

# Pomona Post



View from Rona on a calm winter afternoon.  
Photo Bev Thorne

*Kia ora Volunteers and 'Friends of Pomona'. Here is the latest edition of Pomona Post. Enjoy.*  
See you on the next trap check!



## NOTES FROM TWO SMALL ISLANDS

### Pomona

### Rona

#### News brief

- The Trust would like to acknowledge the extensive work that David Fortune has been involved in since 2014 as a trustee and more recently as treasurer. David and his boat 'Falcon' have undertaken many trapping trips to Rona. In the photo below of the GPS unit on the 'Falcon' you can see pink lines showing many of those trips.



-The Trust welcomes Fraser Skinner as a trustee and as the new treasurer.

- Over late autumn the Trust contracted Simon Marwick to mark the bait station lines on Rona. He also replaced all those hard to see blue triangles with pink ones and sorted out all the missing numbers. We now know where we are. Doing the bait stations now is just a walk in the park! Thank-you Simon.

As it was National Volunteer week last month the Pomona Island Trust would like to thank all our volunteers. All of you have contributed more than 1200 hours on Pomona & Rona over the past year. That is a huge effort from all of you and the trust acknowledges your enthusiasm and hard work on these small islands.

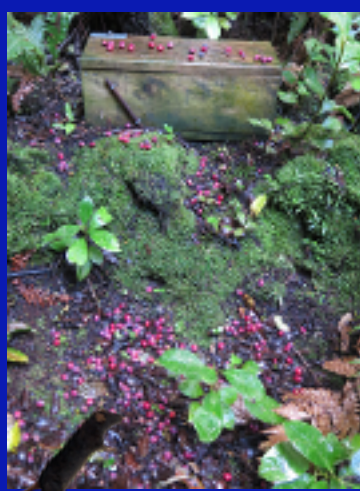
Now to the rats..... Our trap check data is showing a big difference between the number of rats going into traps verses the actual number of rats picked up on the trail camera network. So different lures are being used to try and get the pests in the boxes. However when you have an island free of browsing mammals which generates amazing vegetation and a berry, seed food supply for the rats, its just hard.

So here are rat tallies for recent trap checks:

6th May -23, 27th May -30, 4th July - 46

But on a positive note, the autumn display of fungi was amazing this year on both islands.

Photo showing lots & lots of miro berries surrounding trap P02 on Pomona. This abundance of food for rats on the island illustrates a reason why rats aren't always interested in going into a trap !!



Volunteers have been very busy on Rona over the past 3 months dealing with the mouse incursion. Page 3 of this newsletter will tell all.

On an April bait station check another one of late summers unwanted guests was found dead in a trap. A rat !! It has been 3 years since the last rat visited Rona and no more rat presence has been detected which is good news. Hopefully we can eliminate all the mice (results are promising so far) and Rona can once again go back to its pest & predator free status.

As Rona has had many visits lately a positive outcome of this is volunteers reporting back on tieke sightings and enjoying the diversity of the both the flora and birdlife.

More good news from Rona...As a result of gecko monitoring over the summer, the distribution of the geckos on the island is far greater than previously thought.

#### Pomona Community update evening Wednesday the 17th August

7:30 pm at DOC



See you there

Volunteers on Pomona awaiting pick-up following July's trap check.



#### Kiwi News



Another young kiwi has been spotted on camera. This time in the NW corner of the island. Last young kiwi sighting was the SW corner back in October 2021. So Pomona definitely has a breeding population of the Haast tokoeka. A nice mid-winter surprise. An adult kiwi is on the left for size comparison.

Volunteer David Cary has been busy of late with visits (by bike, tramp and packraft) to Pomona to service his audio moths. He reports "The big surprise is the number of calls at F09 (433 over 42 days). It's quite exciting to see where all the kiwi are. It seems like a thriving, busy, healthy little community. I ended up with 1555 detections from this trip".

These detections frequently pick up pairs of kiwi calling to each other and eventually David hopes to be able to give estimates to the population of this kiwi kōhanga site and number of male/female birds on the island. The moths also are picking up the calls of frogs, ruru, juvenile kiwi, the coo of kereru and rain falling. Thank you David for all your mahi.



Here is David caught on camera at C05 on his way around the island servicing the audio moths on Pomona.





# The 2022 National Kiwi Hui

This year's National Kiwi Hui 21st to 23rd June was held at Living Springs up high on the Banks Peninsula. The perfect place to watch the matariki stars each sunrise and a great opportunity to listen to presentations from experts in various fields. Also network with fellow volunteer conservation groups, catch up with the DOC tokoeka team from Haast and be immersed in all things kiwi. Which four volunteers associated with Pomona did.

