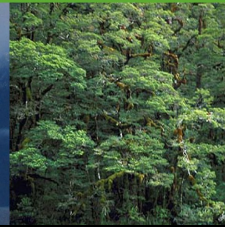
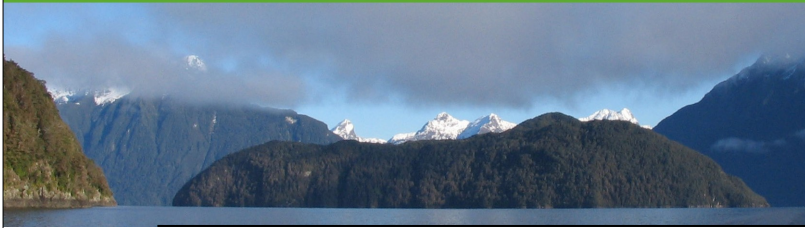


Pomona Post



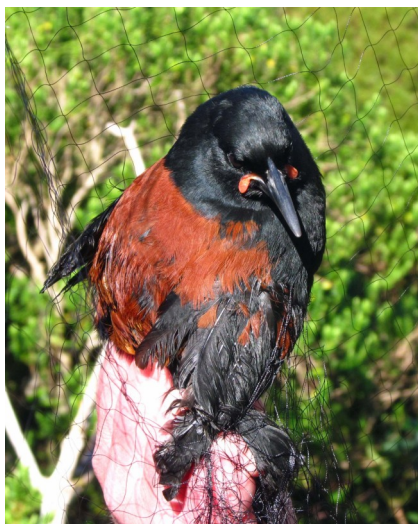
October 2018



Tieke translocation

In August the Trust achieved a major milestone with the release of 31 tieke or saddleback on Rona Island. The transfer was the result of years of hard work by volunteers to ensure the island was free of all predators so that these handsome, but vulnerable birds could call Rona home. "For the first time in Fiordland, saddleback can now be seen and heard in a more accessible location" said Trust Chair John Whitehead.

The Trust has been working towards this release since 2012 when DOC first granted permission for saddleback to be transferred from Breaksea to Rona Island. "It has been a long and difficult journey" said Trust Project Manager Viv Shaw. "A stoat incursion delayed the first attempt to release tieke on Rona six years ago". And then mouse incursions



A saddleback caught in the net ready for transfer to Rona (Photo: Viv Shaw)



Trustee David Fortune releases a tieke on Rona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

and beech masts created further delays. "It's no wonder the levels of excitement were so high when we finally had birds ready for release" said John.

The transfer was made possible with the assistance of DOC staff who were already catching tieke on Breaksea and Anchor Islands for release on Five Fingers Peninsular, Resolution Island. With experienced catchers on hand, Lindsay Wilson, Senior Ranger Biodiversity, offered to catch saddleback for release on Rona Island. "It was great to be able to help the Trust achieve this major milestone" said Lindsay.

Not one but two transfers.....

"Whilst we were rapt to have 31 saddleback on Rona" said Viv "experience has shown that the more birds you can transfer, the greater chance they have of sur-

vival long term". With this in mind the Trust undertook a second tieke transfer in September. Trustees Viv Shaw and David Fortune were the lucky volunteers who got the opportunity to help experienced bird catchers Jo Hiscock and Mad-die van de Wetering catch tieke on Breaksea Island. Meanwhile Chris Shaw stayed behind to coordinate the release on Rona. Read their story on page 2.

Translocation thanks

The Trust has been waiting a long time to transfer tieke to Rona. Back in 2012 the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation had kindly agreed to fund the transfer that was postponed. "We were really grateful that the Foundation guaranteed its financial support" said Trust Chair John "even though it had to wait a while for the translocation to happen".

Boyd Peacock, from the Foundation, attended the second release noting "that it was nice to get out and see conservation in action rather than just reading funding applications".



