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## A DECADE OF CONSERVATION MILESTONES

### Southern Discoveries marks 10-year anniversary of Sinbad Sanctuary Project

A conservation project dedicated to Milford Sound's Sinbad Gully is about to celebrate 10 years of preserving native wildlife one of New Zealand's most special places.

The Sinbad Sanctuary Project is a conservation programme partnered through the Fiordland Conservation Trust, the Department of Conservation (DOC) and principal sponsor, Southern Discoveries.

The partnership is dedicated to restoring Sinbad Gully as close as possible to its original pest-free status and has been working towards that goal for the past decade, through the trapping of predators such as stoats, rats and possums and monitoring beech seed fall (which drives predator numbers).

The gully, located next to the iconic Mitre Peak, is already home to at least 20 different native bird species, including Fiordland tokeoka (Southern brown kiwi) and tawaki (Fiordland crested penguin), as well as three species of threatened lizard. The Sinbad Sanctuary Project is aiming to reintroduce even more species as mammalian pests are eradicated through predator control. The valley walls surrounding Sinbad Gully form a natural barrier against the re-invasion of introduced predators.

Southern Discoveries' passion for preserving Milford Sound's beauty for future generations has seen the company commit more than \$330,000 to the Sinbad Sanctuary Project over 10 years, but their support goes beyond the purely financial.

Southern Discoveries' staff are also involved in predator control, surveying and other monitoring, and the combined efforts of all those involved in the project has delivered significant results.

A total of 140 double-set DOC traps are currently in operations. DOC workers and Southern Discoveries volunteers initially laid out 70 traps in the area in December 2009, with a second stoat trap line established in 2017.

The team has undertaken around 90 trap checks, 20 whio (native blue duck) surveys, two kiwi surveys and three distance sampling surveys of other wildlife over the past decade.

Those actions have seen the number of whio in the Sinbad Sanctuary increase from one identified pair to at least five identified pairs. The number of kiwi estimated in the area also increased from 10 to 19 over just five years.

Populations of other species, such as the bellbird, fantail, kereru, tui and weka, have also grown, with the native toutouwai (South Island robin) due to be reintroduced to Sinbad Gully within the next year.





Southern Discoveries General Manager Kerry Myers says this conservation work remains an integral part of their business.

“As one of the largest tourism operators in this very special part of the world, we’re dedicated to preserving its unique natural environment,” Myers says.

“The Sinbad Sanctuary project has reached some amazing milestones over the past 10 years and we’re very proud to have been part of those efforts.”

Fiordland Conservation Trust chairperson Murray Willans says it’s encouraging to see tourism operators like Southern Discoveries working to protect such an important part of the country.

“Without the support of Southern Discoveries and their customers, projects like the Sinbad Sanctuary just wouldn’t happen,” he says.

Southern Discoveries’ customers are able to support the Sinbad Sanctuary Project directly by making donations when booking online or at one of the company’s visitor centres.

Further details can be found at [southerndiscoveries.co.nz](http://southerndiscoveries.co.nz) or by watching the project video [here](#).

Please find hi res images [here](#)

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### **About Southern Discoveries**

Southern Discoveries is a premium tourism company dedicated to sharing some of New Zealand’s most iconic scenery and extraordinary experiences with the world.

The company offers lake cruises, cycling and farm experiences in Queenstown, and a range of cruises, kayaking and underwater observatory excursions in Milford Sound. The company also offers daily coach trips from Queenstown to Milford Sound, and specialises in private charters and conference and incentive packages.

Southern Discoveries is the original Milford Sound operator and continues to provide the widest range of excursions in the fiord. The company is Qualmark Gold endorsed and maintains an ongoing commitment to the conservation of the area through the Sinbad Sanctuary Project in partnership with the Department of Conservation and the Fiordland Conservation Trust.

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