

Pomona Island Charitable Trust



Annual Report

2015/16





Achievements 2015/16

- Pomona rat-free for over eight months
- Rona mouse-free for over five months
- Mouse-free status of Rona means the island can be used again as a kiwi crèche
- Record number of birds recorded on Pomona during summer 2016 bird count
- Record numbers of robins seen on Pomona throughout the year
- Six out of ten kilometres of tracks cut on Pomona
- In 2015/16, over 725 hours worked by 30 different volunteers on 31 working days
- Income in excess of \$32,350
- In-kind donations to the value of over \$30,900

Pomona Island Charitable Trust

Annual Report 2015/16

Introduction

The last year has been an exciting year for the Pomona Island Charitable Trust. The trap and bait station networks on Pomona have been working well, with the island having been rat-free for over eight months. The last rat caught on Pomona was in August 2015. The hard work of the Trust, its volunteers and contractors over the past two years has clearly paid off.

In order to make the work of volunteers and contractors on Pomona easier, the Trust successfully applied for money from the DOC Community Conservation Partnership Fund to cut tracks on the island. A total of 6km of track have been cut so far and volunteers are in the process of marking the new tracks with orange triangles.

The decision by the Kiwi Recovery Group to stop using Rona Island as a crèche site for the critically endangered Haast tokoeka galvanised the Trust into action. With funding from Meridian, DOC and significant funds from its own financial reserves, the Trust put in place an extensive mouse eradication/control operation. Following extensive research, a 50m by 25m grid of bait stations was deployed on Rona and a contractor was employed to service the network. At the end of the 2015/16 financial year, mice on Rona were tracking at zero percent. DOC has indicated that juvenile Haast tokoeka are likely to be transferred to Rona in May 2016. The decision to commit significant resources to a mouse control project on the island has been a huge success for the Trust.

The Trust is grateful for the on-going support from its volunteers as well as from its financial supporters. Staff at DOC both in Te Anau and Haast continue to assist the Trust in its work to restore both Pomona and Rona Islands.

Organisation

A total of five Trust meetings were held during the 2015/16 year in May, June, August (two meetings) and November 2015. The number of meetings was higher than in some previous years due to the need to meet to discuss the Trust's options for mouse eradication/control on Rona Island.

The AGM was held in June 2015 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, David Fortune and Harry Bull continued as Trustees. Alan Mark continues to be our Patron.

Lindsay Wilson has continued to work with the Trust as its DOC Advisory Trustee. Lindsay, together with the Island Eradication Advisory Group, has provided constructive advice on the mouse eradication/control project on Rona. The Trust generally has a good working relationship with DOC in both Southland and Haast, although communications have been identified as an area which could be improved.

The Trust has been employing the services of local contractors to service the bait station network on Pomona and to set up and service the new bait station network on Rona. Work to cut tracks on Pomona has also been undertaken by a suitably qualified contractor. 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 Services website.

Managing the Project

In 2015/16 the project management of the restoration work on Pomona and Rona Islands was undertaken by Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, largely on a voluntary basis. Viv, through her company Topajka Shaw Consulting Limited was contracted by DOC to undertake extensive research on the options for mouse eradication/control on Rona. She was also contracted by the Trust to prepare an Assessment of Environmental Effects for the operation and will be paid a contribution for project management. In addition to the contract work, Viv through Topajka Shaw Consulting Limited, has donated an estimated \$17,500 in time and resources to the Trust.

Viv continues to drive the restoration work on Pomona and Rona Islands and the Trust would like to acknowledge the contribution she makes to help the Trust achieve its goals.

Funding

In the 2015/16 financial year the Trust received funding from the following sources:

Source	Purpose	Amount
Donation boxes	No specific purpose	\$830
Friends of Pomona subscriptions and donations	Pest control/eradication	\$2,640
Department of Conservation	Kiwi work and track cutting	\$18,731
Meridian Energy Manapouri Te Anau Community Fund	Mouse eradication/control on Rona	\$8,694
Interest	No specific purpose	\$1,455

The Trust is particularly grateful to the Meridian Energy Manapouri Te Anau Community Fund and to Gary Chisholm for their donations which enabled the Trust to undertake the mouse eradication/control work on Rona Island. Funding was also received from DOC's Community Partnership Fund to cut tracks on Pomona, making the island a safer working environment for volunteers.

