

Pomona Island Charitable Trust



Annual Report

2013/14





Achievements 2013/14

- Record number of hours worked by volunteers on Pomona and Rona
- Over 1530 hours worked by 71 different volunteers on 55 working days
- An additional 103 trap sites deployed on Pomona
- Rat numbers reduced to very low levels
- Quarantine measures on Rona work well preventing the establishment of a rat population
- Mohua have their third successful breeding season on Pomona
- Robins have an excellent breeding season on Pomona
- Twelve volunteers have a personal encounter with kiwi
- Income in excess of \$16,300
- In-kind donations to the value of over \$54,000

Pomona Island Charitable Trust

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Introduction

The past year has probably been the most challenging year for the Pomona Island Charitable Trust since its inception.

The rats on Pomona reached high levels, requiring the Trust to supplement its existing trap and bait station network with a further 103 trap sites on the island. The combined trap and bait station network has worked well and rat numbers have reduced significantly. This means that the Trust has successfully reduced the potential negative impact of the rats on the birdlife and ecosystem on Pomona. Volunteers have reported seeing good numbers of mohua and robins, with one experienced volunteer spotting three generations of mohua in one family group.

Rona has presented the Trust with a different set of challenges. A rat was found in a trap. This was a first for Rona as no rats have ever been found on the island previously. DNA analysis confirmed the pest to be a male Norway rat, leaving the Trust to conclude that it was possibly accidentally taken to the island by boat.

Rona's status as a kiwi crèche island has also taken a knock, with the death of seven Haast tokoeka chicks in early 2014. No single, common cause of death has been identified and the Trust is working closely with DOC in Haast to identify the risk factors with a view to minimising them as far as possible.

Volunteer numbers through this challenging time have been excellent and the Trust is extremely grateful to the local community for stepping up when needed. The Trust really appreciates the support it gets from all of its volunteers, financial supporters and staff at DOC both in Te Anau and Haast.

Organisation

During 2013/14 a total of four Trust meetings were held in May, June, October 2013 and March 2014. The AGM was held in June 2013 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. Alan Mark continues to be our Patron. In addition, a meeting between Trustees and DOC staff from Te Anau and Haast was held in June 2013 to specifically discuss the relationship between the Trust and DOC with regard to the management of the islands and the kiwi.

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, Pete McMurtrie, Lindsay Wilson) and dealing with kiwi (Hannah Edmonds, Blair Hoult, Kath Morris, Becky Wilson, Jim Livingstone, Jo MacPherson and Jacinda Amey). The Trust is particularly grateful to Lindsay for giving some of his rangers the opportunity to work with the Trust checking bait stations and traps on Pomona Island.

With the high numbers of traps and bait stations now present on Pomona Island, the Trust has been employing the services of a local contractor, Huntsman Holdings Limited. This helps reduce the workload for volunteers and ensures the project is sustainable.

The Trust is registered as a charitable entity under the Charities Act 2005 (CC22629). 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 2013/14 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 \$30,000 of their time and resources to the Trust. With the rat situation on Pomona there has been a significant increase in work load. Viv has coordinated a significantly higher number of working bees as well as engaging contractors to work on the island. The amount of data analysis required to understand the situation on the island has increased also resulting in a higher workload. Trust Chair, John Whitehead's workload has also increased with the coordination of and building of over 100 new trap boxes.

The Trust would like to acknowledge the significant amount of extra time and resource that Viv and John have put in over the last year to help the Trust to achieve its goals.

Funding

In the 2013/14 financial year the Trust received funding from the following sources:

Source	Purpose	Amount
Donation boxes	No specific purpose	\$975
Friends of Pomona subscriptions and donations	Trapping expenses	\$6,046
Department of Conservation	Kiwi work	\$8,000
Interest	No specific purpose	\$1,315

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 \$5,000 towards the cost of the additional 103 traps.

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 over \$54,000 and the Trust is grateful to all organisations and individuals who have supported our work in this way.

Monitoring – Pests

Stoats - the Trust is pleased to announce that no stoats were caught on Pomona or Rona Islands this year at all. However, large numbers of these pests were caught on the mainland, especially opposite Rona (see Table 1). These mainland trap lines continue to play an important role in protecting the two islands from stoat incursions. The additional traps deployed this year on Pomona to counter the rat invasion will also enable the Trust to catch any stoats that do swim to the island much more quickly (Photo: Viv Shaw).

