

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF



YEAR IN
REVIEW
2024/2025



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A photograph of a forest scene. In the foreground, the back of a pig is visible, showing its dark skin and some lighter patches. The pig is facing away from the camera, looking into a dense forest. The forest is filled with trees and foliage, with a prominent tree trunk covered in bright green moss. Sunlight filters through the leaves, creating a dappled light effect. The overall tone is natural and serene.

'KO TE TAI AO 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
(NGĀTI TŪWHARETOA — NGĀPUHI/TE RARAWA)
SIKA FOUNDATION IWI LIAISON REP

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**RAFFLE DRAWN 9TH NOV AT THE
SIKA SHOW PRIZE GIVING.**



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

IT'S BEEN ANOTHER BUSY YEAR FOR THE SIKAFUNDATION, BUT WITH AN AWESOME TEAM AROUND US, WE'RE GOING FULL STEAM AHEAD. IN MARCH, WE MARKED A BIG MILESTONE AND CELEBRATED 10 YEARS AS A FOUNDATION. TOM PUT DOWN A HANGI OUT AT KAI WAHO, AND WE HAD A GREAT TURNOUT, A FEW SPEECHES, AND PLENTY OF GOOD KAI TO GO AROUND.

It's been a slow but steady climb over the last decade, and we're proud of how far we've come. With the continued support of our partners, volunteers and supporters, we're looking forward to the next 10 years.

This year alone, our volunteers have contributed more than 7,500 hours to our projects. We've now protected over 60 kilometres of river for whio and kiwi through our trapping efforts. On Clements Road, our cat trap line has been running for 12 months and is delivering results: 144 kills including 23 cats, 93 rats, 9 stoats and 17 possums.

Our Sika Spiker Satellite Radio Tracking project is 12 months in, and we've fitted 11 spikers with collars, which are returning some fascinating data.

The Mince for Foodbanks project continues to make a big difference in our local communities. So far, we've donated over 10,500kgs of free-range venison mince to food banks across Taupō, Tūrangi, Taumarunui, Ōhakune, and to Kanuka Creek Kitchen and Ronald McDonald House Charities New Zealand. Many people have now experienced top-quality

wild venison thanks to local hunters, Lahar Farms, Poronui Lodge, Taupo Farm and Game Meat Processors and others who have seen the need and stepped up to help. We're hugely grateful to everyone who has put in the hard yards.

In a major development, the Minister of Hunting & Fishing has agreed to progress the HOSI proposal through the statutory consultative process. This begins with Iwi consultation and is a key step forward in ensuring the sika herd is properly managed.

A HOSI will allow us to protect herd quality while also putting plans in place to manage overall numbers, reduce over-browsing, and support healthy forest regeneration. It's a long-term project with a big workload, and we're excited (and realistic) about what lies ahead. With the support we've had over the last 10 years, we know we can get the job done.

Our Sika Series events are now running across the country. It's a mix of fundraising and information evenings where we share what the Foundation is doing for both conservation and the sika herd. These events are helping us connect with other conservation-minded hunters and showing how a healthy herd and healthy forest can exist together.

If you want a future where your grandkids can learn to hunt, or where you can still walk up a river and spot whio in good numbers, get behind the Sika Foundation. Sign up as a member or lend a hand as a volunteer.

A huge thanks to everyone who's helped us get this far. The future is exciting.



"OUR SIKAFUNDATION SERIES EVENTS ARE NOW RUNNING ACROSS THE COUNTRY ... THESE EVENTS ARE HELPING US CONNECT WITH OTHER CONSERVATION-MINDED HUNTERS AND SHOWING HOW A HEALTHY HERD AND HEALTHY FOREST CAN EXIST TOGETHER."

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

John Cook
Central North Island
Sika Foundation President





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 develop more sustainable sika deer management outcomes and to facilitate a process of hunter engagement with the Department of Conservation (DOC); the New Zealand Game Animal Council (GAC); Mana Whenua; interested landowners; and associated business interests, the Central North Island Sika Foundation was formed in March 2015.

THE FOUNDATIONS VISION STATEMENT IS:

"A healthy sika hunting resource, thriving in resilient natural habitats, valued by Stakeholders"

A key purpose of the Foundation is to explore and advocate for, the designation of a Sika Herd of Special Interest (HOSI) under the Game Animal Council Act (2013), so that sika deer can be formally recognised as a resource on at least some public conservation land, to be managed for the betterment of both conservation and recreational hunting.

OUR OBJECTIVES

A set of general objectives have been developed for the Foundation, which include:

- To actively manage the Central North Island sika herd to provide enhanced levels of protection for the forests and grasslands in which they live and improved benefits to hunters.
- 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 other management actions, as required.
- To increase the understanding by recreational sika hunters and the wider community of the sika herd, its value and management through better information and education.



SIKA FOUNDATION CODE OF CONDUCT

THE SIKA FOUNDATION PROMOTES A HUNTING CODE OF CONDUCT TO ENSURE ALL SIKA HUNTERS RESPECT THE IMPORTANT LAND & HABITAT RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT OUR SIKA HERD.

These key messages have been developed by the Foundation to help with ongoing education and advocacy and to encourage connected, respectful and responsible hunter behaviour.

The hunting culture that this Code of Conduct is designed to uphold is one of sika hunters as Guardians or Caretakers of these forest and mountain lands – hunters 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 & 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 carefully.
- Wear contrasting clothing.
- Follow the Firearms Code.
- Always get a permit and abide by its conditions.
- Respect the rights of private landowners.
- Never spotlight on public conservation land.
- Take care to protect native plants and animals.
- Ensure your dog has had avian aversion training.
- Remove all your rubbish.
- Bury your toilet waste carefully.
- Keep streams and waterways clean.
- Always CHECK-CLEAN-DRY your gear between catchments.
- Consider others who may be present or follow after you.
- Carefully consider the most appropriate animals (sex & age) to harvest from 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 information via the Sika App with accurate data.
- Join the Sika Foundation and support sustainable hunting:
www.sikafoundation.co.nz



A DECADE OF CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY

AT KAI WAHO IN THE HEART OF THE CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND, WE GATHERED IN MARCH FOR A HĀKARI (FEAST) TO MARK A MAJOR MILESTONE: THE SIKA FOUNDATION'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY. IT WAS A STUNNING DAY, WITH STORIES SHARED OVER A DELICIOUS HĀNGI PREPARED BY TOM LOUGHLIN, AND A DECADE OF SHARED PASSION AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT WAS CELEBRATED.

The Foundation held its first meeting on March 15, 2015, with the aim to explore a Sika Herd of Special Interest (HOSI) under the Game Animal Council Act (2013).

The need for better deer management in parts of the Kaimanawa high country at that time had become evident, with skinny deer and damaged forests.

Rather than waiting for someone else to act, a group of committed hunters and conservationists came together to become part of the solution.

We set out with a vision: a healthy sika hunting resource, thriving in resilient natural habitats, valued by all stakeholders.

Over the past 10 years, we've built a reputation for our science-led approach to deer management. By tracking herd health and monitoring indicators such as canopy cover and seedling regeneration, we've built a robust knowledge base that continues to grow. But you don't protect ecosystems just by studying them. It requires hands-on effort. That's why our work includes a wide range of on-the-ground projects.

We are incredibly grateful for the financial support that helps make this work possible. We thank all

our partners, sponsors and supporters for stepping up and standing alongside us.

More thanks go out to our amazing volunteers. Every year, more than 7,000 volunteer hours are logged. People travel long distances, take time off work, and give up their spare time to get stuck in, laying and checking traps, fixing huts, or contributing to research.

Ten years in, we are as committed as ever. With a growing body of research, expanding conservation work, strong partnerships and the statutory process for the HOSI status for sika underway, the road ahead is full of potential.

As a values-based organisation, looking after the whenua and giving back to the landscape we love is what it's all about. Here's to the next decade, and to the people who make it possible.



Shannan Harrington – Tauhara College (left), being interviewed for the WRC Biodiversity Partnerships promotional video in September 2024.

WHIO PROTECTION PROJECT

OVER THE LAST YEAR, OUR INCREDIBLE TEAM OF VOLUNTEERS HAVE WORKED HARD TO PROTECT THE ENDANGERED WHIO (BLUE DUCK) IN THE KAIMANAWA FOREST PARK.

Thanks to their efforts, the Sika Foundation's predator control programme has been officially recognised as a whio recovery site, demonstrating what's possible when volunteers, hunters, and conservationists work together toward a shared goal: protecting one of our country's most iconic native species.