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 \$30,953 and the Trust is grateful to all organisations and individuals who have supported our work in this way.

Monitoring – Pests

Stoats - this year both Pomona and Rona remained stoat-free which was good for the birdlife on both islands (see Table 1). Stoat numbers on the mainland opposite both islands have remained at levels similar to those seen in previous years.

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



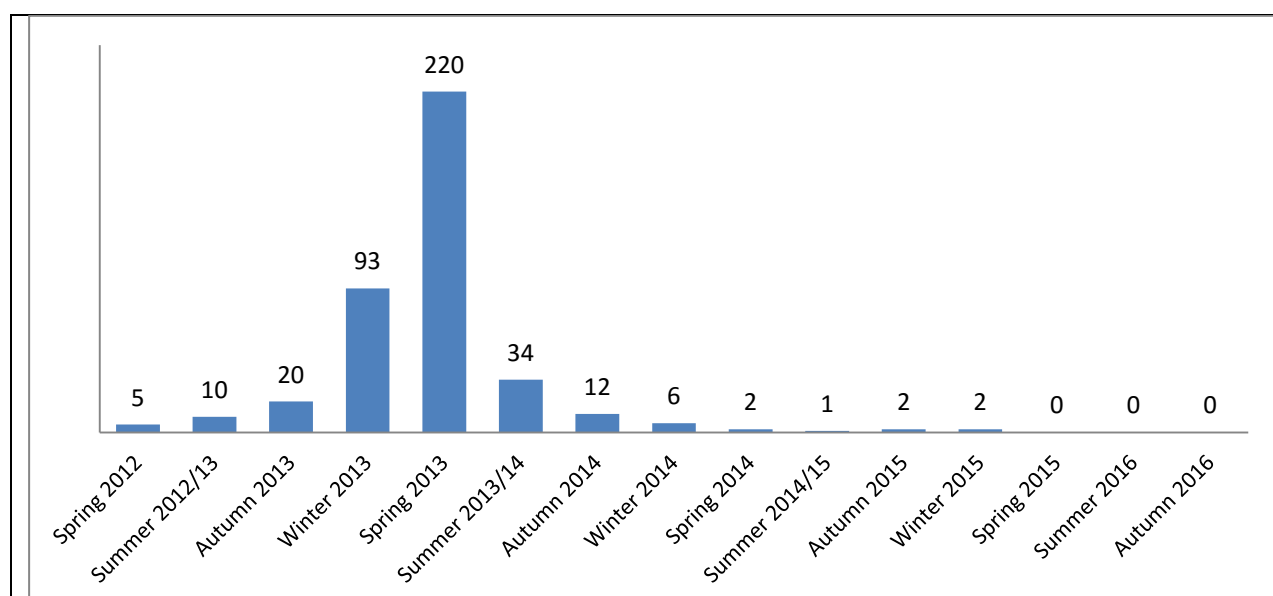
Table 1: Stoat and rat trap data for 2015/16

2015/16	Pomona	Rona	Pomona Mainland	Rona Mainland
No. times traps checked	8*	8	5	5
Stoats caught	0	0	8	8
Rats caught	3	0	10	14
Mice caught	61	73	4	2

* Some partial trap checks were completed on Pomona when other work was being undertaken on the island

Rats - the Trust is delighted with the progress to eradicate rats from Pomona using ground-based methods. As a result of the hard work by volunteers and contractors, no rats have been trapped on Pomona since August 2015 (see Figure 1). By the end of the Trust's financial year, this meant that rats on Pomona have been at undetectable levels for over seven months. The result is all the more exciting because the bait station network has not been operational since August 2015.

