BIRCH BIVVY PAINT JOB: After completing the new deck and adding a water tank to the Bivy in June 2022, the next part was to complete a paint job on the Bivy itself.

With the weather not really playing the game through the following months, we eventually managed to get back in there on the 13th of December 2022. A day that started off well ended in more rain so the best we could do was to paint the interior of the hut before walking out again.



On the 27th of December we returned to the hut on a good-looking Hawke's Bay day. We managed to get two coats of paint on the hut after cleaning off the exterior walls. The hut door was also given a couple of coats. After cleaning out the gutter which provides water to the water tank we walked back to the carpark.

Thanks again to Megan from the Backcountry Trust for initiating the work on the hut along with DOC Hawke's Bay for providing the paint.



Members of the Kaipo Swing Bridge Heli-hike climbing the Kaipo Terraces.

MAHI AROHA SUMMER PROGRAMME – SIKA FOUNDATION KAIPO RIVER SWING BRIDGE HELI-HIKE

Since 1965, the Mahi Aroha Summer Programme has been running each year across the Tongariro and Central Plateau districts. Focused on connecting all New Zealanders with the environment and to encourage shared conservation outcomes, the Sika Foundation alongside Project Tongariro, the Department of Conservation (DOC), and various other community groups and stakeholders, hosted more than 30 conservation related events collectively, throughout the month of January.

A highlight of the programme in 2023 was the Sika Foundation Kaipo River Swing Bridge Heli-hike in the Kaimanawa Forest Park. Advocating for hunter-led conservation and sharing our conservation story, this event provided a firsthand experience of our Whio Protection Programme, observing our volunteer efforts through predator control with a guided tour not normally accessible to the public.

Starting the day with a scenic helicopter flight from the Helisika hanger, our Project and Business



Service with a smile!

Managers Tim Maule and Mike Clinch, with DOC Biodiversity Senior Ranger Sarah Tunnicliffe, led the group of 22 participants from across New Zealand and abroad.

Being immediately immersed in the backcountry flora and fauna, it was the perfect backdrop for an in-depth discussion about the mature beech forest and river ecosystems, the Sika herd, and their thoughts on the big picture monitoring and predator trapping initiatives.



TOP: Landing at the Kaipo Swing Bridge with Helisika.

ABOVE: From Left – Mike Clinch, Tim Maule, Sarah Tunnicliffe.

“It was a great day promoting our partners and volunteers, networking, connecting, sharing perspectives, and encouraging membership to our programmes.”

From there, the group were guided through 10km’s of Kaipo River terraces, stopping along the way to share their observations. The hike was a full day experience that including several river crossings, lunch at the Oamaru Hut, and a short climb back up to Poronui where a private shuttle was waiting to transport everyone back through Poronui Station to the Helisika hanger.



TOP: Participants of the 2023 Mahi Aroha Kaipo River Swing Bridge Event 2023.

ABOVE: Casey Te Rangi atop the Kaipo River Swing Bridge.

It was a great day promoting our partners and volunteers, networking, connecting, sharing perspectives, and encouraging membership to our programmes. Following the event, the Sika Foundation were fortunate to receive thanks from participants in the form of donations and feedback.

Some participants highlighted the stunning scenery during the flight in, how they enjoyed learning about the wildlife and ecology, and that the day was made achievable for a wide range of people. Although a second trip was planned for the following weekend, it unfortunately needed to be cancelled due to the weather forecast.

For three years now, the Sika Foundation has hosted this event and it continues to be in high demand. We are planning to hold several more trips for the 2024 Mahi Aroha Summer Programme, so keep an eye out for this closer to summer.

This day would not have been possible without the assistance and ongoing support of our partners Helisika and Poronui, as well as our amazing network of volunteers who continue to devote their time and resources to our awesome projects.

We sincerely thank you all for your continued involvement.



Whio taxidermy used for aversion training.

from the Sika Foundation, this training was made more accessible through a subsidised cost of \$10.00 per dog (instead of the standard \$25.00).