To retain this status within the Kaimanawa, the Sika Foundation have integrated national guidelines for whio monitoring and reporting, with a goal of supporting and maintaining at least 20 breeding pairs of whio. With no other predator control operating in the backcountry, our hunting community effort is essential for keeping a local whio population alive.

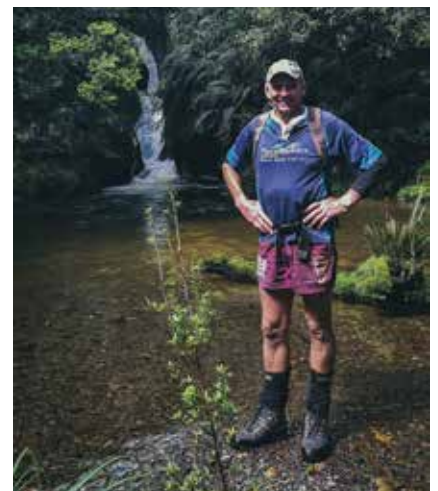
Today, our combined trapping network covers more than 60 km of river based whio protection across the Kaipo, Oamaru, Cascade, Hinemaiaia, Waipakihi Rivers, and Clements Mill Road.

Most lines are serviced monthly, but during the warmer months and following this year's heavy beech seed fall, we've increased servicing to fortnightly or weekly to stay ahead of rising predator numbers, especially leading up to whio nesting season.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

We had a special visit to the Hinemaiaia Stream from the Waikato Regional Council (WRC) and Tauhara College students in September 24, as part of a promotional video during Conservation Week. It was a great chance to share how hunters and volunteers are helping biodiversity in the area.

In 2025, a small group of dedicated local volunteers made a big impact by regularly servicing the Hinemaiaia traplines, often on a weekly basis, to



TOP & ABOVE: Elsie (L) & Phillip Skelton, and Sika Foundation Whio Protection Program Lead, Michael Main.

help keep rising predator numbers under control.

To help reduce operational costs after low predator numbers were recorded over summer, we paused trap checks in the Cascade area in February. Operations soon resumed in July 25, with checks now planned fortnightly in preparation for the upcoming whio nesting season.

The CVC line has recently been upgraded, by removing the old victor trap boxes and installing 9 new double-set traps. A big thanks to Jason Day at Call of the Wild for supplying the custom-made trap boxes that made this possible.



Cascade Stream.

Conservation Canines NZ (pro bono) and DOC's Wild Animal Management team also supported the Foundation's predator control efforts in the Cascade by carrying out a targeted whio survey with conservation dog, Neo. The results recorded five pairs of whio, two single birds, and two Class V juveniles.

Youth Search and Rescue (YSAR) students from Waikato and Thames Coromandel joined us to service traps in the Oamaru and Kaipo in 2024. They camped in -4°C temperatures and did an incredible job. We're excited to have the team back in August and September.



TOP: Neo the whio dog, conducting whio monitoring in the Cascade.

ABOVE: Cascade trapping crew from Taranaki, enduring cold conditions in July 2025.

Access to the Oamaru area was challenging during the first half of 2025 due to rough weather and high river levels. Despite this, trap checks have increased to a fortnightly schedule in response to rising predator numbers across the region.

An exciting report from Poronui in November confirmed whio sightings below Poronui Lodge. This encouraging observation may reflect the positive impact of ongoing joint protection efforts in the nearby Kaipo and Oamaru catchments. Every sighting like this highlights the value of our collective conservation mahi.



TOP: Hinemaiaia trapline has removed 20 hedgehogs in the last year.

ABOVE: Installation of the new BT200 Double-Set trap boxes along the CVC line in the Cascade.

With funding support from WRC, our predator control efforts along Clements Mill Road have expanded with the installation of 30 SA2 Kat traps and chimney boxes.

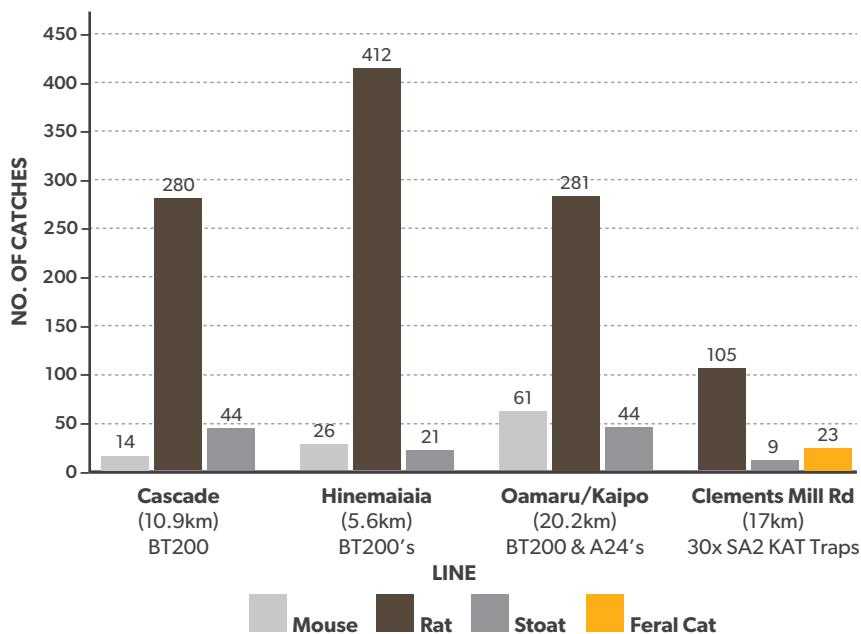
Feral cats pose a significant threat to native wildlife, so this is a valuable step in protecting species like the short-tailed bat (pekapeka), as well as native birds, lizards, and insects. So far, 23 feral cats have been removed from the area – a promising result for biodiversity in the region.

Unfortunately, seven of these traps were stolen in July 25, but thanks to the swift action of volunteer trapper Allan Jackson, all have since been



YSAR students from Thames-Coromandel removing a stoat from the Oamaru/Kaipu in 2024.

Sika Foundation Trapping Network Catches July 2024 - August 2025



replaced. The network is now fully restored and operational.

Since its inception, the whoio protection project has recorded the removal of 2,837 rats, 317 stoats, 24 feral cats, 38 possums, 420 mice, 65 hedgehogs, and 5 weasels. Each predator removed tips the balance in favour of our native wildlife.

We've also received encouraging feedback from trampers and hunters visiting Kaimanawa Forest Park. "The whoio were spectacular. So special," said Laura. "More bird life than I've



Double trouble.

seen in the Ruahines or Tararua combined," said Dan. Comments like these are a powerful reminder that our efforts are making a real and visible difference in the backcountry.



Volunteer Allan Jackson, restoring stolen SA2 KAT traps along Clements Mill Rd.



Trapping volunteer making their way through the Oamaru flats.



Increasingly high predator numbers call for more frequent trap servicing across the network.



Feral cat on the trail cam.



Waipakihi whio.

WAIPAKIHI TRAPPING NETWORK

THE BT200 PREDATOR TRAPLINE PROTECTING WHIO AND KIWI IN THE WAIPAKIHI RIVER VALLEY WAS INSTALLED PARTLY UNDER THE SIKA FOUNDATION'S JOBS FOR NATURE PROJECT IN 2023.

Now extending 7.5 km, this trapline is part of a wider BT200 & F-Bomb predator control network on adjoining Māori land, bringing the total network to 340 traps.

Managed by Kaimanawa Alpine Adventures, the Waipakihi network is built on a strong collaborative foundation, involving Kaimanawa Trust, Rotoaira Forest Trust, NZDA Auckland Branch and Genesis Energy.



Waipakihi trapping network – Trap NZ.



Numerous stoats removed from the Waipakihi network during one trapping run in 2024.

Over the past year, volunteers have removed 161 mustelids (including one ferret), 584 rats, and several possums. Some winter checks were disrupted by rough weather and high river levels, so a few catches may have gone unrecorded.