The mainland trap line opposite Pomona continues to be serviced by the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron and the Trust is particularly grateful to Ross Forrester and Bruce Keen for taking responsibility for checking the traps regularly.



Rats - these pests have been the main focus of the Trust's activities during 2013/14. Even Rona which, up until this year, had never had a rat on it, presented the Trust with a challenge. In January 2014, a very large, decomposed rat was found in a motel. In addition, rat sign was found in another motel some distance from the rat find. From the outset it was clear that the rat did not look like the rats volunteers usually catch on the mainland. DNA analysis confirmed that it was a male Norway rat and that the rat sign found elsewhere on Rona came from the same rat. Norway rats are not that common in Fiordland, so there is a strong possibility that the rat arrived on Rona by boat. The trap network on the island has worked well and the Trust is hoping that this is an isolated incident. The arrival of a Norway rat on Rona highlights the need for quarantine measures as well as education of boaties to check their boats for rodents before they land on either Pomona or Rona Islands.

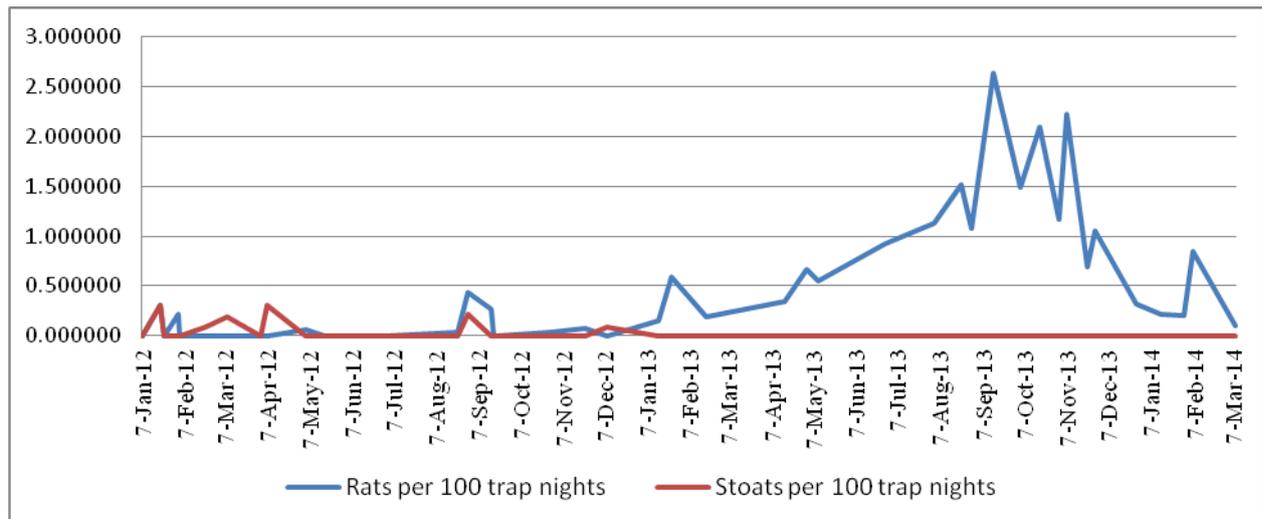
Table 1: Stoat and rat trap data for 2013/14

2013/14	Pomona	Rona	Pomona Mainland	Rona Mainland
No times traps checked	19*	12	7	8
Stoats caught	0	0	9	28
Rats caught	373	1	22	29
Mice caught	175	300	4	2

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

Pomona Rat Response - at the start of the 2013/14 year, rat numbers on Pomona Island continued to increase, so the decision was taken to supplement the existing traps and bait station network with a further 103 trap sites. In August 2013, a contractor was employed to position the traps and to flag routes along the new trap lines. With the additional traps, there is now a 100m x 100m grid of bait stations and traps across the island. There are a few gaps in coverage where the terrain is steep and inaccessible, but the Trust is working on a strategy to ensure complete coverage across the whole of Pomona.