In partnership with the Department of Conservation, Project Tongariro, Save the Kiwi and the Otorohanga Kiwi House, a total of 53 dogs completed this vital training in both Taupō and Tūrangi, with each owner receiving either a 6-month, 1 year or 2-year avian aversion certificate for their dog.

To re-enforce why we get our dogs trained, owners also received a free Family Pass to the Ōtorohanga Kiwi House (valued at \$65.00). With this opportunity, participants were offered an up-close and personal opportunity to see and learn about the taonga that they are working to protect.



TOP: Shadow – a highly valued Sika hunting tool, working in the diverse Ahimanawa landscape.
Photo: Candace Graham.

ABOVE: Kiwi & Whio Aversion Training made more accessible for many hunting dogs thanks to the support of the Sika Foundation!
Photo: Candace Graham.

KIWI AND WHIO AVERSION TRAINING

Kiwi and Whio Aversion Training is a tool which helps reduce the threat that hunting dogs can pose to our precious native birds. As hunters, we play a key role in protecting these taonga and their habitats, and with our Whio Recovery Project expanding and thriving in the Kaimanawa Forest Park, the Sika Foundation has a particular interest in this kaupapa.

To advocate for hunters as kaitiaki (guardians), and for our valuable hunting dogs, the Sika Foundation led two Kiwi and Whio Aversion Training events as part of the Mahi Aroha Summer Programme in January 2023.

Demand for aversion training is substantial within the hunting community, and thanks to support





VOLUNTEER THANK YOU EVENTS

A celebration get-together for Sika Foundation volunteers, sponsors and members was held on Saturday, November 26, 2022, at the Rangitaiki Community Hall. Attendees were treated to a delicious Hakari (feast of a 'Kai Waho Hangi'), courtesy of Matua Tom Loughlin.

Lee Perry from Inner Wild donated a fabulous knife (photo opposite) as a door prize which was handmade from a high carbon steel and resin-stabilised pōhutukawa with micarta.

The lucky winner was Sarah Bryant, who immediately tested the heat treatment of the blade by accidentally tipping it out of the box tip first onto the concrete floor. As this knife is made tough, there was no damage at all.

The Sika Foundation intends to organise more events and get-togethers for volunteers in the future to give recognition and thanks to the people who contribute and collectively clock up thousands of much needed volunteer hours. Our work would simply not be possible without them.





The Blood Origins Team with Sika Foundation members at Cascade Hut, Kaimanawa Forest Park.

SPREADING THE WORD & FUNDRAISING

Through the year, Sika Foundation members were again involved in a wide range of media and promotion with various organisations to highlight and promote the Foundation's work.

This included presentations to, and Kaimanawa REZ field trips with, the Tongariro Conservation Board; various meetings with Department of Conservation staff, the Game Animal Council (NZGAC), and Iwi

representatives; and engagement with the hunting community through organisations like NZDA. Team members did presentations to the Taranaki Branch in September 2022; Taupō Branch in October 2022; and Waikato Branch in March 2023.

The work of the Sika Foundation has continued to be proactively promoted on both Facebook and Instagram. On these social media platforms combined, we have close





The new Blood Origins branded trap boxes killing stoats in Cascade Stream.



“The work of the Sika Foundation has continued to be proactively promoted on both Facebook and Instagram. On these social media platforms combined, we have close to 10,000 followers.”

to 10,000 followers. Newsletters are sent out regularly to a database with nearly 1,000 contacts, and the website continues to be updated with all sorts of valuable material including videos, photos and relevant copy.

Support from the Hunting Magazines: Rod & Rifle; and NZ Hunter; as well as from the NZ Game Animal Council has also helped get key messages out there.

Perhaps the most significant opportunity this year was the hosting of Blood Origins Founder and CEO, Robbie Kroger from Mississippi in the USA, and his film crew from Slots Media in the UK. Blood Origins is a hunting and conservation advocacy organisation with a large international following (115,000).