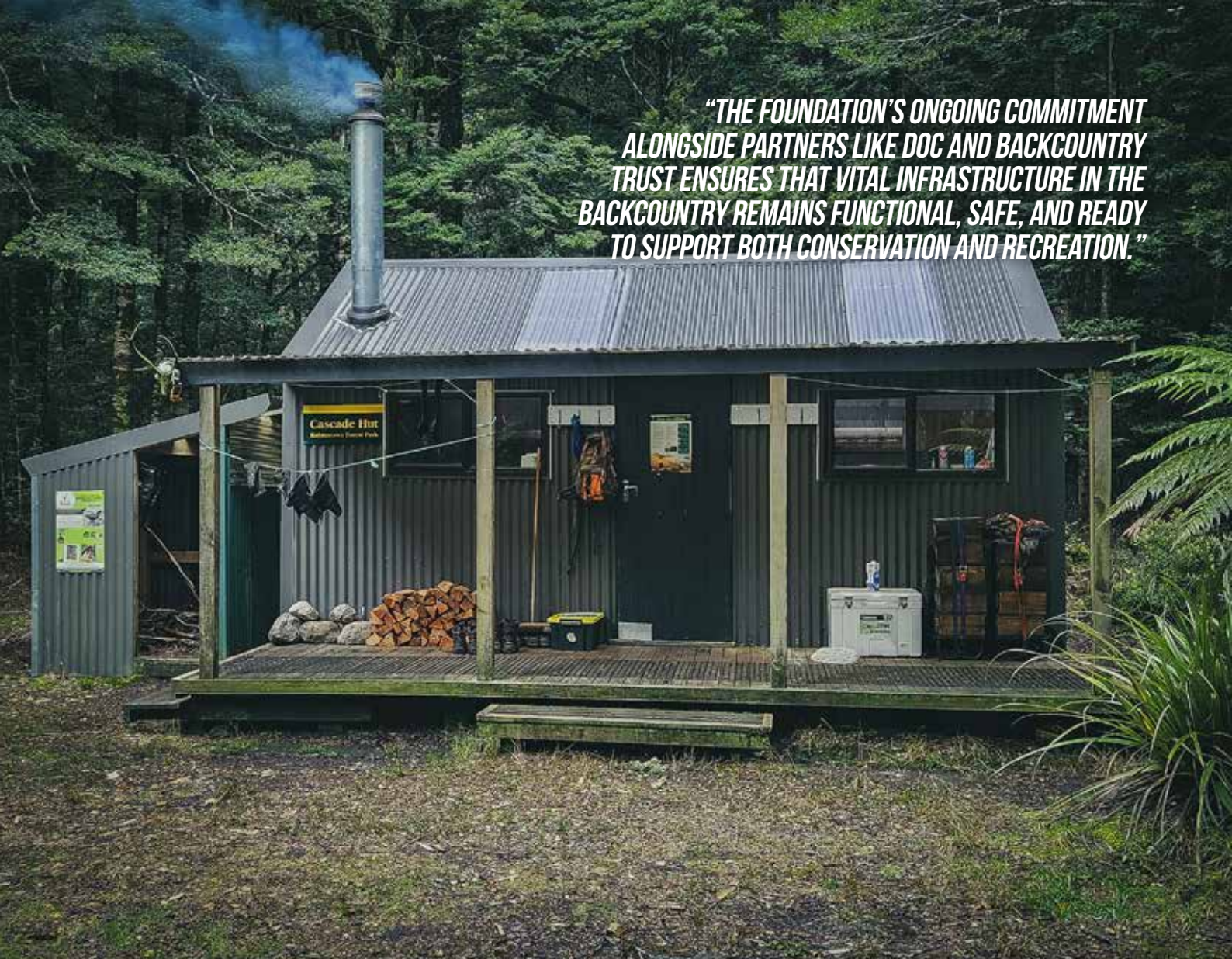
The network continues to grow, with six new sites added along the developing mountain bike track (Line 6), expected to reach the Glamping site this summer.

Plans are in motion to shift riverside traps onto the new track for easier

servicing, and to establish a downstream extension. Volunteer reports have been especially rewarding, with sightings of whio pairs and fledglings, fresh kiwi prints, and confirmed kiwi calls.

Trap design upgrades, like pegging and loosely bolting boxes, have helped reduce sympathetic firings. Bait trials alternating mutton fat and salted rabbit mince have shown promise, with rats favouring the fat. All free-floating traps are now secured, and misfires are becoming rare.

Track maintenance has also progressed, with saplings cleared and trap pegs flown in by helicopter to support continued servicing. As the MTB track rises into beech forest, it will expand predator control into new habitat.



**"THE FOUNDATION'S ONGOING COMMITMENT
ALONGSIDE PARTNERS LIKE DOC AND BACKCOUNTRY
TRUST ENSURES THAT VITAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE
BACKCOUNTRY REMAINS FUNCTIONAL, SAFE, AND READY
TO SUPPORT BOTH CONSERVATION AND RECREATION."**

KAIMANAWA FOREST PARK — HUT MAINTENANCE

**THE SIKA FOUNDATION
CONTINUES TO PLAY A KEY
ROLE IN MAINTAINING HUTS
AND TRACKS ACROSS THE
KAIMANAWA FOREST PARK.**

A major project this year was the Waipakihi Hut renovation, a collaboration funded by Back Country Trust and led by Waikato-based builder, Sika Foundation's hut and tracks manager Brett Stokman.

Backed by BCT's \$20,000 budget, Brett's team replaced the roof, rebuilt the fireplace and kitchen, and repaired the deck. The Foundation's ongoing commitment alongside partners like DOC and Backcountry Trust ensures that vital infrastructure in the backcountry remains functional, safe, and ready to support both conservation and recreation.

WAIPAKIHI HUT — SUMMER 2025

Report by Brett Stokman

During the summer of 2025, I, Brett Stokman, alongside a select crew of skilled tradesmen from the Waikato region, carried out essential maintenance work on the Waipakihi Hut. The project was supported by

Cascade Hut still looks great, with regular upkeep taking place by our trapping volunteers.

the Sika Foundation and the Back Country Trust, whose assistance made this effort possible.

Trip One – Roofing & Structural Work (4 Days)

On our first trip, the team flew into Waipakihi Hut for four days of intensive work. Key tasks completed:

- **Re-roofing:** The existing iron roof was removed and replaced with new iron, generously donated via the Back Country Trust.
- **Kitchen Upgrade and fireplace install:** The old kitchen, which had become infested with mice and rats, was completely



removed. We installed a new open-shelf kitchen bench to improve storage and prevent future vermin issues, as well as a new fireplace.

- **Wood Shed:** Recycled iron from the old roof was repurposed to construct a new (albeit rustic) woodshed – not a work of art, but solid and functional.
- **Deck Repairs:** Rotten and cracked decking boards were replaced, and the supporting veranda



post – previously delaminating – was replaced for improved structural integrity.

- **Spouting:** The sagging and loose guttering was entirely replaced, and a new NovaFlo drainage system was installed to direct water runoff away from the hut.
- **Interior Work:** The hut floors were thoroughly cleaned and given their first coat of varnish before we flew out.

Trip Two – Finishing & Painting (3 Days)

On our second trip, we returned for a further three days to complete the finishing touches:

- **Windows & Doors:** All windows and doors were cleaned and painted inside and out.

- **Flooring:** The hut floors received a second coat of varnish, enhancing durability and appearance.

Recommended Future Work

While we achieved a lot over two trips, there are some tasks that would benefit from attention in the near future:

- **Meat Safe:** Constructing a dedicated meat safe for hunters and trampers.
- **Toilet Relocation:** The current long drop is nearing full capacity and should be relocated soon.
- **Exterior Paint:** The exterior of the hut would benefit from a full repaint within the next two years to preserve timber and maintain appearance.



Sika family group Manson, Kaweka Forest Park.

DEER OVER-ABUNDANCE — THE IMPORTANCE OF 'PREDATION'

By Cam Speedy

DEER OVER-ABUNDANCE IS INCREASING. IT IS A GLOBAL ISSUE – IRELAND, SCOTLAND, USA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, ARGENTINA TO NAME A FEW COUNTRIES GRAPPLING WITH THE ISSUE.

Man has removed natural deer predators from most deer ecosystems around the world, and where deer have been introduced to

foreign systems, they generally have no natural predators.

Human hunting must, therefore, take on the role of pruning the herds to fit the habitat. The need for 'predation' to keep the balance is a critical issue for deer managers all over the planet.

During 2024, I was privileged to host a US Game Biologist as part of a NZ tour arranged by the NZ Game

Animal Council and Safari Club International (NZ Chapter).

We talked at length about game management both here and in the US. When questioned about the optimal bull to cow ratios in trophy elk herds in the US, he stated: "35, no more than 50 bulls per 100 cows".

When I suggested to him that the Fiordland wapiti herd target was 110 bulls per 100 cows, his response came immediately, without thought or hesitation: "But Cam, you don't have predation". It highlighted for me once again that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to game management. Every system is different.