Figure 1: Rats trapped on Pomona Island by season (since January 2012)



Given the speed with which rats bred when they re-invaded Pomona in 2012, the Trust is cautiously optimistic that it has successfully eradicated rats from Pomona. However, advice has been received from the Island Eradication Advisory Group that the Trust should wait for Pomona to be rat-free for two years before declaring a successful eradication. As at the end of March 2016, DOC anticipated another beech mast in the area surrounding Pomona and Rona and the Trust was advised to keep bait inside its bait stations in anticipation of a future rat re-invasion on Pomona.

There have been no rat incursions on Rona during the last year.

Rat numbers on the mainland opposite both Pomona and Rona have been significantly lower in 2015/16 than in the previous year.

Mice - mice on Rona have been a major focus for the Trust in 2015/16. The Trust received advice from the Kiwi Recovery Group that Rona could no longer be used as a crèche site for the critically endangered Haast tokoeka because mice would compete with the kiwi for food. This spurred the Trust into action and, with funding from DOC, the Trust's Secretary, Viv Shaw, undertook extensive research into the options for eradicating/controlling mice on the island. Funding shortfalls and timing did not allow the Trust to attempt a full-scale eradication operation. As a result, the Trust opted to control mice on Rona to low levels using a 25m by 50m grid of bait stations (see Figure 2). Following the preparation of an Assessment of Environmental Effects report, the Trust received permission from DOC for the operation. The bait station network was set up and serviced by Contract Wild Animal Control Limited.

Figure 2: Bait station and tracking tunnel network on Rona



Note: red dots = bait stations; green dots = tracking tunnels

In order to monitor the success of the operation, volunteers established a systematic network of tracking tunnels. Prior to the bait stations being filled with brodifacoum and, using DOC's standard operating procedures, mice were found to be tracking at 23.8% on Rona. Following two fills of the bait stations mice have been tracking at 0% since October 2015. All toxin was

removed from the island in January so that Rona could be ready to host juvenile Haast tokoeka. As at the end of the financial year, it was anticipated that kiwi would be released back on the island in May 2016.



The Trust and DOC acknowledges the experimental nature of the mouse control operation on Rona. Given the results to-date, there is a possibility that the Trust has succeeded in eradicating mice from Rona using the grid network shown in Figure 2. However, as with the rats on Pomona, the advice from the Island Eradication Advisory Group is that Rona should be mouse-free for two years before the Trust can claim a successful eradication.

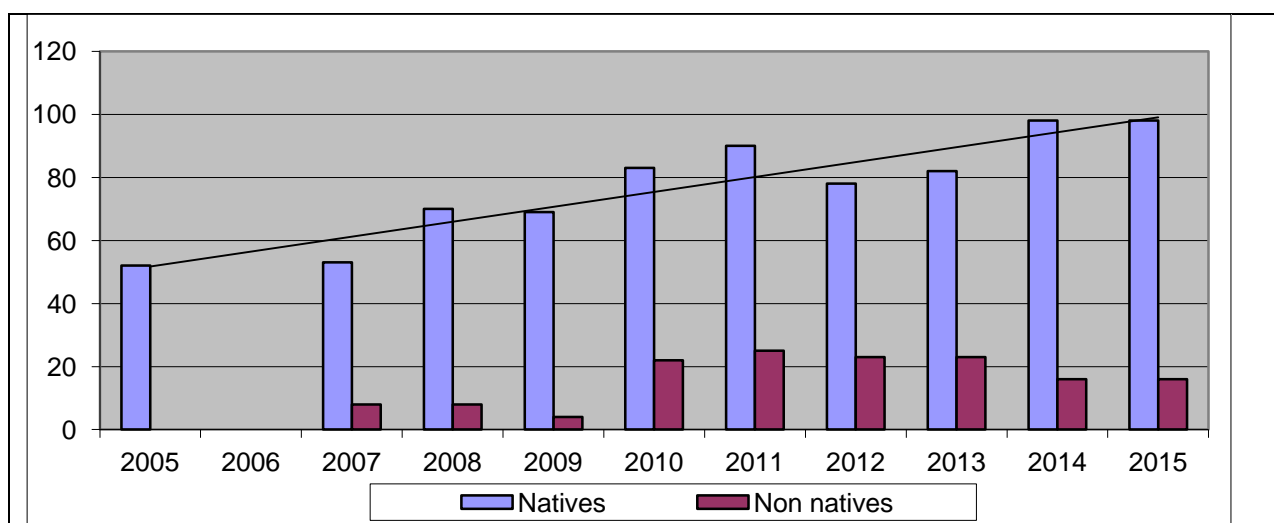
The Trust thanks DOC for providing the funding to undertake the research on mouse eradication/control options. We are particularly grateful to the Meridian Energy Manapouri Te Anau Community Fund and to Gary Chisholm for their contribution towards funding the mouse control (and hopefully eradication) project on Rona. The Trust devoted significant amounts of its own financial reserves to

