

Pomona Post



February 2017



Celebrating Conservation

As part of the ten year celebrations of the restoration of Pomona and Rona Islands, the Trust teamed up with DOC during Conservation Week to host a photography workshop on Pomona. With expert advice on hand from award winning photographer Graham Dainty, ten local ladies honed their photography skills. From landscape shots, to close-ups of native vegetation all participants saw the island through a new lens.



One of the participants in the photography workshop (Photo: Viv Shaw)

Event organiser, DOC Ranger Michelle Crouchley said "It was a great opportunity to use Conservation Week to highlight the work the Trust has done over the last ten years on Pomona". Participants enjoyed their day on the island commenting that "it was a great to have Graham on hand to share both his skills and passion for photography. We all learned a lot and will hopefully now take better photos".

Photographs from the event were displayed at the Te Anau library for the whole community to see. Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw "thanked Michelle and Graham for making the workshop such a success". Some of the excellent photos taken are shown on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter.

John Stevenson

It was with great sadness that the Trust learnt of the recent tragic death of John Stevenson, Bouncer to his friends. Bouncer had been the Trust's Treasurer since 2009 and an active volunteer on the islands. "He'll be particularly remembered for his contribution to the robin and mohua translocations to Pomona" said Trust Chair, John Whitehead. At the end of each day's bird catching activities,



John Stevenson, aka Bouncer, who died in September (Photo: Viv Shaw)

Bouncer would go round the team members asking how many birds they had caught. "Each time he was delighted to find that he'd caught the most" said John "Mind you, not that Bouncer was competitive!"

"Bouncer brought a lot of thoughtful discussion to Trust meetings" remembers Trustee Chris Shaw, "especially advocating for new technologies such as self-resetting traps". John Stevenson will be sorely missed by everyone involved with the Trust.

Funding success

Over the course of 2016, the Trust successfully applied for a number of grants to support its restoration of Pomona and Rona Islands. In December the Trust received \$10,552 (ex GST) from the Lottery Grants Board to finish cutting the tracks on Pomona. A DOC community Partnership Fund grant a year earlier had enabled the Trust to employ a contractor to cut 10km of track on the island. "This latest funding means that we can now cut the last 5km of track" said John Whitehead. "This will make it easier, quicker and safer for our volunteers and contractors to service the traps and bait stations on Pomona".

The tracks will be cut by a professional contractor and we will then put out a call for volunteers to help mark the tracks with orange triangles.



Lottery Grants Board
FUNDS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

The Trust has also received notification that it's application for funds to protect Pomona from rats during a mast year has been successful and we should be able to uplift the \$13,101 (ex GST) awarded shortly. This is on top of the \$10,000 received in July from Kiwis for Kiwi to protect Rona from mice.

Vegetation monitoring

Given that the Trust has been restoring Pomona and Rona for ten years, it was decided that the time had come to re-survey the permanent vegetation plots on the two islands. Our newest Trustee, David Fortune, offered to take responsibility to make sure this important task happened. David explains "the aim is to see how the vegetation has regenerated now that pest species have been removed". The greatest difference should be seen on Pomona as the island has been free of possum and deer for nine year.



David identifying a vegetation plot on Pomona (Photo: Sharon Lake)

With expert assistance from DOC staff, volunteers spent three days surveying the five vegetation plots on Pomona and another day working on the two plots on Rona. "Having Sue Lake and George Ledgard from DOC lead the surveys was a huge help. They willingly shared their knowledge of the numerous plant spe-

cies, as well as vegetation monitoring techniques" said David. "A huge amount of information has been collected and there is now the small matter of analysing the data". Whilst it is too early to say what the results will be, anecdotal evidence suggests that there is strong regeneration, especially on Pomona.

War on rats

The beech mast in summer 2015/16 increased the risk of a rodent re-invasion on Pomona. "In response, the Trust has been waging a war against those rats that made it across to the island" explains Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw. Bait stations have been activated and the number of trap checks increased. "This approach appears to be working" said Viv "as rat numbers during this beech mast have been significantly lower than in the last event three years ago". The graph below shows the value of having the combined trap and bait station network in place across Pomona. "By keeping the rat numbers lower, we are able to provide greater protection to the native birds on the island during the breeding season" said Viv.