Around the world, 'natural' deer herds have evolved in the presence of intense predation pressure (mostly on fawns) from predators like lynx, coyote, bobcat, bears and foxes.

Severe winter snow and cold also prunes back fawn survival. Up to 50% losses of fawns occur in many natural deer herds. Natural deer herds also have apex predators such as wolves and cougars that target both juveniles and older or weaker adults.

For a deer herd that has a balanced sex ratio, annual reproductive output is typically about 25% (doubling every four years). With predation and winter die-offs, that drops to 12-15% – doubling every six to seven years. Here in New Zealand, most of our herds have female biased sex ratios (2:1 or more) due to an over harvest of (mostly younger) males.

Our deer herds have annual reproductive outputs of 35-50%, and NO fawn predation. As a result, herd size can double every two to three years. Deer herds are a totally renewable resource.

If hunters do not take on the role of harvesting younger and female deer, they can become over-abundant – very quickly. This can result in habitat damage in the form of native forest depletion; forestry damage; crop, pasture and fence damage in our farming landscapes; and slowing the recovery of slip scars after heavy rain events.

In Aldo Leopold's essay "*Thinking like a Mountain*" he describes how the slopes of many a newly wolf-less mountain in the USA during the early 1900's, withered under a maze of new deer trails.

"IN THE ABSENCE OF FAWN PREDATION AND HARSH WINTERS TO LIMIT POPULATION GROWTH, WE MUST REMOVE FAR MORE FEMALES IN OUR DEER HARVESTS. SHOOTING MALES DOES NOTHING TO REDUCE POPULATION GROWTH."

In the end, the hoped-for deer herds starved and died of their own 'too-much'. History has a habit of repeating itself. Humans, it seems, are slow to learn.

Hunting 'predation' of deer herds by humans can be affected by cultural issues too. Around the globe, as humans become more urbanised and disconnected from nature, we see an anti-hunting culture evolving.

Firearms are considered 'dangerous'; hunting is 'cruel'; and meat is 'bad' for the planet. The effects on who goes hunting, where and how, that flow from these perspectives are increasingly limiting deer 'predation'.

Here in New Zealand, in addition to a lack of natural predators,



TOP & ABOVE: Skinny Kaimanawa sika – poor forest health equals poor deer health. The two are inextricably linked. Photo: Sika Foundation Rangitikei Trail Camera (Image above) Survey.

comparatively mild winters and an evolving anti-hunting culture amongst our urban population, many hunters still see shooting female deer as 'bad' for hunting.

Our hunting social media pages are full of photos of velvet stags, spikers and 'trophies', rather than female deer. The resistance of Kiwi hunters to shooting hinds is understandable.

When I first started hunting in the early 1980's, deer numbers were at historically very low levels following large scale commercial hunting.

This formed a persistent mindset that we need to 'look after the numbers',

often targeting spikers so as not to impact the breeding population.

Today, we have more deer than we know what to do with and we need to flip that mindset 180 degrees. 'Look after the numbers', 'more-is-better' and 'antler-focused' philosophies drive a heavy selection bias of males over females in our deer harvests – further exacerbating over-abundance.

Effectively managing deer over-abundance in New Zealand relies on a change of hunting culture. As responsible, connected, respectful hunters we must take on the role of predators and herd managers.



ABOVE & RIGHT: Sika fawns – young deer are extremely vulnerable to predation. Low fawn survival is the primary means of controlling deer population growth in most natural deer habitat systems. Photos: Tim Maule.

In the absence of fawn predation and harsh winters to limit population growth, we must remove far more females in our deer harvests. Shooting males does nothing to reduce population growth.

In fact, male biased deer harvests increase reproductive output leading to habitat pressure which reduces deer condition (see images of skinny Kaimanawa high-country sika hinds).

It decreases competition for mating rights during the rut; and it lowers trophy quality. Sadly, it can also turn landowner support for deer from positive to negative. To hear fallow deer increasingly being referred to as 'paddock-rats' is an example of this shift.

New Zealand has always been browsed. A thousand years ago, the browsing animals were large birds (ratites, related to emu and



“WHILE DEER AND MOA ARE NOT THE SAME, THE KEY ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE IS THAT THE HERBIVORE DENSITIES IN OUR ANCIENT BIRD FORESTS WERE INDEED RESTRICTED BY PREDATION AND THE FOREST-HERBIVORE-PREDATOR SYSTEM WAS IN BALANCE.”

cassowary, known as moa). There were up to five different species of moa co-existing in some forest habitats, ranging in size from ~20kg

to ~250 kg. These browsers occurred at densities of 3 – 4 moa/km².

The balance between vegetation and herbivores was maintained by a range of predatory birds. A large (20+kg) rail-like predator known as an adzebill, with huge neck muscles to wield a heavy skull and bill, that housed an unusually large tongue, was supremely adapted to eating moa eggs and young chicks.

A variety of raptors such as Eyles Harrier (3.5kg) would have preyed on chicks and small juveniles; and the



Sika family group – without predation, family group size starts to grow exponentially. Group sizes of five or more are an indication that increased harvest is required. Photo: Gary Harwood.



Sika family group – family group sizes of three are an indication that reproductive output is strong, and harvest pressure should be maintained. However, it is the females that should be targeted, not the spikers. Photo: Fiona Duley.

largest of them all – the Haast Eagle (14kg) – predated adult moa.

This guild of predators maintained a delicate balance in the landscape between vegetation and herbivores. In fact, juvenile moa made up a comparatively low proportion (just 10-15%) of moa remains in the fossil record, indicating that while moa produced plenty of eggs throughout their long (60+ year) adult life – one or two each season with the chick hatching at a highly advanced stage – juvenile survival post hatching was low.

That is how nature works. Those that survived were highly tuned to their

environment, and that environment was protected from browsing by intense predation. While deer and moa are not the same, the key ecological principle is that the herbivore densities in our ancient bird forests were indeed restricted by predation and the forest-herbivore-predator system was in balance.

In the absence of natural predators to restrict fawn survival and therefore, deer population growth here in New Zealand, there is a need for intense human harvest, particularly of female deer, to fulfil that ecological role.

Deer over-abundance is not a good outcome for anyone. While



Adzebill – NZ Postage Stamp – Extinct Bird Series (1996): A supremely well-adapted predator of New Zealand's prehistoric bird fauna.



Moa – NZ Postage Stamp – Extinct Bird Series (1996): 12 different species of moa are recognised – ranging from 20kg to 250kg. They heavily browsed the ancient bird forests of New Zealand. The balance between herbivores and habitat was kept by a range of predators that targeted moa eggs, chicks, juveniles and adults.



Haast's Eagle – NZ Postage Stamp – Extinct Bird Series (1996): The 'Hughs 500' of the bird world. Haast's Eagle was the largest bird of prey to have ever existed and the ultimate apex predator, hunting the bush-edges of New Zealand's ancient bird forests.

deer have immense social, cultural and economic value, they also have a consequence.

As hunters within a now highly modified natural system, we must play that critical role of 'predator' to ensure we keep the balance.



ADAPTIVE DEER MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH PLAN 2024/2025 UPDATE

THE THREE MAIN OBJECTIVES FOR THE SIKA FOUNDATIONS ADAPTIVE DEER MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH PLAN FUNDED BY JOBS OF NATURE, IN STRONG COLLABORATION WITH AND ENABLED BY FURTHER FUNDING FROM DOC FOR 2024/25, WERE TO:

- Maintain the downward pressure on the reproductive output of the herd in the Rangitikei Remote Experience Zone (REZ_MU), in November 2024.
- Remeasure seedling ratio (SRI) and faecal pellet indices (FPI) in the REZ in Feb/March of 2025 to understand changes in relative deer abundance and response in habitat from management efforts over the course of the project.

- Measure baseline seedling ratio and faecal pellet indices for the neighbouring Waipakihi management unit (WPK_MU) to gauge a snapshot of habitat condition at place.

There is no “one size fits all”. Different habitat, stress and hunting pressures exists at a range of levels across the landscape.

DEER MANAGEMENT

Previous operations in the Remote Experience Zone (REZ) have tested the various methods and technology available for reducing female deer densities, these have ranged from ground hunting with indicating dogs, thermal drones, long-range shooting techniques and aerial (helicopter-



Monitoring crew in the REZ.



Graham Nugent in Clements Mill Road.

based) operations (thermal assisted and conventional).

The most efficient and cost-effective method for maintaining the downward pressure on the hinds and their family groups (who live in discreet home ranges impacting mountain beech habitat) continues to be thermal assisted aerial operations.

