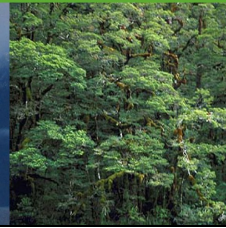
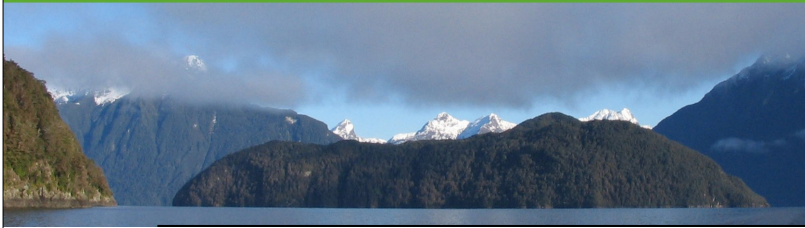


Pomona Post



September 2016



Ten years of restoration

This year the Pomona Island Charitable Trust is proudly celebrating ten years of restoration activity on Pomona and Rona Islands. The Trust was officially formed in July 2005, but the real work on the islands kicked off in 2006.

Over the next few newsletters we will look back on the successes and challenges that the Trust has faced over the past ten years as well as keeping you up-to-date with what's happening now.

Showing our appreciation

As a way of showing our appreciation to those individuals and organisations that have supported the Trust, an informal celebratory event was held to coincide with the first ever trap check on Pomona Island.

A short DVD was put together showing photos from the last ten years before the Trust's Patron, Emeritus Professor Alan Mark, presented Certificates of Appreciation to those who have made a significant contribution to the restoration of Pomona and Rona Islands. "The Trust and its supporters have worked hard over the last ten years to achieve real gains on Pomona and Rona Islands" said Alan. "The Trust is well run and I am confident that it can manage the challenges that it is currently facing on Pomona and Rona".

"The event was a good opportunity for our Trustees, volunteers and financial supporters to get together in a relaxed setting" said John Whitehead "and to share their experiences of Pomona and Rona". Celebratory events are not complete without a cake and the Trust is grateful to Wapiti Bakery for donating a



Cake donated by Wapiti Bakery (Photo: Viv Shaw)

wonderful cake. "The stoat being trapped before it gets to the kiwi is really neat" said volunteer Fay Edwards.

Meanwhile the work on both Pomona and Rona continues.....

Good news from Rona

The tracking tunnels and traps on Rona were checked again in August. "We were stoked to get another clear round with mice still tracking at zero percent" said Trust Secretary Viv Shaw. Mice have now been at undetectable levels for 286 consecutive nights on the island.

The success of the mouse project on Rona means that the island is again being used as a crèche site for the critically endangered Haast tokoeka. In May five juvenile kiwi were released with the assistance of Shelley O'Dwyer from Meridian Energy. "It was fitting to have a Meridian Energy staff member help us release the kiwi" said Viv "because they contributed to the funding to set up the bait station network".



Members of the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron, Bruce, Ross and Paul receiving their certificates of appreciation from Trust Patron Professor Alan Mark (Photo: Chris Shaw)



Shelley O'Dwyer about to release a kiwi on Rona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

Mat Bayliss, chair of Meridian's Manapouri Community Fund said that the company "is excited about the success of the mouse eradication project and the release of the kiwi back onto Rona".

Checks on the kiwi show that they are thriving—all of them having put on a significant amount of weight. "It is good to know that the effort put in by the Trust to control mice on Rona has paid off" said Trust Chair, John Whitehead.

Mouse work to continue

The ability of the Trust to keep mouse numbers at undetectable levels for the benefit of kiwi on Rona has been recognised by Kiwis for Kiwi. The organisation has awarded the Trust a \$10,000 grant to continue to protect the island from these tiny invaders.

Environmental Achiever

Earlier in the year DOC staff put the Trust forward for a Southland Community Environment Award. In making the nomination, Lindsay Wilson commented that "the Trust has done a fantastic job of tackling all the challenges that have been presented and continuing to go forward. In the process there have been

many new learnings, with different approaches and techniques being trialled. The work of the Trust will really help build our ability to restore inshore islands around New Zealand".

"Meeting the judges was a highly motivating experience in itself" said Trustee Chris Shaw, "Winning the Environmental Achiever Award was fantastic recognition for the support from all of our volunteers and financial supporters especially in the last three years".

