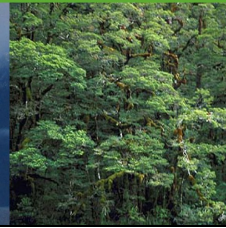
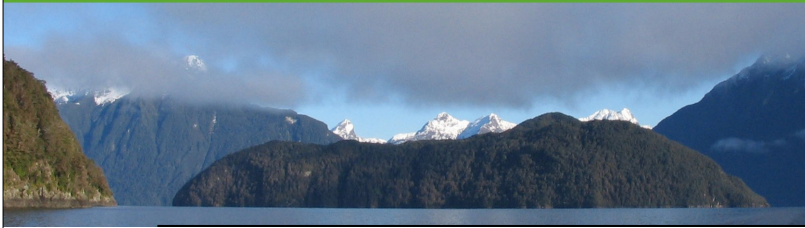


# Pomona Post



October 2017



## Pomona on track

Thanks to grants from DOC's community fund and Lottery's Environment and Heritage Committee, all of the tracks on Pomona Island have now been cut and marked with orange triangles. The network of 172 trap sites and 179 bait stations on the island, are served by over 25km of track. "For a relatively small island, this is a lot of tracks" said Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, "Our volunteers are important to us, so anything we can do to make their time on Pomona safer is well worth the effort".

However, track work is an on-going mission as vegetation grows back and trees fall across the tracks. "Making sure our tracks stay clear will be a priority for the



Volunteer Fay Edwards ready to triangle tracks on Pomona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

Trust", noted Viv.

## Are kiwi breeding on Pomona?

Since 2011, 19 Haast tokoeka have been released onto Pomona with the aim of establishing a *kohanga kiwi*—a safe site where this critically endangered kiwi species could breed thereby adding to the then population of 350 birds. Trustees are often asked whether these kiwi on Pomona have started breeding.



Viv Shaw with kiwi released on Pomona (Photo: Barry Harcourt)

Up to now we've have had to shrug our shoulders and say "who knows?".

However, we do know that Haast tokoeka are slow breeders and that they typically start raising their first chicks when they reach the age of four or five. "Given that most of the birds on Pomona have now reached breeding age, we are determined to find out whether the Pomona kiwi are adding to the population of Haast tokoeka" said Viv Shaw.

With funding from Kiwis for Kiwi, a contractor will be employed to locate up to eight kiwi. The kiwi will be found using a mix of night calling and through the use of a fully training kiwi dog. "Once located, each bird will be fitted with a chick timer transmitter" explained Viv. "This is a very clever piece of equipment that will enable volunteers to monitor whether the kiwi are sitting on a nest. And all without needing to disturb them."

"This is an exciting project for the whole community" said John Whitehead, Chair of the Trust. "Hopefully we'll be able to finally answer the question that everyone is asking us!"

## Saving kiwi month

It is great to be able to announce our Pomona kiwi breeding project this month, as October is "Save Kiwi Month". For more information check out the Kiwis for Kiwi website at <https://www.kiwisforkiwi.org/take-action/its-save-kiwi-month/>



## Biosecurity training exercise

What do ivy, newts, rooks and cats have in common? They were all biosecurity threats “found” last month during a DOC biosecurity training exercise on Pomona!



Going through DOC's quarantine procedures before heading out to Pomona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

Following a workshop in Te Anau, 13 DOC staff, along with Trust Secretary Viv Shaw, headed to Pomona to respond to a set of simulated biosecurity incursions on the island. “Islands are important sanctuaries for a number of threatened species throughout New Zealand, so it is good to test our incursion response capability through exercises such as this one on Pomona” said Peter Corson, DOC's island biosecurity advisor. “All of the threats addressed during the exercise are issues that DOC has had to deal with in real life”.



DOC staff biosecurity exercise on Pomona (Photo: Finley Cox)

“From the Trust's perspective, it was useful to meet the DOC experts on biosecurity” said Viv. “We were able to tap into their collective knowledge and, as a result, we have some good ideas on how to tighten up our own biosecurity procedures”.

Don't worry, no real pests were released onto Pomona for the purposes of this exercise!!