Close up of a tieke (Photo: Viv Shaw)

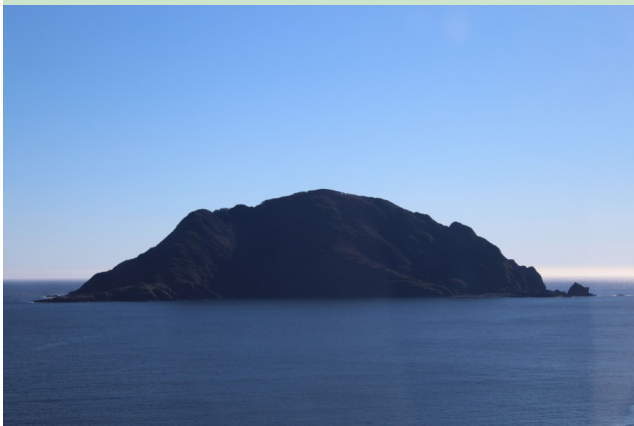
Trust-led tieke transfer

Trustees Viv Shaw, David Fortune and Chris Shaw were heavily involved in the second tieke transfer. Here's their story.

Taking on the role of volunteer Project Manager, Viv highlights some of the planning and logistics behind the operation: "Once we'd decided to do a second tieke transfer to Rona, I spent a lot of time watching the weather forecast. We needed a run of three dry, calm days to give us the chance of catching a reasonable number of saddleback. After one weather window shut another opened and we were set to go on 4 September. With only a couple of days notice all hell broke loose! We needed to get all the bird catching and camping gear together, organise the helicopter, make sure the water taxi was on stand-by, prepare a health & safety plan. And of course put all of our gear through quarantine so as not to take any unwanted pests or seeds down to Breaksea.

"Whilst this wasn't my first bird transfer, it would be my first in full charge making it a bit more nerve-wracking! DOC ranger Bex was a huge help and I'm really grateful to her for her laid back approach to making things work".

Having got the team together, completed all the quarantine checks and finished the safety briefing, we were ready to head to the hangar for the flight to Breaksea. David takes up the story: "It's incredible how much gear you need to catch a few birds. At one point I thought we weren't going to get all the gear in the helicopter. But Kim managed and we were soon on our way. What a great day to fly! Fantastic views of snow covered mountains and steep-sided valleys. It showed how spectacular Fiordland is. All too soon Breaksea Island was in sight and after a quick reccy of the landing site, Kim



Our first view of Breaksea Island (Photo: Viv Shaw)

put the helicopter down as close as possible to our campsite. With all the gear unloaded we watched as Kim flew off leaving us to experience the sights and sounds of Breaksea.

This was my first time on Breaksea and first impressions were really positive. The island was alive with seals and the birdsong that greeted us was amazing. Within just a few minutes we heard our first saddleback. But there was no time to relax as we shifted all our gear to the campsite, then set off to look at potential tieke catching sites. Jo had caught tieke



Campsite on Breaksea Island (Photo: Viv Shaw)

on Breaksea before so knew where to go. Within an hour or so we'd got the catch sites set up. Leaving the nets down we headed back to the campsite to put up tents and get tea". An important part of our health & safety plan was communications. With radio skeds agreed in advance, Chris awaited our calls back in Te Anau. "The In-reach worked well and I knew that the team on Breaksea was safe" said Chris.

Viv continues: "with alarms set for 6.30am we were up and ready to catch our tieke soon after breakfast. With lots of birds calling we were hopeful of a good catch. We drifted between six sites, removing all birds that had flown into the mist nets. For the first couple of hours we disentangled bell-birds and robins before catching our first saddleback at 10.30am. Seeing a tieke close up was very special. They are surprisingly large birds with quite long beaks and of course that beautiful orange saddle. Once banded, the tieke was placed in a box with a perch and some mealworms, apples, grapes and orange. The saddleback were certainly well looked after as they waited to be transferred to their new home".