Environment Southland recorded a short video outlining the work of the Trust which can be viewed at:

<http://www.es.govt.nz/council/environment-awards/Pages/2016-Southland-Community-Environment-Awards.aspx>.

Good news and bad news usually go together!

Whilst much of 2016 has been about good news, we all know the saying "there's good news and bad news!"

Unfortunately the predicted beech mast event has happened in Fiordland and rat numbers on the mainland opposite Pomona have soared. In one trap check alone, the team from the Southland

Trailer Yacht Squadron caught a whooping 27 rats on the mainland trap line.

"With rat numbers this high, the issue was always going to be when would rats swim back to Pomona rather than if" explained Viv Shaw.

Having gone almost a year rat-free, a breeding population was found during the August check. But as in 2012 when rats first re-invaded Pomona, the Trust is ready. "In fact we are more than ready" said John Whitehead. "We now have in place a network of 172 traps and 179 bait stations to help protect vulnerable bird species from predation by rats". We have activated the bait station network and will increase the frequency of trap checks to ensure rat numbers do not get out of control.

Sharing experiences

Volunteers often report positive experiences after a day spent on either Pomona or Rona Islands. It might be seeing a flock of mohua or watching a robin peck at your pack. It might be seeing a beautiful orchid flowering or finding all the traps empty at the end of day. Recently, Chris Shaw saw a stick insect for the first time on Pomona and Viv got buzzed by a falcon whilst having her lunch on the helipad—she was probably too big to be its lunch! Photos on page 3.



Trust Chair, John Whitehead and Secretary, Viv Shaw, receiving an Achiever Award from Richard Lauder, CEO of Real Journeys (Photo: Southern Exposures Photography)



Stick insect (*Acanthoxyla prasina*) (Photo: Chris Shaw)

If any volunteers have photos or special experiences from the islands that they want to share with us please email Viv at pomona.island@ihug.co.nz.

Pomona—the early years

Starting with a blank sheet, the Trust engaged a contractor, Derek Brown, to prepare a pest management plan to deal to the five pest species—possums, deer, stoats, rats and mice—on Pomona. “The objective of eradicating all pest species from the island was quite daunting” said John Whitehead, Trust Chair, “but Derek’s plan gave us the direction we needed”.

The first task on Pomona was to lay out a trap network targeting the stoats and rats. This involved flagging and cutting 9km of tracks and placing 36 trap boxes each containing two Mark IV Fenn traps. (We now have 172 trap sites and 27km of track!!)

The traps were baited on 24 August 2006 with the first trap check taking place on 29 August 2006. “The excitement of checking traps for the first time on the island was palpable” said Trust Secretary Viv Shaw. “Two stoats and 16 rats were caught and our dream of creating a pest-free island sanctuary was underway”.

As well as regular trap checks to keep stoat and rat numbers under control, the Trust turned its attention to the possums and deer on the island. Contract Wild Animal Control Limited (CWACL) dealt to the possums using a mix of leg-hold traps and Feratox. A staggering 420 possums were removed from Pomona. “It’s no wonder our Patron Alan Mark had described the island as being ravaged!” noted John. CWACL were also contracted to shoot the small number of deer known to live on Pomona.

Let the rodent eradication begin.....

As the work on the ground continued, the planning for the Trust’s aerial assault on the rodents was well underway. The recommendation in the pest management

plan was to follow best practice for eradicating rats and mice from Pomona. This would involve two aerial applications of brodifacoum to be completed at least tens days apart. With resource consent secured the operation was planned for winter 2007. The rodent eradication was successful and in the next newsletter we’ll look back on what the Trust did to



Falcon eying up Viv for lunch? (Photo: Viv Shaw)

get rid of the rodents and the subsequent effort to keep Pomona Island pest-free.

Thank you

Looking back, it is always good to acknowledge the people and organisations that believed in the founding Trustees’ vision to eradicate all of the pests from Pomona. “DOC staff have always provided a high level of support” said Trust Secretary Viv Shaw, “especially sharing their experiences of pest eradications”.

In the first two years of operations, significant financial support was forthcoming from Donald Riley, the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation, Lottery Grants Board, Community Trust of Southland, Meridian Energy as well as local family Trusts. Smaller, but very welcome donations were made by numerous other individuals. “Without the support and belief in our ability to eradicate all pest species from Pomona, we would not be celebrating ten years of restoration activity in 2016” said Trust Chair John Whitehead.



Volunteers at the first working bee on Pomona in 2006 (Photo: Viv Shaw)