Birds benefit

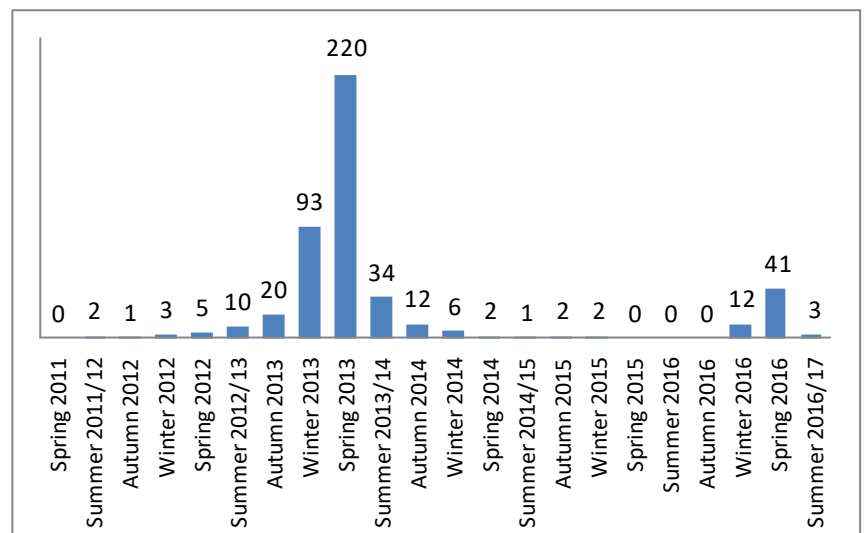
Whilst beech masts pose huge threats because of the high risk of re-invasion by rats, these events also provide a great

opportunity for our native birds to thrive. Beech seeding, for example, provides a good food source for kakariki allowing them to breed year round. "We've noticed a significant increase in the number of kakariki on Pomona" said Trustee Chris Shaw, a regular bird counter. "And, as for robins, you almost end up tripping over them, there are so many!".



Kakariki on Pomona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

The benefit of the beech mast has also been borne out by the annual bird count, with overall bird numbers on Pomona up by 19.5% over the previous year. Tomtits were the most common birds followed by bellbirds, fantails, kakariki, rifleman and grey warblers. Chris reported seeing young mohua being fed by their parents. "This is a good sign that the intensive trapping and baiting regime is working on Pomona" said Viv.



Graph showing rats on Pomona following beech masts in 2012/13 and 2015/16

Rona benefits too.....

The positive effects of the beech mast are also on display on Rona Island. A total of 137 birds were counted across the four baseline count stations representing an increase of over 20% compared with the 2015 count. Brown creeper were the most common birds on Rona followed by fantails, tomtits, red-poll, rifleman and grey warbler. "Managing mouse numbers to very low levels on Rona is having a positive impact on the birdlife" explained Viv Shaw. "With virtually no mice on the island, the birds get the tasty invertebrates all to themselves".

This lack of mice has also been benefiting the kiwi. Rona is now temporary home to 15 critically endangered juvenile Haast tokoeka. "The fact that every single kiwi from the 2015/16 breeding season is now resident on Rona is amazing" said Viv. "The Trust's decision to invest in intensive mouse control has been well worthwhile".



Pomona volunteer and Moturau Hut warden, Phil Hoskin about to release a kiwi on Rona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

With a phased approach to the release of the birds, a number of members of the local community have had a chance to have their own personal kiwi experience. Volunteers have also had the opportunity to help DOC staff with the regular health



Volunteers on the beach at the end of a good day's work on Pomona. And that's not all of them! Some are on another beach waiting to be picked up! (Photo: Viv Shaw)

checks and transmitter changes on the kiwi on Rona.

Mouse stowaways?

