

Pomona Island Charitable Trust



Annual Report

2012/13





Achievements 2012/13

- Release of a further six critically endangered Haast tokoeka kiwi on Pomona
- Kiwi thrive on Pomona
- Ten critically endangered Haast kiwi chicks spent time on Rona during 2012/13
- Mohua have their second successful breeding season on Pomona
- Robins have an excellent breeding season on Pomona
- Stoat trap network proves its worth on Rona
- 25 volunteers have a personal encounter with kiwi
- Over 1289 hours worked by 71 different volunteers on 40 working days
- Income in excess of \$22,000
- In-kind donations to the value of over \$42,000

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Introduction

When we started restoring Pomona and Rona Islands we knew that there would be the ever-present risk of re-invasion by rats and stoats. The last year has seen the resolve of the Pomona Island Charitable Trust tested on both islands.

In spite of a mammoth effort by volunteers, Pomona has seen the re-establishment of a breeding population of rats on the island. The Trust has responded by adding a bait station network to the existing trap lines on the island. This is helping to protect the birdlife on Pomona by reducing rat numbers to low levels. Additional measures have been planned for the coming year to further reduce rat numbers to very low levels.

The presence of rats on Pomona does not appear to have impacted on the birds on Pomona. The kiwi continue to thrive and the mohua have enjoyed their second successful breeding season on the island. Volunteers have reported seeing and hearing high numbers of robins, kakariki, tomtit and rifleman across Pomona. During 2012/13 a further six Haast tokoeka were released on Pomona bringing the total permanent kiwi population to 15.

Rona has also presented the Trust with a challenge of an unprecedented nature. Having been stoat-free for over five years, the capture of six stoats during a single trap check tested our trap network to the limit. As Rona is a kiwi crèche island, the stoats represented a major threat to the critically endangered Haast tokoeka chicks on the island. Reassuringly, our trap network did its job and all stoats were killed before they could do any harm to the kiwi. Following additional trap checks and the deployment of a specialist stoat dog and his handler, Rona has again been declared as being stoat-free. The Trust is grateful to all the volunteers who have helped us respond to the challenges over the last year. Special thanks to Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, for managing the increased workload.

Organisation

During 2012/13 a total of three Trustees' meetings were held in June, September and December 2012. In addition, the AGM was held in June 2012 at which John Whitehead was re-elected to the position of Chair, Viv Shaw to the position of Secretary and John Stevenson to the position of Treasurer. Chris Shaw, Neil Robertson, Harry Bull and Hunter Shaw continued as Trustees (Photo: Julie Walls). Alan Mark continues to be our Patron.



Lindsay Wilson has continued to work with the Trust as its DOC Advisory Trustee. The Trust has an excellent working relationship with DOC in both Southland and Haast. Individual staff provided the Trust with excellent advice on issues such as rat and mouse incursions (Gerard Hill, Lindsay Wilson, Andy Cox, Brent Beavan), species translocations (Hannah Edmonds, Pete

McClelland) and dealing with kiwi (Blair Hoult, Neil Freer, Kath Morris, Becky Wilson, Jim Livingstone).

The Trust is registered as a charitable entity under the Charities Act 2005. This registration enables the Trust to be exempt from tax, which means that anyone donating money to the Trust can claim the tax back on their donations. The Trust files annual returns which are available for public viewing on the Charities Commission website.

Managing the Project

In 2012/13 the project management of the restoration work on Pomona and Rona Islands was undertaken on an entirely voluntary basis by Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, with her company Topajka Shaw Consulting Limited donating an estimated \$21,500 of their time and resources to the Trust. With the rat re-invasion on Pomona, the stoat incursion on Rona and the kiwi work on Pomona, there has been a significant increase in work load. The Trust would like to acknowledge the significant amount of time and resource that Viv has put in over the last year to help the Trust to achieve its goals.

Funding

In the 2012/13 financial year the Trust received funding from the following sources:

Source	Purpose	Amount
Donation boxes	No specific purpose	\$776
Friends of Pomona subscriptions and donations	Trapping expenses	\$10,600
Department of Conservation	Kiwi work	\$9683
Interest	No specific purpose	\$1382

The Trust is particularly grateful to Gary Chisholm for his on-going support of our work on both Pomona and Rona and his generous donation of \$10,000.