In November 2024, a 35-hour thermal assisted aerial operation was undertaken across the entire REZ.



Graham autopsying an old sika hind harvested in the REZ.

“THE MOST EFFICIENT AND COST-EFFECTIVE METHOD FOR MAINTAINING THE DOWNWARD PRESSURE ON THE HINDS AND THEIR FAMILY GROUPS (WHO LIVE IN DISCREET HOME RANGES IMPACTING MOUNTAIN BEECH HABITAT) CONTINUES TO BE THERMAL ASSISTED AERIAL OPERATIONS.”

The Sika Foundation contributed one hour of helicopter time to recover carcasses that were logistically retrievable and safe to do so. 14 carcasses were able to be recovered for autopsy, and for meat donation to local iwi and the Foundation’s Mince for Foodbanks programme.

The 2024 operation removed 275 hinds/yearlings, 42 stags of poor quality, leaving 24 stags of good quality – working towards a better-quality sika hunting resource more in balance with the habitat.

MONITORING

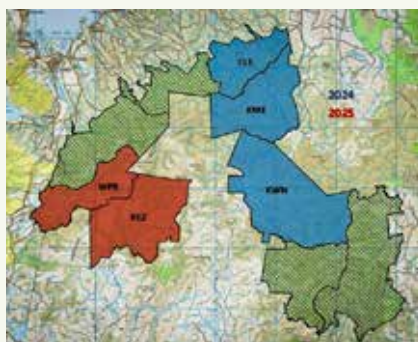
The monitoring crew had a successful 2025 season with the REZ receiving its first SRI/FPI re-measure (since the 2022/23 baseline) alongside a



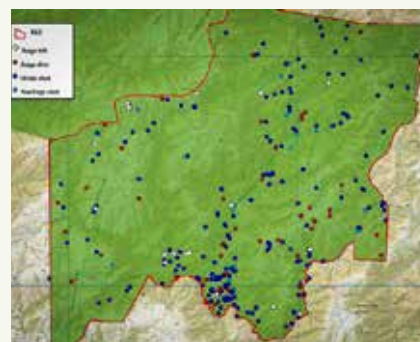
A sika stag assessed and left in the November REZ operation.



A sika family group thermal detection, Nov REZ operation.



Management units (MU) scheduled for monitoring 2024 and 2025.



November REZ kills.



A good conditioned young REZ sika stag (early Dec 2024).



A healthy fawn in the REZ (early Dec 2024).

baseline SRI/FPI measurement for the neighbouring WPK_MU, both being completed by the end of March.

The Foundation was also fortunate to spend time with and host Dr Graham Nugent for various field trips into the Clements Mill area and the REZ MU. Alongside Project Manager Tim Maule and monitoring contractors, there was lots of discussion and

project insights regarding these two different locations where sika deer exist and impact habitat at opposite “ends of the scale” largely due to access, hunting pressure and habitat type.

Graham spent his career working for Landcare and Research, participating in numerous browser/forest relationship projects and research.

“THERE ARE ALSO SUBSTANTIAL AREAS OF NATURALLY OCCURRING DIE BACK IN THE REZ AND TRUE LEFT WAIPAKIHI MOUNTAIN BEECH HABITAT. THESE “DIE BACK” SITES CAN BECOME HIGHLY DESIRABLE SITES FOR SIKA DEER AS COLLAPSING STEMS SMASH DOWN VEGETATION FROM THE BROWSE TIER...”

Graham was also one of the founding architects of the Seedling Ratio Index (SRI) method, being used in this project.

SUMMARY

1089 deer have now been removed as a part of the SF ADM&R Plan (1405 deer since 2017 when including the 316 deer that were removed as a part of the southern Kaimanawa TB Survey).

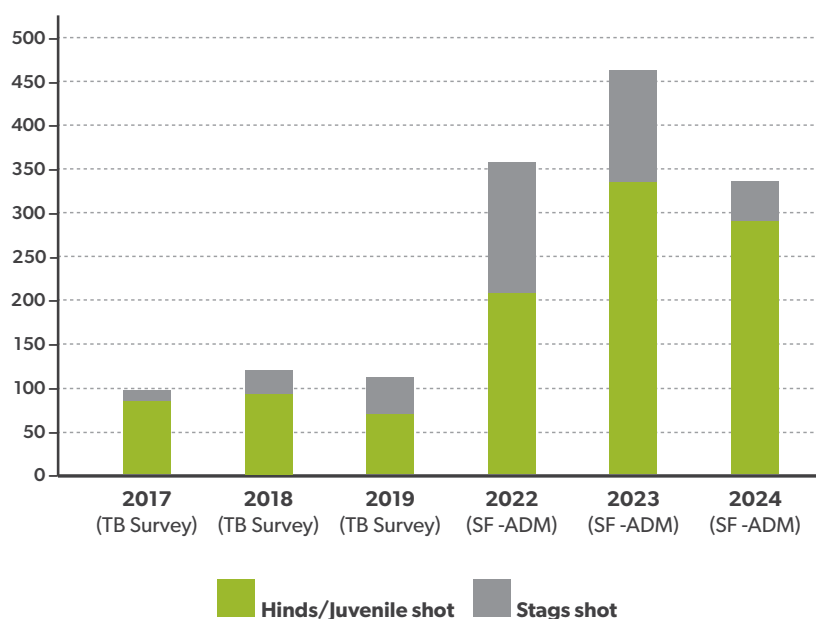
The 2017 to 2019 TB survey provided a baseline sample of 213 hinds from the REZ for analysis, that showed almost half (48%) of the breeding age hinds were barren and 76% were in average to poor condition.

Autopsy data now collected from 195 hinds of breeding age during the 2022 – 2024 deer management operations, show an increase in reproductive rates to 72%, with an average condition score of 2.7 out of 5.

Although herd health has improved quickly, habitat health is a far slower process that is dependent on maintaining deer densities at appropriate levels over time.

There are also substantial areas of naturally occurring die back in the REZ and true left Waipakihi mountain

REZ Deer Management Operations 2017 - 2024



A pulse of red beech and mountain beech seedlings in the southern now REZ now surviving the browse tier.

beech habitat. These “die back” sites can become highly desirable sites for sika deer as collapsing stems smash down vegetation from the browse tier, combined with increased sunlight and rotting vegetation/nutrients creating habitat that sika deer favour.

Continuing to manage sika deer impact, and monitoring forest trajectory at these sites is critical to ensure sika deer impacts are managed and canopy replacement occurs.



A pulse of mountain beech seedlings in the REZ.

OBSERVATIONS AND TECHNICAL REPORTS

The Sika Foundation is working with DOC to construct a technical report in 2025 with the data that has been collected for all five management units measured over the sika range during the project (CLE, KME, KWN, WPK) inclusive of the REZ baseline and remeasure.

The REZ remeasure will provide valuable insights into the decrease in relative deer abundance and response in habitat following management efforts, assisting in management decisions moving forward.



Large area of beech canopy dieback, Waipakihi Valley, March 2020.

KAIMANAWA BEECH MAST 2024/25

OUR BEECH FORESTS DON'T FLOWER EVERY YEAR. WHILE THERE MIGHT BE SMALL AMOUNTS OF OCCASIONAL FLOWER SOME YEARS, EVERY FIVE OR SO YEARS, ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS RESULT IN PROLIFIC FLOWERING OR 'MASTING' ACROSS LARGE AREAS.

Forest 'masting' is a key driver of breeding for many native birds – most famously kākāpō breed when rimu masts. In beech forest, kākā and kākāriki can breed well when beech trees mast, and kereru and kākā breed in the Kaimanawa low country when beech, kahikatea, miro and mātai all mast together – as they often do.

The last mast in the Kaimanawa high country was the 2018/19 season. 2024/25 is another big year with red beech, mountain beech, miro, kahikatea and karamu all seeding/ fruiting heavily.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

There are two reasons:



Beech canopy collapse, Rangitikei Valley, December 2024.



Abundant mountain beech flower covering the forest floor, in the Rangitikei Valley December 2024.



Three young ship rats caught in a single DOC200 trap (May 2025).

1. Predators: Large amounts of seed and fruit create a huge food source for rodents. We are already seeing big increases in rat numbers across the Central North Island. Over winter, rat numbers will increase at more than 1% per day – quadrupling in four months. Later in spring, these high rodent numbers will fuel high stoat breeding rates.



Mountain Beech flower, November 2024.



Red Beech flower, November 2024.