They donated US\$25,000 (NZ\$39,000) to the Foundation for

conservation projects in February 2023, and brought the film crew to New Zealand to help tell the Foundation’s story. The resultant film will premiere at the 2024 Sika Show and will be used to tell the story to an international audience.

This education, out-reach and awareness continues to be a cornerstone of the Foundation’s work, helping shift the narrative around our game animals and the important role they play in a modern New Zealand. The Foundation is proud to be part of this cultural shift.

PARTNERS, SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

Without the support of our partners and sponsors – listed here in alphabetical order, we could not do our work, which is why we are incredibly grateful to them. Establishing long-term relationships with our sponsors is important to us, as they assist us with:

- Supporting the Management Hunt funding requirements
- Promoting the jaw and data collection programme
- Help fund and manage specific CNISF projects
- Assist with administration and operational costs

If you would like to know more about sponsorship options and other ways you can help us make a difference, please get in touch by emailing mike@sikafoundation.co.nz.

PARTNER:

Stoney Creek



WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:

AJ Productions
Ashhurst Engineering and Construction
Bayleys Taupo
BFA Business Advisors & Accountants
Blood Origins
Bullivant Taxidermy
Department of Conservation
Dog & Gun Coffee
Fulton Hogan Bay of Plenty
Game Animal Council of New Zealand
Hamills Te Awamutu
Hard as Rocks
Helisika
Hunters & Habitats
Hunting & Fishing Fly & Gun, Taupo
Maunga Tia Adventures
MMC Law Limited
NZDA Taupo
Poronui Lodge
Safari Club International NZ Chapter
Sika Show NZ Hunting and Outdoor Expo
Tight Lines/Tatonka NZ
Turangi ITM
Waikato Regional Council





OUR PEOPLE

CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND SIKA FOUNDATION COMMITTEE 2022/23 (ALL VOLUNTEERS)

President:	John Cook
Business Manager:	Mike Clinch
Secretary:	Cam Speedy
General Reps:	Chris Crosse; Josh van der Valk; Mike Penn; Mike Barton; Allan Jackson
Female Sika Hunters Rep:	Fiona Duley
Appointed NZDA Rep:	Currently vacant
Appointed Iwi Rep:	Tom Loughlin
Appointed Conservation Board Rep:	Currently vacant

PROJECT LEADS:

CNISF Project Manager:	Tim Maule
Whio Recovery Project Coordinator:	Josh Van Der Valk
Trapping and Hunter Data and Analysis:	John Moreland
Hut & Track Field Manager:	Mike Main
Membership Coordinator:	Mike Penn
Jaw Aging & Data Collection:	Dustin Murdock, with Allan Jackson and Tim Maule

CONTRIBUTORS

Marketing & Media:	Martine Pierhagen
Graphic Design:	Nik Maxwell

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT US

Our work would not be possible without the support of our members, plus the businesses and organisations that help us with funding or in-kind sponsorship.

We are incredibly thankful to them, as we need support to maintain and grow our projects, as well as to fund operational costs.

If you are keen to support us with your skills and time and get involved in our projects or programmes, please email volunteer@sikafoundation.co.nz.

To find out more about sponsorship options, please email info@sikafoundation.co.nz.

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FUNDRAISING


An easy way to support the Sika Foundation and to help raise awareness for our organisation is to purchase a limited-edition Sika Foundation Hoodie, T-shirt, or to get a decal sticker for your vehicle.



To order yours, please email us: info@sikafoundation.co.nz.

***“Through better deer herd management
focused on healthy habitats that will support more
sustainable hunting, we can link conservation
and hunting in a more positive way.”***

.....

A photograph of a Sika stag with large, velvet-covered antlers standing in a dense, mossy forest. The stag is looking towards the camera, and the background is filled with thick foliage and tree trunks.

***A superb close encounter photograph of a trophy Sika stag in dense native bush.
It doesn't get much better than this.
Photo: Blake Clinch***



Central North Island Sika Foundation

www.sikafoundation.co.nz

info@sikafoundation.co.nz

Find us on Facebook & Instagram



Kaimanawa Forest Park.
Photo: Shanan Harrington