In addition to the direct financial support received by the Trust, a significant amount of in-kind support has been received. In-kind support is estimated to be to the value of nearly \$42,000 and the Trust is grateful to all organisations and individuals who have supported our work in this way.

Monitoring – Pests

Stoats - the capture of six stoats in a single trap check on Rona in February 2013 was an unprecedented event for the Trust. The island had been stoat-free for over five years. DNA analysis confirmed the Trust's suspicions that a pregnant female had swum to the island and given birth there. With Rona being a crèche island for the critically endangered Haast tokoeka, the incursion by stoats on Rona was of major concern to both the Trust and DOC. The Trust was able to draw upon the collective experience of a wide range of DOC staff from across the country and is grateful to everyone who provided us with information from their projects and

gave us sound advice. As a result of that advice, the number of trap checks was increased, tracking cards deployed and DOC engaged the services of a stoat dog and its handler. No further evidence of stoats on Rona has been found and it looks as though the trap network on the island did its job well (Photo: Viv Shaw).



Twenty stoats were caught on the mainland opposite Rona. With numbers this high on the mainland, it is perhaps not surprising that one stoat was able to swim across to the island. Much lower numbers of stoats were caught on both Pomona and the adjacent mainland (see Table 1). The mainland trap line opposite Pomona continues to be serviced by the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron and the Trust is particularly grateful to Geoff Wells for taking responsibility for checking the traps regularly.

Rats - the trap network on the mainland opposite Rona caught 33 rats with no rats making it across to the island. Unfortunately, the situation on Pomona was quite different. In the 2011/12 annual report, we recorded two incursions by rats on Pomona. We thought that we had succeeded in preventing rats from re-establishing on the island. Sadly, three months after the previous incursion we caught another rat and three months later yet another rat. In spite of putting in place an intensive bait station network around the sites of the incursions, the number of rats on Pomona increased from September 2012 onwards. By the end of 2012/13, we had caught a total 19 rats on the island. This year, Trustees have had to accept that rats have again started breeding on Pomona.

Table 1: Stoat and rat trap data for 2012/13

2012/13	Pomona	Rona	Pomona Mainland	Rona Mainland
No times traps checked	15*	10	6	6
Stoats caught	3	6	4	20
Rats caught	19	0	16	33
Mice caught	117	97	4	5

* Some partial trap checks were completed to assess the rat situation on Pomona

Pomona Rat Response - Pomona Island was rat-free for over five years. The level of regeneration on the island both in terms of birds and vegetation, convinced the Trust that we could not give up on the rats. The Trust is now determined to maintain rats on Pomona to very low levels. With this in mind, we have designed a three-phased approach to controlling these pests. Phase 1, a bait station network across the island, was implemented in November 2012. Phases 2 and 3 which involve intensifying the trap network on Pomona, will be implemented in August and September 2013. The Trust would like to thank Gary Chisholm from Christchurch for his unstinting support of our work on Pomona. Gary's generous donations enable us to continue our restoration work on the island.

We would also like to acknowledge the support received from staff at DOC, in particular their technical knowledge and practical help in the field. Particular thanks go to Lindsay Wilson and Gerard Hill for their assistance with the design of the bait station and trap networks and for their on-going confidence in the Trust's ability to restore Pomona and Rona Islands.

"The Trust is moving to a new management approach that I believe long term will be more sustainable, less stressful and one that you will grow to have confidence in delivering the results you want for Pomona.

It was great to push the boundaries of eradication so close to the mainland, now you may be able to lead the way in effective management of islands that are within dispersal range of pests on the mainland."

*Lindsay Wilson,
Biodiversity Manager, DOC Te Anau*

Mice - both Pomona and Rona Islands have breeding populations of mice. Although mice will have little or no impact on the bird species on the two islands, the Trust aims to keep their numbers as low as possible.

Island Restoration

Haast Kiwi (Tokoeke)

Pomona Island - In 2012/13 a further six critically endangered Haast kiwi were released on Pomona, bringing the total permanent kiwi population on the island to 15. Two students from Fiordland College on exchange from Germany helped release the kiwi on the island. Four of the birds were transferred from the kiwi crèche on Rona Island. Of the 15 kiwi on Pomona, ten still have transmitters on them. Over the course of the year 25 volunteers had the opportunity to help the Trust with its kiwi work.