The combinations of high rat and stoat numbers can be devastating for treasures such as kiwi, whio, kākā and kākāriki. By late May 2025, Sika Foundation traps were already catching much higher numbers of predators than for the past two seasons.

2. Beech Forest Recovery: Between 2019 and 2022 large areas of Kaimanawa beech forest started dying. This is a natural phenomenon, possibly caused by drought, some sort of pathogen or a combination of both. High winds have started to topple many of the dead trees creating light gaps that should start a beech regeneration process. However, where deer numbers are elevated, seedling recovery hasn't started. Large amounts of beech seed falling now creates an opportunity for the forest to recover, especially in areas where sika hind numbers have been lowered.



JAW & DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT HUNTS

MEASURING AND AGING DEER JAW BONES PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN UNDERSTANDING HERD HEALTH. WHEN DEER ARE IN A STRESSED HABITAT WITH POOR NUTRITIONAL INTAKE DURING THEIR CRUCIAL GROWTH YEARS, THEY WILL MATURE WITH A SMALLER SKELETAL SIZE (ALL SKELETAL GROWTH OCCURS IN THE FIRST 3-4 YEARS).

Aligning skeletal, age, reproductive and condition data from sika hinds provides further insight into herd health and the habitat they are interacting with "at place". This is due to the fact they live in discreet home ranges of 100-200Ha, living in matriarchal family groups.

This R11 hind Mike Penn shot on the 2025 March management hunt

was above average in skeletal size (212mm in heel) but shot in very poor condition (1 out of 5) and not in milk.

This sample tells a story of a very good start to life in productive habitat in order to reach her skeletal size, but now she is now struggling in this habitat at a time of year when she should be at her fattest. Declining habitat? drought? Age? the larger the dataset, the more accurate the insights are.

Hunter datasheets provide wildlife observations and data including hours hunted, animals contacted, and animals shot in areas throughout the CNI sika range. "Hunter Habits" and harvest by age/sex play a key role in understanding recreational harvest impacts the sika herd across the CNI sika range.



R11 hind shot on the 2025 March management hunt.



A hunter's hind harvest with jaw removed.



Jaw cleaned up attached to jaw card & datasheet.

DATA COLLECTION SUMMARY

458 jaws were processed from July 2024 to June 2025 (an increase of 139 jaws compared to the previous July 2023 to June 2024 dataset). The Sika Foundation typically collates these two valuable forms of data from three different places: professional management operations, Sika Foundation management hunts and recreational hunters.

AREA/BLOCK CATCHMENT	TOTAL HOURS HUNTED	DEER CONTACTED BUT NOT SHOT	STAGS SHOT	JUVENILE STAGS SHOT	HINDS SHOT	JUVENILE HINDS SHOT
Mangatainoka Heads Shelter	-	-	-	-	1	-
Te Puke Hut	-	-	-	1	-	-
Maungaorangi	63	4	1	1	-	-
Otore Saddle	69	16	1	1	1	-
Pox Clearing	182	32	3	-	1	-
Pukehuia	172	34	-	-	3	1
Ruatahuna	10	4	1	-	-	-
Thunderbolt	80	26	6		1	1
Ti Tiringa	106	26	1	-	-	2
Upper Kaipo	63	16	-	-	2	-
Waimarino	-	9	-	-	2	2
Waiotaka	76	20	2	-	3	1
Whitikau	88	14	-	-	-	-
TOTALS	909	201	15	3	14	7

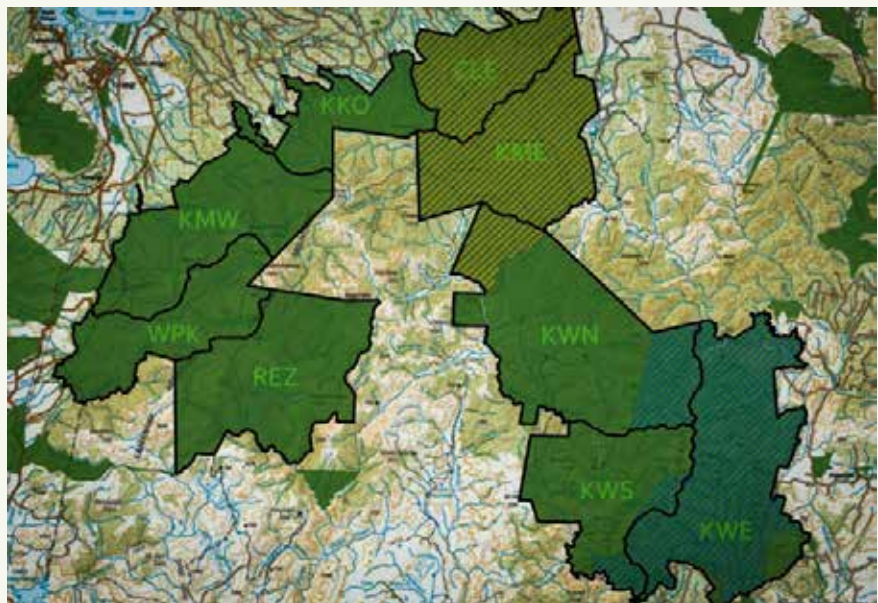


2024 Helisika spring competition promos.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Helisika and Stoney Creek ran the 2024 Helisika Hunting Competition, working closely with the Sika Foundation during the spring of 2024, to encourage recreational hunters to harvest more sika hinds, increase data collection for the Foundation, and increase hunter awareness around the importance of hind harvest and their impact on the habitat they live in.

The competition ran from the October 1 to November 20, 2024 (to



The 9 Kaimanawa and Kaweka Forest park management units are of particular interest to gather jaw herd health data from, to align with habitat insights from seedling ratio indices collected in these management units.

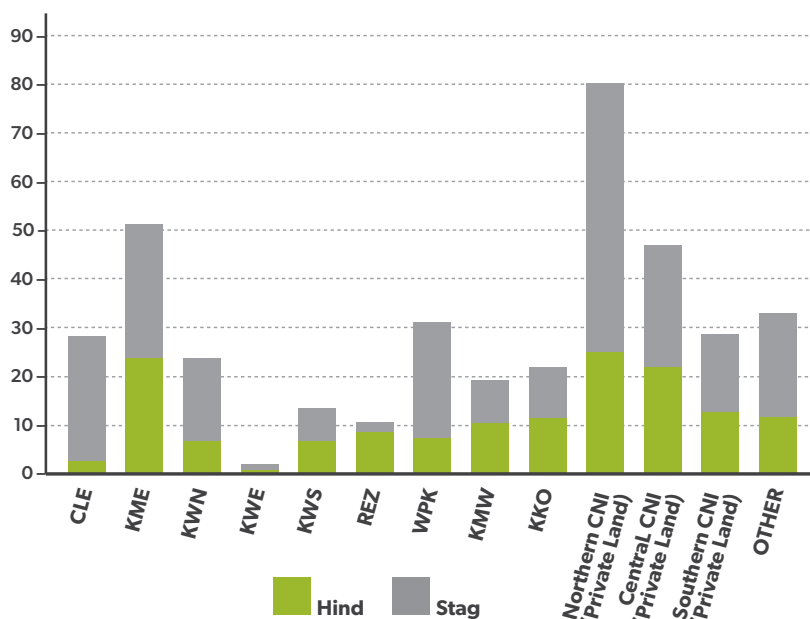
avoid fawn abandonment) and was a huge success with the large volume of hunters participating, collecting 57 jaws in total (50 hind jaws) to contribute valuable herd health data for the 2024-2025 dataset.

All hunters who submitted jaws received their jaw results back detailing the animals age and

various insights into reproductive information, condition and skeletal size comparisons with Central North Island herd averages.

The Foundation aims to increase the sample size to 1000 jaws annually across the Central North Island sika range, with a particular focus on collecting 100 jaws (50M:50F) per

Total Recreational Hunter Jaw Collection Distribution



public land management unit – to understand herd health at place.

DATA ANALYSIS

Out of the 458 jaws aged, the herd average heel length for a mature sika hind is (200mm) and (210mm) for a mature sika stag.

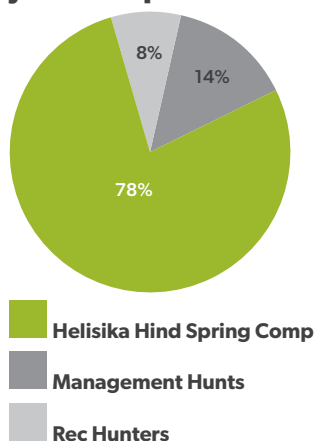
For the recreation hunter portion, the programme saw a dramatic increase in hind jaws processed making up 46% of the total sample, largely due to the Helisika spring hind competition (38% of the hind jaws aged from this timeframe). Stags were 54% of the total sample with 39% of stags being harvested in April alone.

