

TROUT REMOVAL IN PIG ROOT & SIBERIA CREEKS

Project Update Sept 24

The Taieri Flathead Galaxias (Tfhg) fish is a small non-migratory native fish that is confined to catchments in Otago, including locally the Waikouaiti and Waihemo/Shag river catchments. Living mainly in small streams that are dominated by cobbles and boulders.

The Tfhg has a threat status of Nationally Vulnerable (Dunn 2017), which is the third highest ranking given to species facing extinction. The biggest greatest threat to the Tfhg is from brown trout. In 2022 the Otago Regional Council (ORC) Science team in collaboration with the East Otago Catchment Group (EOCG) undertook a feasibility study on the upper tributaries in the Waihemo/Shag catchment to determine if the removal of brown trout populations was achievable.

The study looked at habitat, flows, brown trout populations, Tfhg populations, length of occupancy by trout, natural barriers, and if the tributaries were acting as sportfish nurseries for the wider Waihemo/Shag river trout fishery. Siberia and Pig Root Creeks were part of the feasibility study. It was concluded that brown trout densities in both of these creeks were high and that the populations found were self-sustaining concluding that without trout removal this population would follow the same pathway as so many other non-migratory galaxiid populations within the Otago Region 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. The brown trout will be removed by electric fishing the creeks. Year One removal commenced in January 2024 and over the next few months and 28 hours later approximately 2698 brown trout were removed from these two creeks. A really successful start to this work!

The operators will be back in 2024/2025 to continue the work to remove brown trout. As well as this the natural barrier/waterfall under SH85 will be assessed and potentially modifications made to prevent further access upstream into Pig Root and Siberia Creeks for 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 387 875.



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Year One

2698 brown trout
removed



Taieri flathead galaxias



Electric fishing in Pig Root Creek



One of the brown trout that was removed