"Whilst the Trust's aim is to eradicate mice from Rona, it was always going to be a tricky business" said Trust Chair John Whitehead. "With a full-on beech mast and ludicrously high mouse numbers on the mainland, it was always going to be a question of when would the mice return?" The answer to that question is January 2017! A regular trap check saw two mice caught, both at key landing sites on Rona. Fortunately, no mouse prints were found on the tracking tunnel cards. "Whilst it is possible for mice to swim from the mainland to the island" said Trust Secretary Viv Shaw, "it is also a timely reminder to boaties to check their boats for rodents before they go anywhere near Rona Island". Because the threat of a mouse re-invasion was so high, the Trust had de-

cided in November to activate the bait station network on the island to prevent mice from re-establishing a population on the island. "This looks to have been a good decision" said Viv.

Work off the Christmas calories.....

The Trust's generous offer to volunteers to work off the Christmas calories resulted in a record breaking turnout for a working bee. On 28 December last year, with a full boat, we headed over to Pomona to check the traps, service bait stations and to do some track marking. "Clearly people had been overindulging on the Christmas turkey and mince pies" laughed Viv "and needed a good excuse for a good workout" It was great to get so much work done in a single day.

"Hopefully all of our volunteers have made a New Year's resolution to do more volunteering on Pomona in 2017" continued Viv.

Pomona—the early years

With so much to report on in this edition of Pomona Post, we will continue our series on *Pomona—the early years* in the next newsletter.

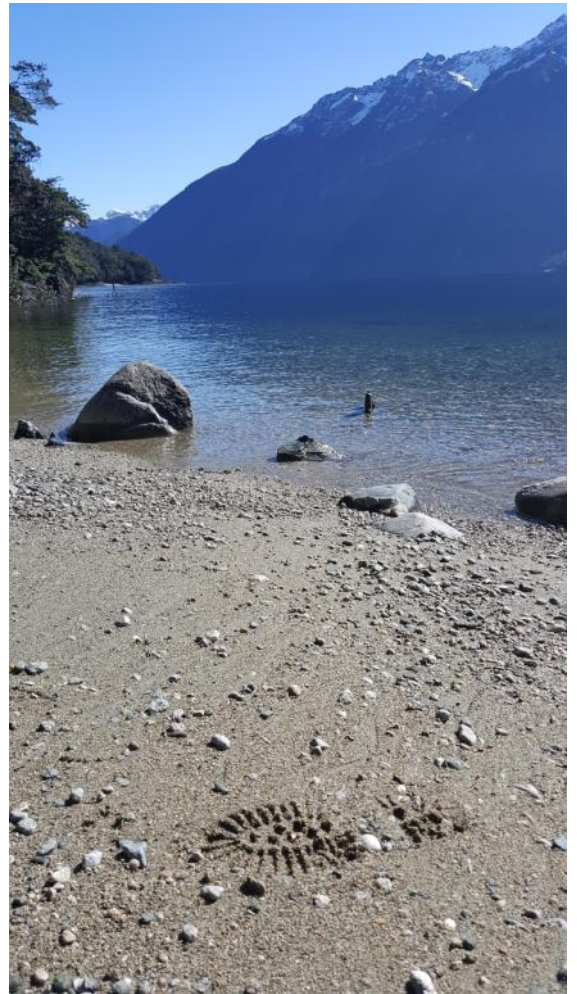


Live mouse on the Kepler Track (Photo: Viv Shaw)

Celebrating Conservation Week 2016: Photography workshop on Pomona



Graham Dainty: Pomona creek



Michelle Crouchley: Leave only footprints



Maria Pio: View from Pomona



Anja Kohler: Hounds tooth fern

Celebrating Conservation Week 2016: Photography workshop on Pomona



Margaret Kalweit: bird feather in shrub blowing in the wind



Maryke Scholefield: Pomona Island



Margaret Kalweit: weathered tree trunk

Thank you to our workshop participants for sharing their photographs with us



Graham Dainty: Weta in motel



Michelle Crouchley: Pomona beach



Maria Pio: Growing on rock