

Otago Daily Times

Published on *Otago Daily Times Online News* (<http://www.odt.co.nz>)

Role of genetics explored

Created 10/09/13

 Share 0
 Tweet 0
 ShareThis

Coastal Otago Conservation Award winner Prof Ian Jamieson, head of the University of Otago's threatened birds research group, is at the forefront of genetic research on New Zealand's threatened species and has been instrumental in moving robins and saddlebacks to Orokonui Ecosanctuary. He talks about that work.



What is it about the project you are involved in that got you interested in conservation and drives your work?

I'm interested in the science and management of translocations across New Zealand, especially when the new population might result in a high degree of inbreeding or a loss of genetic diversity.

I have been working on this with introductions of robins and saddlebacks at Orokonui Ecosanctuary.

I'm interested in the consequences for the long-term viability of the population.

My research interests were always associated with birds, but not necessarily genetics.

It is only when we started to look at why reproduction and survival were not as great as we expected for threatened birds on "predator-free" islands that we started to suspect inbreeding and loss of genetic diversity might be playing a role.

And hence we started to investigate the role of genetics.

How do the project/s you're involved in benefit conservation?

We try to work out the number of individuals that settled on the island or a mainland pest-control site, how many of those subsequently bred, and what was the breeders' relatedness.

What do you get out of your work in conservation?

I get a close connection between my research students, Doc managers, community trust advocates and the general public. We are all after similar conservation goals, but address the problems in very different ways.

[1] Coastal Otago Conservation Award winner Prof Ian Jamieson. Photo supplied.

What challenges have you faced and how have they been overcome?

With so many groups involved in the same goals and problems, initially, we don't necessarily agree on solutions. But we slowly come to a consensus for the best way forward.

What direction do you see your conservation work going in the future?

More discussion with Doc and lay people about the problems at hand before trying to solve the problem in a predetermined way.

Otago

© Allied Press Limited 2007. All the material on this page has the protection of international copyright. All rights reserved.

Source URL (retrieved on 10/09/2013 - 12:39): <http://www.odt.co.nz/regions/otago/272356/role-genetics-explored>

Links:

[1]
http://www.odt.co.nz/files/story/2013/09/coastal_otago_conservation_award_winner_prof_ian_j_522da70821.JPG