the project because the on-going opportunity for members of our community to interact with the Haast tokoeka is important to us. The volunteers who have helped the Trust with its monitoring programme are also acknowledged (Photo: Viv Shaw).

Monitoring - Birds

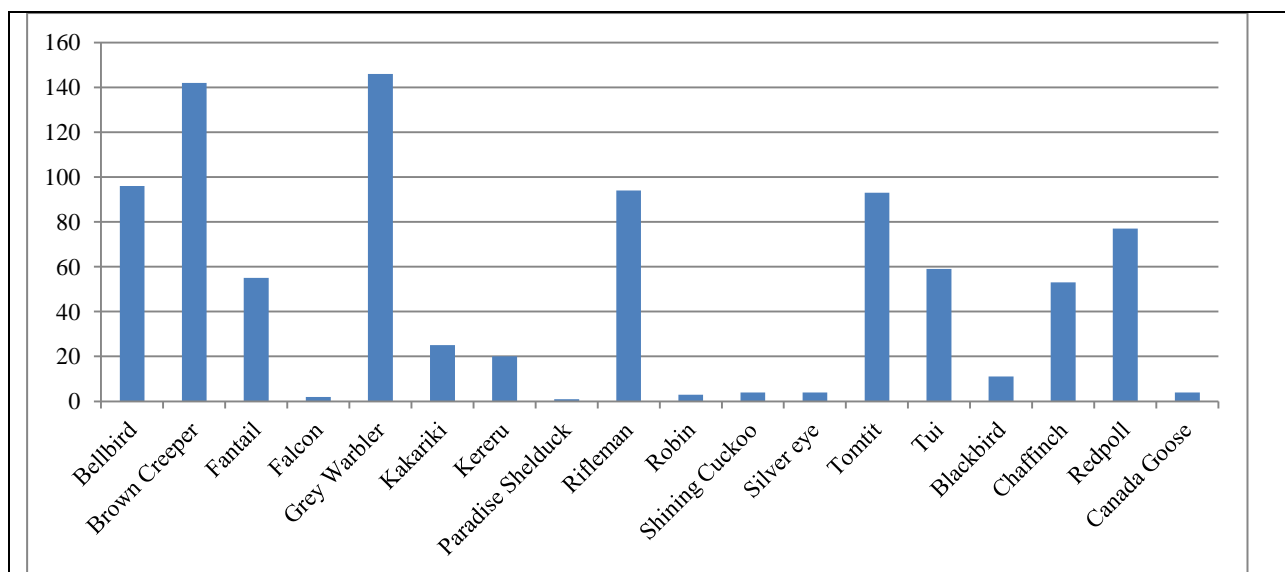
The Trust undertakes bird counts at 10 baseline count stations on Pomona and four count stations on Rona Islands once a year. In February 2016, Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, produced a report on bird monitoring on Rona, collating and analysing the data from the last ten years.