By the end of the day we had caught 12 tieke and Chris could go ahead and organise the release on Rona. Chris takes up the story: "after receiving a message from Viv, I organised the helicopter to pick the team up from Breaksea the next day and booked the boat to take us over to Rona. I also contacted Boyd from the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation and Nicky Cobb (the partner of former Trustee John Stevenson) as they had been invited to attend the release".

Trust-led tieke transfer (cont'd)

With all arrangements in place the team could spend a relaxing evening mulling over the “catches of the day”!

The dawn chorus greeted the team on Breaksea. David continues: “There were still saddleback out there calling so we were hopeful of catching more birds for transfer to Rona. But having already caught 12 tieke, it was much harder to attract birds to the nets. Having a falcon sitting above one net site didn’t help!”

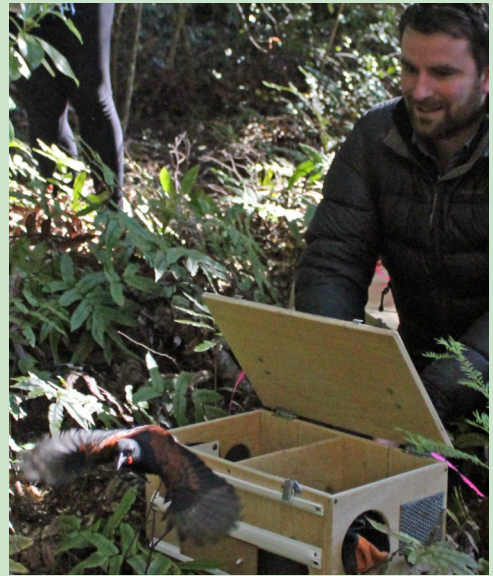


Falcon watching a mist net site on Breaksea Island (Photo: Viv Shaw)

With two more saddleback caught the team had to pack up as the helicopter was due to arrive within an hour. Viv takes up the story: “having spoken to Chris by satellite phone we knew that the helicopter would shortly be on its way to pick us up. It was a mad dash to take down the tents and pack everything up into fish bins. We’d left the mist nets up until the last minute in case any last tieke wanted to take up our offer of a new home. Sadly none did! Squeezing everything back into the helicopter, we took off in perfect conditions flying down Broughton Arm and back to Lake Manapouri”.

Chris was waiting with the release team at the mouth of the Iris Burn. “The original plan had been to fly to Supply Bay” said Chris, “but Kim, the helicopter pilot, suggested the Iris Burn as it’s closer to Rona. We watched as the catching team flew in and as soon as the helicopter landed Reg, the skipper, manoeuvred the boat into position so that I could grab the boxes containing the tieke. After a quick peck on the cheek from Viv we motored off to Rona. Back in August the saddleback had been released in the SW Bay so this time we went to the north. Boyd Peacock, his wife Amanda, and Nicky Cobb helped release the birds. Photographing saddleback flying out of their boxes is really hard as they take off so fast. But I did manage to get a decent photo of Boyd releasing a bird!”

Translocations, however, do not finish with the birds being



re- Boyd Peacock from the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation releases a tieke on Rona (Photo: Chris Shaw)

leased. “There’s a lot of clearing up to be done—bird boxes and mist nets to clean as well as all the camping gear” said David. “So the next day we were back at the DOC workshop. With Bex’s help all of the gear is now ready for the next bird translocation”.



David and Bex helping to clean the gear at the end of the translocation (Photo: Chris Shaw)

Final impressions

“Spending time on Breaksea Island, New Zealand’s first predator-free island, is a real privilege” said both Viv and David. “Jo and Maddie were great to work with and they took the time to show us how to remove birds from mist nets and then give us the opportunity to have a go ourselves. It was a full-on couple of days, but an experience we will never forget”.

“Releasing 45 tieke is another step in our restoration of Rona Island. They are special birds and we hope they do well in their new home” said Chris.

Kiwi breeding?

It is not just tieke that have been the major focus of the Trust. We have also been monitoring the permanent population of Haast kiwi on Pomona for signs of breeding.