Figure 1: Rats and Stoats on Pomona Island per 100 trap nights (since January 2012)



Whilst Table 1 shows that the number of rats caught on Pomona in 2013/14 has been very high, Figure 1 shows that the combined trap and bait station network has worked very effectively over the course of the year to reduce rats to very low levels on the island. The significant reduction in the number of rats on Pomona would not have been possible without the commitment of volunteers. Led by Trust Chair John Whitehead, volunteers built all of the additional traps and continue to service them on a regular basis. Volunteers have also been helping to cut tracks on the island to make the servicing of the traps safer and quicker.

The decision was taken to employ a contractor to position the traps on Pomona, and also to service the bait stations. Servicing the bait station network is particularly hard work as the people replacing the bait have to carry heavy loads and handle toxins. The use of contractors for this work also reduces the risk of volunteer burnout and makes the project more sustainable.

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 for his on-going confidence in the Trust's ability to restore Pomona and Rona Islands.

Mice - both Pomona and Rona Islands have breeding populations of mice. The rats on Pomona are likely to be having some impact on mouse numbers on the island as are the bait stations. On Rona, however, the mouse population has increased significantly. The number of mice caught on the island in 2013/14 has increased by more than 200% over the previous year. Tracking tunnel data shows 100% of cards having mouse prints on them. At the same time the number of cards with weta prints on them has decreased. Initially the Trust was not sure that mice were having much impact on the island. However, with the death of seven Haast tokoeka chicks, some as a result of starvation, and the decrease in weta prints on tracking cards, the Trust is looking seriously at ways it can reduce mouse numbers on Rona.

Island Restoration

Haast Kiwi (Tokoeke)

Pomona Island - 15 kiwi called Pomona home in 2013/14. The Trust had planned to monitor four pairs of kiwi on the island. However, due to the Trust's increased workload to control rats, the difficult decision was made to not monitor any of the kiwi on Pomona. At this stage it is not known whether any of the pairs have started to breed on the island, but the absence of stoats throughout the year would have increased the survival chances of any young chicks.

Rona Island - 2013/14 was a mixed year for the Haast tokoeka chicks on Rona. Eight kiwi from the 2012/13 season spent time on the island. One died from a bacterial infection and the others were transferred to their permanent homes on Coal Island and Raratoka in October 2013. Regular volunteer Fay Edwards accompanied the kiwi on their journey. Another kiwi that had been released on Rona in May 2010 was finally located using a dog.



January 2014 saw chicks from the 2013/14 season released onto Rona. Unfortunately, these kiwi did not do as well as the previous year's cohort. Seven of the ten birds released on Rona in 2014 died within three months. Another bird is missing, presumed dead, and the remaining two chicks were moved to Wellington Zoo. Post mortems have been carried out on all of the dead birds and there is no single cause of death. Two of the chicks were emaciated and probably starved to death, another had a bacterial disease and the other four were inconclusive but had signs of avian scavenging. Falcon are known to hunt on Rona, but it is not possible to say with any certainty that they played a role in the kiwi deaths on the island.