Figure 3: Abundance of native versus introduced bird species on Rona 2005 - 2015



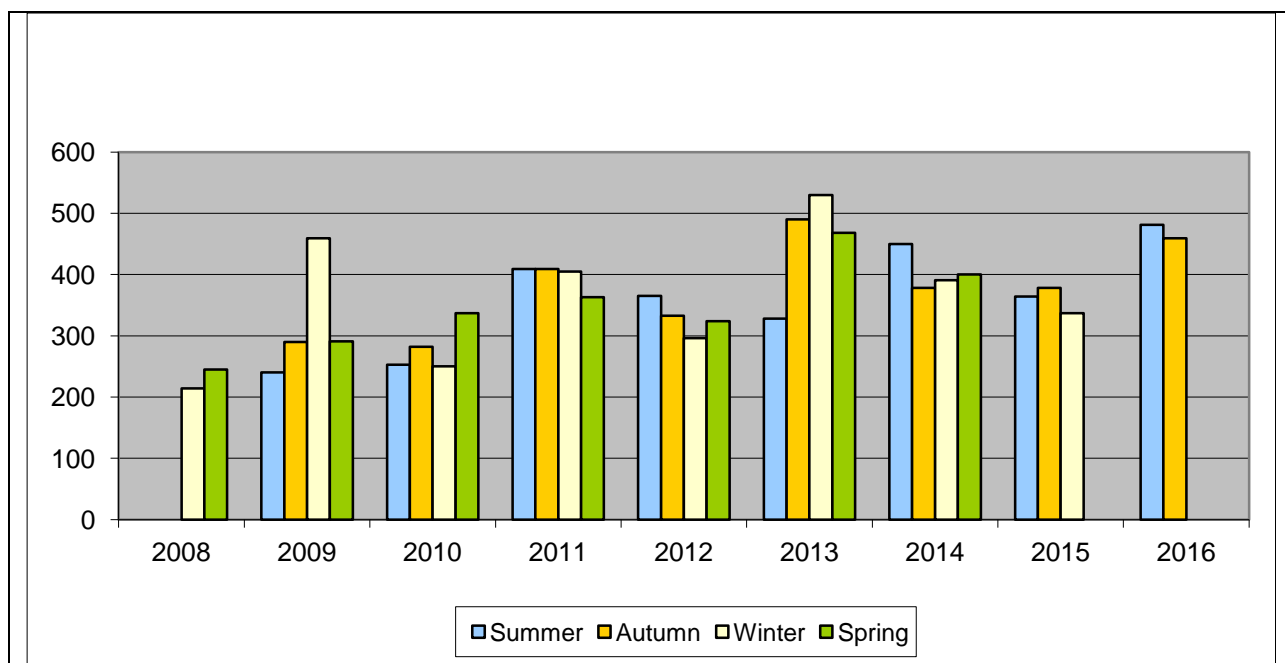
The report covered issues such as the island's pest management history as well as bird species abundance and diversity (see Figures 3 and 4). The most abundant bird species on Rona were found to be grey warbler, brown creeper, bellbird, rifleman and tomtit. The report also included a section on translocated species such as South Island robin and Haast tokoeka.

Figure 4: Species diversity on Rona 2005 - 2015



In addition to the annual counts on both islands, the Trust undertakes seasonal counts four times a year on Pomona at 24 count stations across the island. The count completed in February 2016 was a record summer count with a total of 481 birds seen or heard, representing over 20 birds per count station (see Figure 5). The record summer count confirmed the informal feedback from volunteers that birdlife on Pomona was excellent. The numbers of robins seen during trap checks was at an all time high with multiple birds seen at almost every trap site.

Figure 5: Abundance of birds at the 24 count stations on Pomona, by season 2005 - 2015



A report on bird monitoring on Pomona, similar to the one produced for Rona, is planned for next year.

Haast tokoeka - over the course of 2015/16, a small number of Haast tokoeka spent a short period of time on Rona Island before being moved to their permanent homes. All kiwi were

removed from the island before the mouse control operation began. In addition to the 19 kiwi permanently resident on Pomona, two juvenile birds were released onto the island to enable them to grow strong before being released back into the kiwi sanctuary at Haast.

Pomona Track Work

In 2015 the Trust made a successful application to DOC's Community Partnership Fund for money to cut 10km of track on Pomona. Huntsman Contracting Limited were awarded the contract for the work and Ben Crouchley and his team started work in January 2016. By the end of March 2016, 6km of track had been cut with the remaining tracks scheduled to be cut by the end of April 2016. Once our contractor had cut the tracks, volunteers marked the new tracks with orange triangles (Photo: Viv Shaw). The tracks have been cut in order to provide volunteers with a safer environment in which to work. It has also helped to speed up the time it takes to check the traps.