## Pomona rat-free?

Over winter rat numbers on Pomona have been trending downwards with only two of the critters caught during the July trap check—both in the same rodent motel in Hurricane Passage.

But the best news of all came in September. “For the first time in over a year we had a completely rat-free trap check” said Trust Chair, John Whitehead. “Based on past experience, we can dare to hope that Pomona will again become rat-free. At least until the next beech mast event!!”

“Becoming rat-free again is, in no small measure, thanks to our volunteers” said Viv. “We've had great support in recent months and want to say thanks to all of you”.

Invertebrates and birds all benefit from Pomona being rat-free. So we are looking forward to a bumper breeding season this year.

Talking of birds, one of our volunteers, Shawn Herron—a keen birder—enjoyed the company of a morepork during a recent bird count. “It is really unusual to see a morepork during the day” said Shawn, “but this one watched me for the whole 5-minutes I was doing the count.”

## OSNZ conference

In June this year, Te Anau played host to the annual Ornithological Society of New Zealand conference. Trustee, Neil Robertson, one of the organisers, was



Morepork seen on Pomona during the day (Photo: Shawn Herron)

keen to showcase Pomona to attendees. A field trip to the island was quickly snapped up by participants and they were not disappointed. Accompanied by Trustees John Whitehead and David Fortune, the first thing the bird fanatics saw were kiwi prints on the beach. “We couldn't have planned it better” said David. Participants didn't have to go far to see the next species on the to-see list either. Mohua duly obliged with most people getting a glimpse of the elusive yellow-head high up in the canopy.



Kiwi prints on Pomona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

“The feedback from the field trip to Pomona was very positive” said Neil “with participants making a donation towards the Trust's work as part of their trip”.



## Kiwi return to Haast

Returning 11 kiwi back to the sanctuary at Haast in April this year was run like a military operation. Five Trust volunteers joined forces with six DOC staff/contractors to catch nine kiwi on Rona and two on Pomona.

A briefing was held the night before the operation with rendezvous at 5.45am the next morning. "It was still dark when we got to the islands" lamented Trustee, Chris Shaw. But at first light everyone disembarked the water taxi and set off in three separate teams to catch their kiwi. Some teams had dogs and others had to rely on their tracking expertise alone. "Needless to say those with the dogs caught their kiwi quicker and more easily" said Trust Secretary Viv.

Two birds on Rona clearly liked Rona Island so much that they attempted to evade their catchers. But with support from dog teams they too were located and boxed up ready for their journey back to the sanctuary at Haast. "It was a long day" said Jacinda, Haast tokoeka Team Leader "but we got all 11 birds, thanks to a team effort on behalf of DOC and the Trust".

The kiwi were driven to Haast and, following an emotional mihi from Makaawhio, the local iwi, were taken by jet boat to their release site.

"Whilst it is sad to see the kiwi leave" said Viv, "Rona is a crèche site with the express purpose of enabling young kiwi to develop and grow big enough to fend for themselves in the big world of the Haast sanctuary". There are still six kiwi on Rona awaiting transfer to their permanent home.

## Airbnb for weta?

With fewer rodents on Pomona and Rona, we should start to see an increase in the number of invertebrates on the islands. Like tourists, weta will be on the look out for good accommodation, so the Trust has got into the weta Airbnb market! Motels built by prisoners in the Otago Corrections facility have been installed on both islands and are ready for weta to move in.

## Promoting Pomona

Volunteers not only work on the islands, but a lot of effort also goes on behind the scenes. A key means of communication



A new weta motel on Rona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

for the Trust is our website. "After ten years of operation the site was beginning to get a bit out-of-date" explained Trustee and Webmaster, Chris Shaw. "We also wanted to make it mobile friendly, whilst keeping the site easy to navigate."

Check out our revamped website at: <http://www.pomona-island.org.nz>

And let us know what you think.

Meridian Energy has also been busy promoting the Trust through a video highlighting the kiwi work on Rona. Cut and paste the following link into your web browser or go to the news page on our website and click on the link provided.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUWq538Q4Pc>



Quality accommodation available for weta on Pomona and Rona Islands (Photo: Graham Dainty)



Kiwi catching team at the end of a long day on Rona (Photo: Warren Simpson)