The Sika Foundation continues to encourage recreational hunters to focus on the harvesting of breeding hinds, living in limited home ranges in matriachial family groups “at place”, to their reduce their habitat impact.

MANAGEMENT HUNTS

Management hunts remain a key education tool to concentrate hunters into areas to encourage

Recreational Hunter Jaw Sample Source



hind harvest, some of these landing sites are strictly accessed for management purposes and these sites located through Kaimanawa and Northern Kaweka are available at lower cost through Helisika, with a further discount and “first pick” for Sika Foundation members.

There were three management hunts in November (2024) and March/ June (2025). A big thanks to Sika Foundation members and Helisika who to enable these management hunts to go ahead.



Cutting a cross section needs to be done to accurately age jaws after tooth eruption patterns have erupted (R4+).

“THE SIKA FOUNDATION CONTINUES TO ENCOURAGE RECREATIONAL HUNTERS TO FOCUS ON THE HARVESTING OF BREEDING HINDS, LIVING IN LIMITED HOME RANGES IN MATRIACHIAL FAMILY GROUPS “AT PLACE”, TO THEIR REDUCE THEIR HABITAT IMPACT.”

Look out for jaw boxes across the sika range below; or send your clean jaws to John Cook, 21 Shera street, Taupō, 3330.

- Clements Mill Road (Sika Lodge).
- Helisika hangar.
- Tauranga Taupō garage.
- Waipakihi Road (KAA entrance).
- Puketitiri Road (Potaka).
- River to Ranges (Hastings).

A big thanks to all the hunters for dropping jaws/datasheets off and collection partners for facilitating jaw boxes. The hours of mahi from Sika Foundation volunteers put into ageing, measuring, entering the data and sending back results to hunters is also worth noting.

The jaw crew also assisted in ageing jaws for the Wapiti Foundation, Pureora hunting competition and Northland Regional Council for the Russell State Forest sika eradication.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Beech dieback; Kaimanawa REZ hind; Healthy hind.



- HOSI designation does not “protect” sika. It simply gives them status as a ‘game animal’ that can be managed for conservation & hunting, within a specified area.
- It’s only within a specified area of Public Conservation Land.
- No changes to the status or management of sika on any private land.
- No ‘one size fits all’ approach. Determined by terrain, access, forest make-up, hunting pressure, herd make-up, and deer impact.
- No hunting restrictions (what, where, when, by who) being proposed. Generally, there is a need to shoot more sika to protect the forest.
- Hunters will be encouraged to shoot more hinds.
- Where forest stress and poor deer condition is evident, population reduction will be required.
- No balloting systems or hunting fees proposed. There may be some active management of hunter access in some locations at high use times e.g, the roar.
- Active monitoring of both the sika herd and forest condition.

KEY INFORMATION RE THE SIKA HERD OF SPECIAL INTEREST (HOSI)

THE SIKA FOUNDATION SUBMITTED A PROPOSAL FOR A HERD OF SPECIAL INTEREST (HOSI) STATUS FOR SIKA DEER IN THE KAIMANAWA AND KAWEKA FOREST PARKS TO THE MINISTER OF HUNTING AND FISHING IN FEBRUARY 2025.

It was moved into the statutory consultation phase in April. We believe that the adoption of a Sika HOSI management plan will encourage a collective sika management approach by

recognising and providing for a range of values – especially cultural values held by Mana Whenua, conservation, community and recreation.

The Sika Foundation is grateful to the Department of Conservation and the Game Animal Council for supporting us through the proposal development process and acknowledges the constructive conversations and consultation that has been started with local Iwi and Hapu as we navigate this new legislation.



MINCE FOR FOODBANKS PROJECT

THE SIKA FOUNDATION MINCE FOR FOODBANKS PROJECT BEGAN IN MAY 2020 WITH THE FOUNDATION PAYING FOR TRANSPORT FROM INVERCARGILL TO TAUPŌ 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. THIS WAS SPLIT EQUALLY BETWEEN TAUPŌ & 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 mince 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 locally 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 total of more than 10,600 kg of mince has been donated, processed and provided to a range of organisations including: Tūrangi Foodbank; Awhina Society – Taupō Women's Refuge and Community Foodbank Inc; Kainga Aroha Te Awamutu; Taupō Baptist Church Sunday dinners for the Homeless; Te Kuiti Foodbank; Ngāti Rangi Community



“ON 5 MAY 2021, THE FIRST LOCAL MINCE DONATION WAS DELIVERED TO TŪRANGI FOODBANK. SINCE THEN, A TOTAL OF MORE THAN 10,600 KG OF MINCE HAS BEEN DONATED, PROCESSED AND PROVIDED TO A RANGE OF ORGANISATIONS...”

Connectors Ohakune; ‘Everybody Eats’ Onehunga; the ‘Food Rescue Kitchen’ TV Show, and two Ronald McDonald Houses in Auckland.

That is over 6.0 tonnes of clean, organic protein delivered to families and people 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.

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

The Origins Foundation in the USA has also come to the party with \$10,000 per annum for the next two years to help increase the flow of mince.



One of the 11 collared spikers. Photo: Helisika.

SIKA FOUNDATION SIKA SPIKER SATELLITE TRACKING PROJECT

THE SIKA FOUNDATION OBTAINED SPONSORSHIP FUNDING AND SUPPORT TO EMBARK ON A GROUND-BREAKING SIKA STAG MOVEMENT STUDY IN 2024. A TOTAL OF ELEVEN SIKA SPIKERS WERE FITTED WITH IRIIDIUM SATELLITE TRACKING COLLARS BETWEEN MAY AND JULY 2024.

Data fixes of time, date, location and temperature are obtained at four hourly intervals (six times per day) and uploaded to the satellite, daily. These can then be downloaded and mapped to allow daily and seasonal movements to be tracked. At least 10 of the spikers were 1+ stags (rising 2yo) targeted while still in family groups on their birth ranges, while one is thought have been a 2+ stag (rising 3yo) at capture.

WHY?

The Foundation seeks to understand how far sika spikers disperse from where they are born; where they set up their rut grounds relative to their birth ranges; and where they set up their summer feed grounds relative to their rut grounds.

This information will help navigate how optimal sika stag habitat might best be managed into the future – whether that be through a Sika Herd of Special Interest (HOSI) or in consultation with interested landowners.

WHERE?

The Foundation negotiated access to some 15,000ha of private Central North Island wilderness with a mix of beech, manuka, tussock, plantation and pasture habitat, where



Release of a collared stag. Photo: Helisika.

landowners were supportive and shared common values around a desire to better understand and look after this valuable resource.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Of the eleven sika spikers originally collared between May and July 2024, ten were still alive with functioning collars as of 1 April 2025. One collar had failed, and communication was lost, despite manual ground searches and an extensive aerial search. The remaining collars had all been transmitting data for up to 10 months, with a variety of home range use patterns emerging.

The images on the opposite page show three distinct patterns that typify the movements of the sample of collared animals so far. The green dots are actual GPS fixes while the pink lines are automatically filled in by the tracking programme, between four-hourly fixes. These pink lines do not necessarily equate to the actual path of movement by the animal.

One of the most interesting patterns is a large-scale dispersal away from the capture point (denoted by the yellow pin), shown in Image 1. After spending the winter and spring around his capture point, in December 2024 this young stag undertook a 50km journey over a



Another collared spiker released.
Photo: Helisika.

“THE TWO MONTHS (APRIL/MAY) OVER THE TRADITIONAL SIKA RUT WILL BE OF INTENSE INTEREST. WHERE STAGS GO, OR IF THEY STAY WHERE THEY ARE, WILL HELP INFORM OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW SIKA STAGS USE THIS COMPLEX LANDSCAPE.”

three-week period, travelling north through a mix native and pine forest, to a completely new location. He then settled in a very discrete area for three months, some 35km from where he was initially collared. As the rut approached, his movements once again started to increase.

The second pattern is from a young stag who moved to a very discrete range after capture and stayed there all winter, into early spring. We suspect he got a bit of a fright and went home to hunker down with mum. During the spring, a distinct shift in his range occurred as he moved back out into more open feed areas, where his range over-lapped with two other collared stags.

Our interpretation of this pattern is that the lower right-hand cluster of fixes represents his mother's home range (where he was born). He



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Large Dispersal Event from capture point; Short Dispersal Event; Exploratory Range Expansion from a core area.

appears to have made a number of return visits to this range through spring, but the majority of his fixes have been 2 – 3 km away.