Volunteers

Between April 2015 and March 2016 the Trust organised 31 working days. A total of 30 different volunteers completed 726 hours work on pest monitoring on the islands and the adjacent mainland and track marking on Pomona. 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 number of working days and the hours put in on the islands by volunteers has been on a par with the previous year. This is largely because the rat numbers on Pomona are under control, requiring fewer trap checks, and there has been less work to do on Rona given the absence of kiwi chicks on the island. We thank all of our volunteers over the past year (Photo: Viv Shaw). The following individuals also deserve a special thanks for the number of working days they have completed on both Pomona and Rona Islands in 2015/16:



- ✱ Viv Shaw – 19 working days
- ✱ Chris Shaw – 15 working days
- ✱ David Fortune - 13 working days
- ✱ John Whitehead – 9 working days
- ✱ Fay Edwards – 7 working days
- ✱ John Stevenson - 6 working days
- ✱ Paul Waymouth - 5 working days.

The Trust would also like to acknowledge the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron, in particular Ross Forrester and Paul Waymouth, who have taken responsibility for servicing the mainland trap line opposite Pomona.

Communications

Quarantine signs– during the course of the year new quarantine signs were installed on Pomona Island following their forcible removal the previous year (Photo: Viv Shaw). Unfortunately the quarantine sign on Rona Island was also vandalised and is lying at the bottom of the lake and will be retrieved when the level of Lake Manapouri drops sufficiently to make it safe to do so.



Pomona Publicity – in 2015/16 the Trust's work featured in articles in publications such as the Southland Times, the Otago Daily Times, the Fiordland Advocate, DOC's Behind the Scenes newsletter and First Edition, the Southland District Council quarterly newsletter. In September 2015, the Trust's Secretary was invited to give a talk to the Southland Branch of Forest and Bird on the Trust's work. David Fortune gave an overview of the work on the islands to the Fiordland Rotary Club. The Trust also produced two newsletters during the year - in October 2015 and March 2016.

Website – Trustee Chris Shaw continued to maintain and update the website during 2015/6. Changes in the systems at our webhosting organisation prevent us from comparing our web traffic with previous years. The website is updated regularly and continues to receive favourable comments from visitors to the site.

Documents prepared by Trust – during the course of the year Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, produced the following documents for the Trust:

Shaw, V. (2015), Mouse eradication/control on Rona Island, Topajka Shaw Consulting Limited, June, 48p.

Shaw, V. (2015), Assessment of Environmental Effects for mouse control on Rona Island, Pomona Island Charitable Trust, September, 18p.

Shaw, V. (2016), Rona Island: Bird monitoring report, Pomona Island Charitable Trust, February, 24p.

Conclusion

Overall 2015/16 has been a successful year for the Pomona Island Charitable Trust. The Trust has succeeded in reducing rat numbers on Pomona to undetectable levels. As a result of the hard work by volunteers, birdlife on the island has thrived, with the summer 2016 bird count recording the highest number of birds ever counted during a summer count.



The Trust's decision to invest in mouse control on Rona has paid dividends. At the end of the 2015/16 financial year, mouse were tracking at 0% with tracking cards having been continuously in the tracking tunnels on the island for 174 consecutive nights. The success of the operation has exceed the Trustee's expectations and as a result critically endangered Haast tokoeka will again be released onto the island in May 2016.

The Trust thanks all of our volunteers and financial supporters for your belief in our ability to reduce rat numbers on Pomona and mouse numbers on Rona to undetectable levels. Your support provides us with the motivation to continue our work to restore Pomona and Rona Islands for future generations.

In July 2015, the Trust celebrated the tenth anniversary of its formation. The commitment from our volunteers and financial supporters to help us keep Pomona rat-free and Rona mouse-free has been the best birthday present we could have wished for.

**Trustees of the
Pomona Island Charitable Trust**

June 2016