Rona Island - the island continues to play a key role in the recovery of the endangered Haast kiwi. During the year ten chicks spent time on this kiwi crèche island. All of these kiwi successfully reached the weight whereby they can fend off an attack by stoats and most have now been transferred to their permanent homes. Four of these birds made their way to Pomona with the assistance of Pomona volunteers (Photo: Viv Shaw). The other kiwi were transferred to Coal Island, Orokonui and Haast Sanctuaries by DOC staff.



As approved kiwi handlers, Trustees Viv Shaw and John Whitehead have undertaken a number of trips to both Pomona and Rona Islands to change the harnesses and transmitters on the kiwi. Both are now able to take other volunteers with them to help them catch the kiwi.

Mohua and Robins



The Trust continues to monitor the birds five times a year on Pomona and annually on Rona. Robins have had an excellent breeding season on Pomona and are now seen all over the island during every working bee (Photo: Viv Shaw). A low number of robins were released on Rona Island in May 2012 to supplement the already small population of these birds on the island. By the end of 2012/13, there appeared to be no robins left on Rona. This probably means that they were predated by the female stoat and/or falcon which are known to hunt on Rona.

Mohua have enjoyed their second breeding season on Pomona, with volunteers reporting seeing large flocks of these colourful birds together with kakariki and brown creeper. Mohua are vulnerable to predation by rats, so the re-establishment of a rat population on Pomona has been a cause for concern. However, both the Trust and DOC are confident, that by managing rats to low numbers, the mohua can continue to thrive on the island.

Saddleback

The Trust had planned to translocate 40 Saddleback from Breaksea Island to Rona in March 2013. Sadly, the discovery of the six stoats on the island forced the Trust to postpone this transfer. Our sponsor, The Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation was very understanding of the situation and agreed to fund the transfer as soon conditions on Rona allow.

Volunteers

Between April 2012 and March 2013 the Trust organised 40 working days. A total of 71 different volunteers completed 1289.5 hours work on pest monitoring on the islands and the adjacent mainland. This does not include the significant number of hours of work that go into the administration of the Trust and the time devoted by Trustees to meetings and the preparation of written documentation. Students from Fiordland College on exchange from Germany helped us with trap checks and also to release Haast kiwi on Pomona (Photo: Viv Shaw).

The following volunteers deserve a special thanks for the number of working days they have completed on the islands in 2012/13:

- 🍃 Viv Shaw – 31 working days
- 🍃 John Whitehead – 19 working days
- 🍃 Chris Shaw – 14 working days



These volunteers are also Trustees so their overall contribution to the work of the Trust is much higher. The Trust would also like to acknowledge the following individual volunteers who have completed five or more days work on the islands: Geoff Wells, Bruce Keen and Ross Forrester (from the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron), Bev Thorne and Fay Edwards.

Communications

Friends of Pomona – the Trust would like to acknowledge the on-going support from Gary Chisholm in Christchurch for his generous donations towards pest eradication and control. The Trust published two newsletters over the course of the year - in October and March.

Website – Trustee Chris Shaw continued to maintain and update the website during 2012/13. The website received 9284 visits over the past year with the Trust's news page being the most visited.

Pomona Publicity – in 2012/13 the Trust's work featured in articles in publications such as the Southland Times, Southland Express, Fiordland Advocate, and on CUE TV. The work of the Trust featured in a number of internal organisational newsletters such as Forest and Bird Southland Branch, Fiordland College, Fiordland Conservation Trust.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Pomona Island Charitable Trust has had its most challenging year to date. We have had to deal with the re-establishment of a rat population on Pomona and an unprecedented stoat incursion on Rona. These setbacks have tested the resolve of the Trustees, but we are all determined to continue the restoration work on Pomona and Rona Islands.

We are confident, through the intensification of our trap and bait station network on Pomona, that we can keep rats to very low numbers so that any impact on the regeneration of the island is kept to a minimum. Our observations to date suggest that the birdlife on Pomona continues to thrive and we will work hard to ensure this continues.

Finally, to our financial supporters, our volunteers and DOC staff, a special thank you for your on-going support over the past year. The Trust and DOC have learnt a lot from the stoat incursion on Rona. The island continues to play a vital role in the survival of the critically endangered Haast tokoeka.

John Whitehead
Chair
on behalf of the Trust

June 2013

