

TAIERI FLATHEAD GALAXIAS ENHANCEMENT IN PIG ROOT & SIBERIA CREEKS

Project Update July 26

The Taieri Flathead Galaxias (Tfhg) fish is a small non-migratory native fish that is confined to small streams in catchments in Otago, including locally the Waikouaiti and Wai-hemo/Shag river catchments.

The Tfhg has a threat status of Nationally Vulnerable (Dunn 2017), which is the third highest ranking given to species facing extinction. The biggest threat to the Tfhg is from brown trout.

The EOCG has been working with the Otago Regional Council (ORC) Science team and local landowners on a Tfhg enhancement program and we have recently completed Year 3 work. The aim of the program is to eradicate Trout from Pig Root and Siberia Creeks which will in turn enhance the habitat for the Tfhg.

An earlier feasibility study of the 2 creeks found that that brown trout populations were high and self-sustaining. Concluding that without trout removal this population would follow the same pathway as many other non-migratory galaxiid populations within Otago and become locally extinct.

The EOCG has received funding from the ORC Ecofund for a 3 year program (\$7000 each year) to remove the brown trout in Pig Root and Siberia Creek, with the balance of funds to be paid by the ORC. We have recently completed our final year of work, Year 3 with a total of 530 trout removed across the two creeks. Note: 435 of these trout were removed out of Upper Siberia Creek where access has been challenging.

As well as the trout removal the ORC Science team are monitoring the Tfhg population across the 2 creeks which continues to show promising results. In Year 1 prior to the Tfhg enhancement program starting 107 Tfhg were found across both creeks and in Year 2 the number has increased to 358.

Recent monitoring for Year 3 found 257 Tfhg's. Whilst this is less than Year 2 it is important to note it is still more than double the amount found in Year 1 and will be due to natural interannual variability rather than trout predation.

Due to the success of this project, the ORC will continue to fund an additional year of trout removal and monitoring. Once trout are believed to be eradicated from the 2 creeks, the work will move to eDNA monitoring.

In addition, the natural barrier/waterfall under SH85 will be assessed and potentially modified to protect this Tfhg habitat from reinvasion by the trout.

We would like to thank the landowners Dave & Judy Andrew and Tony & Julie Kearney for their ongoing support with this project.

If you have any questions about this work or want to know more, please don't hesitate to contact the EOCG co-ordinator Steph Scott on 0274 387875.

Year One

2698 brown trout removed

107 Taieri flathead galaxiid recorded (6 monitoring sites)

Year Two

825 brown trout removed

358 Taieri flathead galaxiids recorded in the 6 monitoring sites

Year Three

530 brown trout removed

257 Taieri flathead galaxiids recorded in the 6 monitoring sites



Electric fishing in action on Pig Root Creek



One of the Taieri Flathead Galaxias that were found.



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