The third pattern represents the majority of collared stag movements, with a core range not far from where they were collared, punctuated with forays further afield. Of particular interest in Image 3 is the ~5km movement west where he hit a deer fence, was unable to go further, and returned to his core range.

The two months (April/May) over the traditional sika rut will be of intense interest. Where stags go, or if they stay where they are, will help inform our understanding of how sika stags use this complex landscape. Only time will tell. There is still so much more to learn.

Our sincere thanks go out to all our sponsors and supporters:

- Helisika.
- Stoney Creek.

- NZDA National.
- NZDA Auckland Branch.
- Safari Club International (NZ Chapter).
- Sika Hunters NZ.
- Kai Waho Experience.
- Poronui Station.
- Lochinver Station.
- East Taupō Lands Trust.
- Plus, other supporters who wish to remain anonymous.

We will continue to keep an eye on these stags and update the sika hunting community on further progress.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Please DO NOT shoot collared stags! These stags might turn up anywhere in coming years, so please carefully identify your target. You can also support our work by becoming a member of the Sika Foundation or making a donation.



**Kaipo River Swing bridge
Heli hike 2025 participants.**

MAHI AROHA SUMMER PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY

EACH JANUARY, THE SIKA FOUNDATION LEADS THE KAIPO RIVER SWING BRIDGE HELI-HIKE AS PART OF THE MAHI AROHA SUMMER PROGRAMME, A NATURE-BASED INITIATIVE THAT CONNECTS PEOPLE WITH CONSERVATION IN THE CENTRAL PLATEAU.

This year, 20 participants joined us for a helicopter flight into the Kaipo Swing Bridge, followed by a walk along the Kaipo River to Oamaru and Poronui Huts.

For many, it was a first-time experience in this remote part of the Kaimanawa. For others, it was a chance to see a familiar place through a fresh conservation lens.

The day offered an insight into hunter-led conservation, complete with whio sightings, stories of volunteer mahi, and a scenic heli ride, all leaving a lasting impression.

Events like this play a vital role in sharing our work with a wider

“THE DAY OFFERED AN INSIGHT INTO HUNTER-LED CONSERVATION, COMPLETE WITH WHIO SIGHTINGS, STORIES OF VOLUNTEER MAHI, AND A SCENIC HELI RIDE, ALL LEAVING A LASTING IMPRESSION.”

audience and building a stronger connection to the whenua. A big thank you to Helisika, Poronui, DOC, and Project Tongariro for their support in making the day a success.

The Foundation also ran avian aversion training over the same month in Taupō and Tūrangi, with another 42 dogs now certified for kiwi and whio aversion.

Designed to replicate natural whio and kiwi territory, the training, led by dog handler Willy Marsh, helps keep dogs, whio, and kiwi safe.

These events are a valuable extension of the Sika Foundation’s Whio Protection Programme and a practical



Shadow – a valuable sika hunting indicating dog, whio and kiwi aversion trained.



Sika Foundation Volunteers Bastian (left), and Marcus (right).

example of conservation in action, backed by community, partnerships, and purpose.



SPECIAL THANKS

THE SIKA FOUNDATION'S CONSERVATION SUCCESS RELIES ON STRONG PARTNERSHIPS WITH ORGANISATIONS LIKE DOC, PORONUI LODGE, NZDA, HELISIKA, AND KAIMANAWA ALPINE ADVENTURES.

We're also grateful for the generous support from sponsors including Stoney Creek, The Origins Foundation (formerly Blood Origins), Genesis Energy, Call of the Wild, the Auckland NZDA Branch, and WRC.

Most importantly, we thank our dedicated volunteers. Your commitment and hard work are invaluable. Together, this collective effort is making a real difference in protecting some of the Kaimanawa's most vulnerable native species.



PARTNERS, SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

WE WOULD LIKE TO GIVE SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS AND SPONSORS – LISTED ON THIS PAGE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER. OUR WORK WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT THEIR ONGOING SUPPORT.

We would like to pay special tribute to Stoney Creek and with The Origins Foundation who in the last 12 months have shown massive support and underpinned our projects with financial generosity. Our core supporters and sponsors continue each year to show financial support, and the Foundation is extremely grateful to them all.

PARTNER:

Stoney Creek



WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:

AJ Productions
Bayleys Taupo
BFA Business Advisors & Accountants
The Origins Foundation
Bullivant Taxidermy
Cambridge ITM
Caspak
Department of Conservation
Game Animal Council of New Zealand
Genesis Energy – Tongariro Power Scheme
Helisika
Hunting & Fishing Fly & Gun, Taupo
Kai Waho
Lahar Sika Wilderness
NZDA Taupo
Poronui Lodge
Safari Club International NZ Chapter
Sika Show NZ Hunting and Outdoor Expo
Waikato Regional Council



SPREADING THE WORD

THROUGH THE YEAR, THE TEAM WAS AGAIN INVOLVED IN A WIDE RANGE OF MEDIA AND PROMOTION WITH VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS TO HIGHLIGHT AND PROMOTE THE SIKA FOUNDATION'S WORK.

This included presentations to 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 Waikato Branch in November 2024 and Wellington in February 2025 and is rolling information and fundraising events named the Sika Series out to other parts of the country.

Support from the Sika Show also helped get key messages out there, with another big turnout at the 2024 event at Mystery Creek. The Origins Foundation premiered Kaimanawa, a beautiful short movie, in November 2024 showcasing the Sika Foundation's work.

The education, out-reach and awareness undertaken by the Foundation continues to be a cornerstone of our work, helping shift the narrative around our game animals, the important role well managed game herds can play in a modern New Zealand and how hunters can be at the forefront of conservation as a result of their presence. The Foundation is proud to be part of this cultural shift.

COMMITTEE, PROJECT LEADERS & SUPPORT

Central North Island Sika Foundation Elected Committee 2024/25 (all volunteers):

President	John Cook
Secretary	Cam Speedy
Business Manager	Mike Clinch
Female Sika Hunter Rep	Fiona Duley
General Reps	Chris Crosse, Mike Penn, Marty Noakes, Mike Main, Scott Russell, Sam Ashby
Appointed NZDA Rep	Allan Jackson
Appointed Iwi Rep	Tom Loughlin
Appointed Conservation Board Rep	TBC

Project Leads:

Sika Foundation Project Manager	Tim Maule
Whio Recovery Project Operations	Mike Main
Hut & Tracks Field Manager	Brett Stokman
Volunteer Coordinator	Candace Graham
Membership Coordinator	Kim Prenter
Management Hunts Support	Mike Penn
Jaw Aging & Data Collection	Allan Jackson

Contributors:

Marketing & Media	Martine Pierhagen
Graphic Design	Nik Maxwell

WEBSITE, SOCIAL MEDIA AND FUNDRAISING

THE SIKA FOUNDATION'S MAHI CONTINUES TO BE ACTIVELY PROMOTED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA, WITH BOTH FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM USED TO INFORM AND ENGAGE OUR COMMUNITY. TOGETHER, THESE PLATFORMS HAVE A FOLLOWING OF NEARLY 10,000 PEOPLE.

Our content is often shared by, and sometimes co-created with, our sponsors and partners including The Origins Foundation (formerly Blood Origins), NZDA, SCL and Stoney Creek, increasing our reach and steadily growing our audience.

Regular newsletters are sent to a mailing list of more than 1,100 contacts, keeping our members, volunteers and supporters up to date with our work. Our website sikafoundation.co.nz is regularly updated with new content including videos, photos, soundbites and relevant project information.

FUNDRAISING

A simple and effective way to support the Sika Foundation, and help spread the word about what we do, is by purchasing a Sika Foundation hoodie, T-shirt, or a decal sticker for your vehicle.

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



HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT US

THE SIKA FOUNDATION IS EXTREMELY GRATEFUL TO THE BUSINESSES, ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WHOSE FINANCIAL AND IN-KIND SUPPORT HELP US GROW OUR PROJECTS AND COVER ESSENTIAL COSTS.

If you would like to support us through donations, a bequest or corporate sponsorship, please contact Mike Clinch, Business Manager on 027 5577204 or e-mail mike@sikafoundation.co.nz.

If you are keen to volunteer and get involved in our projects or programmes, please email volunteer@sikafoundation.co.nz or send an expression of interest via our website. sikafoundation.co.nz/jobs.

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***“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.”***





Central North Island Sika Foundation

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