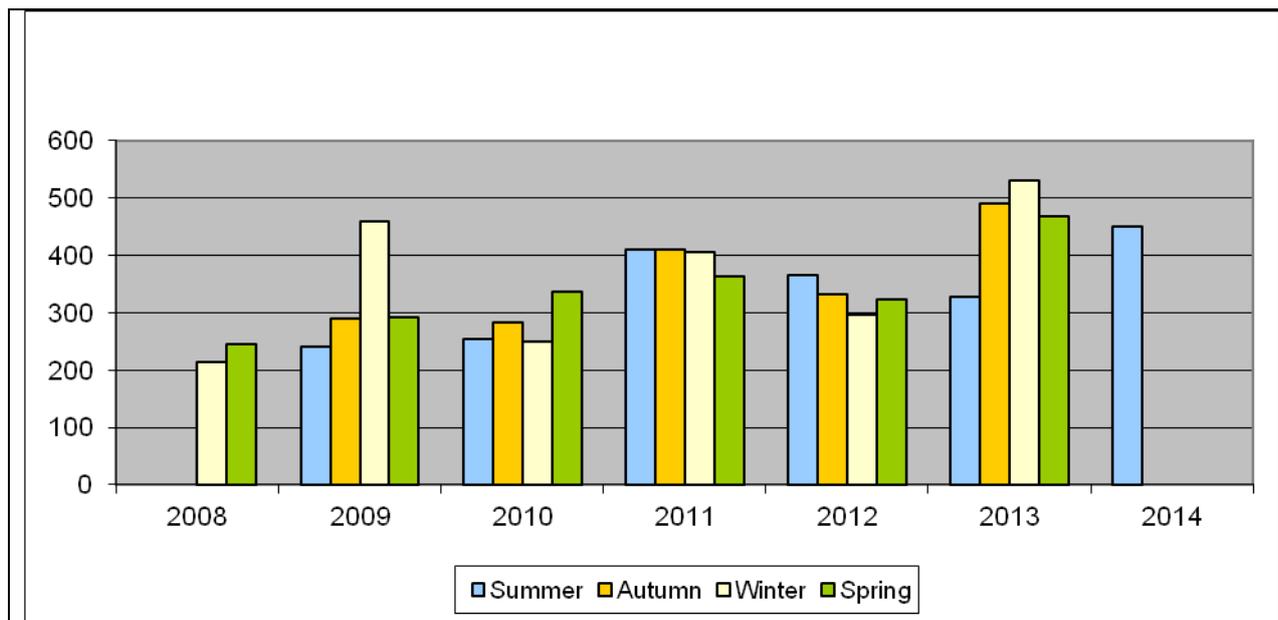
The Trust is working together with DOC Haast and the Kiwi Recovery Group to identify potential risk factors for the kiwi. Whilst the mouse situation on Rona may providing a source of competition for food with the kiwi, DOC staff acknowledge that other factors prior to the kiwi being released on Rona are likely be playing a major role in the chicks' survival.

Twelve volunteers have had the opportunity to interact with kiwi on Pomona and Rona islands during 2013/14. This is lower than normal because of the kiwi deaths this year (Photo: Viv Shaw).

Bird Monitoring

The Trust continues to monitor the birds five times a year on Pomona and annually on Rona. Figure 2 shows that 2013/14 was a record year for birds on Pomona across all four seasons. In winter 2013, volunteers saw or heard 530 birds at the 24 count stations on the island. This represents the highest number of birds ever seen or heard in a single day. The most common bird on Pomona is the redpoll - a European introduction that flocks in large numbers. The most common native birds on Pomona are bellbird, grey warbler, tomtit and rifleman. At this stage, the Trust is pleased to note that the additional work undertaken in the last year to control rats on Pomona does not appear to have had a major impact on the birdlife on the island.

Figure 2: Number of Bird Seen or Heard at 24 count stations on Pomona since 2008



Robins - Robins have had another excellent breeding season on Pomona and volunteers are reporting seeing good numbers of these friendly birds. During a working day on the island, it is not unusual for between 50 and 60 robins to be seen or heard.

Mohua - Mohua have had their third breeding season on Pomona.. Family groups are seen together along with some of the banded birds originally released on Pomona in 2011 (Photo: Viv Shaw). Mohua are particularly vulnerable to predation by rats, so the Trust is working very hard to reduce the risk to this threatened species.

Saddleback

The Trust had re-scheduled its translocation of 40 Saddleback from Breaksea Island to Rona for March 2014. Sadly, the transfer had to be postponed again due to the discovery of a rat on the island. 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 2013 and March 2014 the Trust organised 55 working days. A total of 71 different volunteers completed 1530.5 hours work on pest monitoring on the islands and the adjacent mainland. This is the highest number of hours worked in a single year by volunteers since the Trust started restoring Pomona and Rona Islands. 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.

