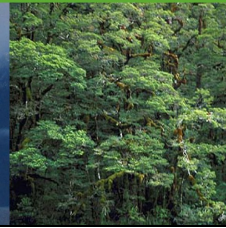
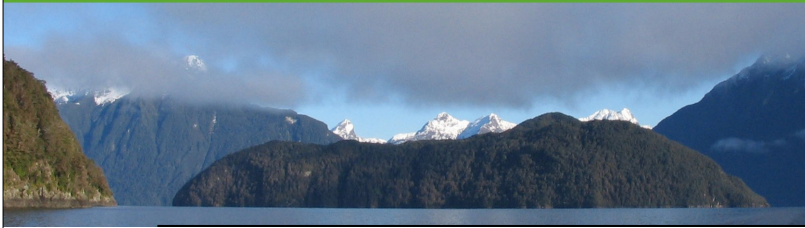


# Pomona Post



March 2018



## Business as usual .....

Over the past six months it has been pretty much business as usual on Pomona. Volunteers check the traps every two months and undertake quarterly bird counts. Sadly, there are still a few rats on the island, following the beech mast event in 2016. "They are at low numbers and, judging by the numbers of robins right across the island, they don't appear to be having any impact on the bird life" said Trust Chair John Whitehead.



A robin eating a worm (Photo: Viv Shaw)

"But even when things are ticking along nicely Pomona still has a way of surprising us." observed Trust Secretary Viv Shaw.

## Snail surprise

Now we all know that Pomona Island is a sanctuary for our native birds and plants. But late last year we discovered that it is also a safe haven for snails. Contractor, Phil Evans, whilst going about his busi-

ness filling the bait stations on the island, found an empty shell on the track. Suspecting that it might be an unusual find, Phil put the shell in his pack so that it could be identified. Viv just happened to be going to Wellington the following week, so she took the snail shell to Te Papa for identification. What she discovered surprised us all. "It was amazing how much we learnt about our snail" said Viv. "And the person at Te Papa I spoke to was really excited!"

## Why is our snail so special?

We learnt that our snail was a fully grown adult that had probably died a natural death. We also discovered that it could be a new species within the Rhytida genus or even a new undescribed genus. Either way the snail is likely to belong to a sister genus to the better known Powelliphanta snail making it a Gondwanaland species that exists only in New Zealand and Australia.

Work is currently underway to identify New Zealand snail genera and species and our snail could play an important part in that research. Manapouri is of great interest to malacologists (the collective noun for snail shell experts) because, as our contact at Te Papa noted "exciting new discoveries are very possible".

The snail find is definitely a new species for Pomona if not New Zealand. "It pays to keep your eyes open when wandering around Pomona" noted Viv. It is also a good reminder to all our volunteers and contractors that should you find anything interesting on either Pomona or Rona please pass it on to the Trust so that we can get it identified.

## Robin the top bird

Every year in December, volunteers complete bird counts at 10 baseline count stations on Pomona. This allows us to



Rhytida snail species found on Pomona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

track our progress since restoration work began eleven years ago. For the first time robins were the top bird accounting for 15.6% of all birds counted. From the release of 59 robins in 2009, this species had gone from strength to strength on Pomona. At this time of the year the number of juvenile robins is very high. "It's great fun watching their antics as they vie for territory" said Trustee Chris Shaw.

### Attracting the next generation

It is not only young robins enjoying what Pomona has to offer. Earlier this year we had probably our youngest "volunteer" on the island. Coming from a long line of conservationists, it was only a matter of time before nearly four-year old Zac Marsh paid his first visit to Pomona. Accompanied by his granddad (Trust Chair, John Whitehead) and Fay Whitehead, wee Zac spent the day discovering all sorts of bugs and birds as well as testing out the water temperature of Lake Manapouri.



Zac Marsh with granddad John Whitehead at the end of a tiring day on Pomona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

Mum, Jo Marsh and grandma Sue Lake are regular volunteers, so hopefully when Zac grows up he'll come back and help out.



DOC staff member, Tarsi Koentges, with the smallest kiwi ever released on Rona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

### Lone kiwi no longer alone

Following the return of most of the kiwi to the Haast sanctuary in April last year, Rona had become home to a lone kiwi that had dropped its transmitter. In recent weeks that has changed with the arrival of six Haast tokoeka chicks with a further six birds expected in the near future. With 13 birds, Rona will again be close to capacity as a kiwi crèche.

In recent years, juvenile kiwi have been spending a few months on Rona to prepare them for life back in their homeland. This year, thanks to the intensive mouse control work the Trust has undertaken, the island is again playing host to kiwi chicks. In February the smallest chick ever was released on Rona. "Weighing in at just 360g, the kiwi was not much more than a ball of feathers on legs" laughed Viv Shaw.

"The Trust is stoked that Rona is once again playing an important role in ensuring the survival of the critically endangered Haast tokoeka" said John Whitehead.

### New Trustee

The Trust is pleased to announce that Lynley King has joined us as our newest Trustee. Having recently shifted back to

Te Anau, Lynley, together with husband Paul, has a long association with Fiordland. The couple have been regular volunteers on both Pomona and Rona in recent months and as an environmental educationalist, Lynley has a lot to offer the Trust. A profile of Lynley will appear in the next edition of Pomona Post.

### Tieke transfer

In the early years of the Trust, Viv and John put together a restoration plan for Pomona and Rona setting out what species might be suitable for transfer to the islands. "Saddleback, known to Maori as tieke, have always been high on that list" said John.

A planned translocation back in 2013 had to be aborted at the last minute following the discovery on Rona of a pregnant stoat and her offspring. The return of mice to the island further delayed a tieke transfer. "Since then the Trust has worked hard to keep Rona both mouse and stoat free" explained Viv. And that effort is now paying off, with DOC giving approval for the transfer of up to 60 tieke to the island later this year. "We are keeping our fingers and toes crossed that the transfer goes ahead" said Viv "as Rona would become the first easily accessible site in Fiordland where people can see and hear Saddleback".



Juvenile Saddleback (Photo: Barry Harcourt)