Chris Shaw monitoring kiwi on Pomona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

Since August, volunteers have been visiting Pomona every 2-3 weeks to check up on the six kiwi that have been fitted with transmitters. "Technology these days is amazing" said Trust Project Manager Viv Shaw. "The small transmitter fitted to each kiwi is so clever it can tell us whether a bird is sitting on an egg and also whether that egg has hatched". It does this by monitoring the activity levels of each kiwi. When the kiwi becomes less active it is sitting on an egg.

It can take up to 20 minutes to collect the data for each kiwi. "Listening to the series of beeps can be quite challenging" said Trustee Chris Shaw "especially if the signal is weak or there is a lot of background noise". "If you miss one se-

quence you have to start again from the beginning" laughed volunteer Paul King.

Our volunteers are nothing if not dedicated so over the past six months they have diligently recorded the activity levels of the six kiwi.

"You can imagine our excitement" said Viv "when in August the level of activity of one of our kiwi started to drop off". DOC staff at Haast confirmed that we did indeed have our first incubation of a kiwi egg on Pomona (see graph at the bottom of the page). We continued to monitor the kiwi, but sadly in early October he stopped sitting on the egg.

DOC Ranger Jacinda Amey informed us that it is not unusual for incubations to fail in young kiwi, especially Haast to-koeka. "It takes time for the kiwi to get the hang of breeding successfully" explained Jacinda. "These are young birds on Pomona and the eggs are often unfertile for the first couple of nesting attempts". She assured us that there was nothing to worry about and that there was a strong chance this pair of kiwi would go on to successfully hatch an egg in the future.

Another of the six kiwi being monitored also laid an egg, but again the incubation did not go the full term of 80 days. The other four have not shown any signs of breeding yet, but as Jacinda says "there is still time!" The Trust is committed to monitoring the kiwi for another year

thanks to funding from Kiwis for Kiwi and the Meridian Community Fund.

Ratty Pomona

Since the last beech mast in 2016, the Trust has been working hard to rid Pomona of rats. In spite of regular trap checks and servicing the bait station network, a small pocket of rats has managed to remain on the north western corner of the island. "We are doing everything we can to eradicate them before the next beech mast due next year" said Trust Chair John Whitehead. For this reason the Trust has decided to invest in some of the A24 self-resetting traps.

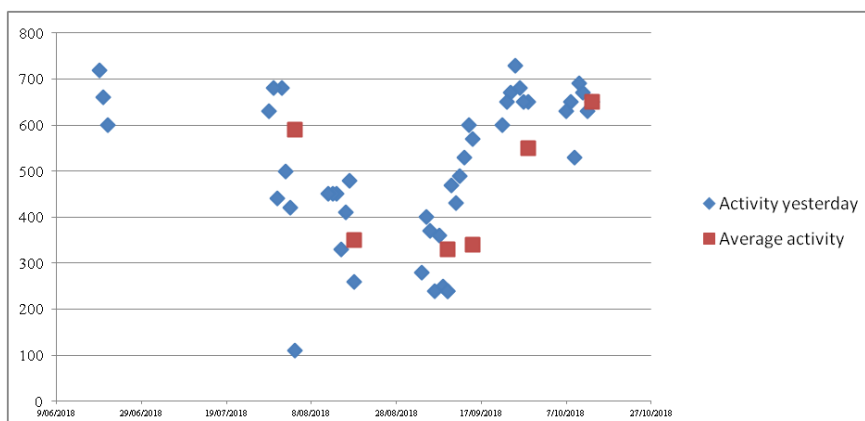
"These traps will be an additional weapon in our arsenal in the war against rats" said John.



A24 self-resetting trap on the Kepler (Photo: Viv Shaw)

"The cost of deploying A24s is quite high" said John "so, with Christmas coming up, if any of our supporters would like to sponsor a trap or two we'd be delighted to hear from you".

We wish all of our Friends and volunteers a very Happy Kiwi Christmas.



Level of activity for one of the breeding kiwi on Pomona (Graph: Viv Shaw)