The Trust has been extremely grateful to members of the local community for stepping up to help out since the rats re-invaded Pomona Island. With the number of traps having more than doubled on the island, we have needed more people to help us. Since August 2013 we have been averaging eight volunteers per working bee on Pomona (Photo: Viv Shaw). We thank all of our volunteers, but the following individuals deserve a special thanks for the number of working days they have completed on both Pomona and Rona Islands in 2013/14:



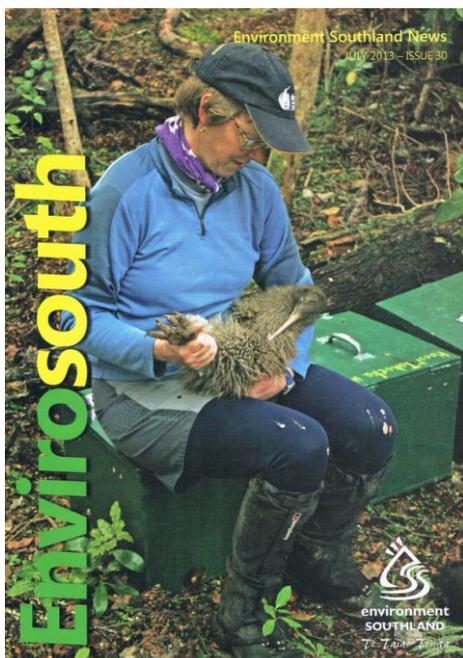
- 🍃 Viv Shaw – 38 working days
- 🍃 John Whitehead – 31 working days
- 🍃 Chris Shaw – 26 working days
- 🍃 Fay Edwards – 23 working days
- 🍃 David Fortune – 10 working days

The Trust would also like to acknowledge the following individual volunteers who have completed five or more days work for the Trust: Sue Bennett, Bruce Keen and Ross Forrester.

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Geoff Wells in October 2013. Geoff had been volunteering for the Trust for over six years, having taken responsibility for servicing the trap line on the mainland opposite Pomona. Geoff will be greatly missed, but his legacy will continue as his colleagues from the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron are continuing to service "Geoff's line".

We also welcomed our youngest ever volunteer to Pomona in August 2013. Six year old Jasper Carter helped his Dad John to check the traps along Hurricane Passage. The trip has been immortalised in a YouTube video.

Communications



Pomona Publicity – in 2013/14 the Trust's work featured in articles in publications and such as the Southland Times, The Press, Southland Express, Fiordland Advocate, Hokitika Guardian, Greymouth Star, Envirosouth and on CUE TV. Various websites reported on work on Pomona and Rona Islands including TV one News, Newstalk ZB, and Environment Southland. The work of the Trust also featured in a number of internal organisational newsletters such as Fiordland College, Fiordland Conservation Trust and DOC's Behind the Scenes. Whilst most of the media coverage was positive, some of the coverage was about the kiwi deaths on Rona. The Trust also produced two newsletters during the year - in September 2013 and March 2014.

In July 2013, Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, gave a presentation at the SIT Biodiversity Expo and, along with Trustee Chris Shaw, manned a display of the Trust's work

on Pomona and Rona Islands. In July, Viv also received the Councillors' Special Award at Environment Southland's 2013 annual awards ceremony, in part for her work for the Trust. This led to her featuring on the front cover of Environment Southland's quarterly newsletter sent out to all Southland ratepayers.

Website – Trustee Chris Shaw continued to maintain and update the website during 2013/43. The website received 10036 visits over the past year, an 8% increase over the previous year. The Trust's news page continues to be the most visited part of the website.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Pomona Island Charitable Trust has had a very challenging year. It has more than doubled the number of traps it services on Pomona. Alongside the bait station network installed in 2012, the traps have reduced the number of rats significantly. This means that the Trust's aim to protect the birds on the island is being achieved. The bird numbers on Pomona have been testament to this success with the winter 2013 count being the best on record to date. The Trust is committed to maintaining rats on Pomona at low levels and in the coming year will look at ways of eradicating them once again from the island.

The first ever rat find on Rona tested the Trust's quarantine measures on the island. The trap network did the job it was designed to do and appears to have prevented the establishment of a rat population on Rona. Increased communications with boaties is needed to further reduce the risk of rats reaching Rona by boat.

The Trust has been devastated by the kiwi deaths on Rona. Whilst the circumstances leading to their deaths is beyond our control, we do feel responsibility for the chicks when they are on the island. We are committed to working with DOC so that Rona can continue to be a crèche island for the critically endangered Haast tokoeka.

Last but not least, the support from our volunteers, financial supporters and DOC staff has been phenomenal. Without your on-going commitment to Pomona and Rona Islands, our job would be so much harder.

John Whitehead
Chair
on behalf of the Trust

June 2014



Blue sun orchid (photo: Viv Shaw)