First up was a field trip to the family owned Willowbank Wildlife reserve. Conservation is the primary focus at Willowbank and they are involved in many successful breeding programmes, including breed to release for kiwi, whio and pateke.

Back at Living Springs after bunk room bagging (ladies on the left, gentleman on the right just like school camps), it was time for the Whakatau and to sing the waiata Kiwi Ngutu Roa then the sharing of kai.



Pomona folk; Paul & Lynley, John & Fay all smiles at this years Kiwi Hui.

The presentation on the first evening was an excellent talk given by Dr Hugh Robertson (DOC).

A matariki sunrise on a mid-winters morning June 21st. First day of the hui at Living Springs, Banks Peninsula.



'30 years of Kiwi Conservation' ..... a summary where he talked about how many new and subspecies have been recognised, how kiwi conservation has been funded and the future direction for programmes looking after kiwi.

Al Bramley from ZIP was first up the next day with an aspirational presentation called 'Innovate to Eliminate'. He talked about the work that ZIP are doing now in the Okarito area (rowi country) and in the future over the main divide in the Mackenzie basin. There they will be faced with the challenge of eliminating rabbits before they can deal with the ferrets, stoats etc. Good luck.

All the presentations were great and it is hard to report on them all.

However all talks were tending towards non-invasive monitoring. Like Dr Laura Molles & Dr Carol Bedoya's 'Acoustic censuring and individual identification of birds in the wild', Atarau Sanctuary and 'Using animal-borne acoustic recorders to inform abundance estimates in kiwi' Alberto De Rosa Massey University.

Often all the kiwi research and presentations focus on the North Island brown kiwi because that is where the funding tended to go in the past so it was good to listen to 'The use of sodium fluoroacetate to protect South Island Kiwi' and know that the birds of Te Wāhipounamu are definitely a future focus.

Thank-you to both DOC & Save the Kiwi for covering all the costs and letting volunteer conservation groups like the Pomona Trust attend. It was great.



## POMONA PLANT HOTSPOT

As volunteers have been busy going off-track on Rona lately, they have all had close entanglements with a tangled endemic NZ plant.

**Supplejack, Kareno, *Ripogonum scandens*.** This woody evergreen twining forest liane forms thick and sometimes impenetrable masses. Supplejack vines are plentiful on both Pomona & Rona. In fact they are so dense in places they sometimes look like they are tying the forest together making walking very challenging.

Early Māori had many uses of the plant..... In medicine to treat fever, bowel troubles, in house building to tie up roof thatches and walls, in fishing to make tuna/eel traps, kōura/crayfish pots, flooring platforms in canoes, and for baskets, ladders and for kai.

Supplejack vines climb by coiling its stem around branches and tree trunks for support. Where there is an absence of support the vines drop to the ground and loop around the forest floor in a very dense entanglement. In the first year of its life supplejack resembles a small shrub but the following year a small vine starts climbing its way upward. In summer it can grow super fast 5cm daily. Once supplejack reaches full sunlight it produces leafy stems bearing flowers and fruit. The ripe red berries are edible. Kakapo love them. Very young growth shoots resemble asparagus in taste and volunteers on Pomona have been known to nibble on them. The seeds are full of amino acids and the sap can also be consumed. The roots are known to be a substitute for sarsaparilla and are rich in starch. The leaves are also edible..... In fact you can eat just about the whole deal. So next time on Rona having a foot tripping, body trapping encounter with these jungle gyms have a snack or two.

Apparently supplejack was one of the first plants that was given a common European name. Captain Cook on his second trip to NZ in 1773 sounds like he had his own entanglement and kareno was recorded as supplejack.



Supplejack berries at different ripening stages



Another supplejack jungle to get through on Rona.

An impenetrable mass of supplejack on the P line Pomona



Supplejack ladders on Rona.



The large green glossy leaves of the supplejack plant.



# RONA



The Volunteer Army is being deployed to Rona to deal with a mice incursion. Objective is to eradicate the vermin.

Last Pomona Post reported on the unwanted mice swimmers ending up on Rona and taking up residence. Since then members of the trust had Zoom meetings with the DOC Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to help come up with a plan to eradicate mice from the island using brodifacoum in bait stations. John & Paul never thought in their retirements they will be assigned roles of : Planning, Intel & Reporting Manager : Operations and Logistics Manager both reporting to the Incident Controller. Sounds like they have taken up roles in the Army  
So on the 9th April the Volunteer Army was deployed to undertake the first bait station fill.

What a mission it was. At that stage the 450 bait stations were marked with those awful hard-to-see dark blue triangles , weren't numbered and there appeared to be more pink flagging tape on the ground than tied to trees showing the way. By the end of the day the recruits all looking a bit worse for wear shared their Rona battle stories. Ladders of supplejack, impenetrable thickets of supplejack, deep ferny gullies and just don't mention those steep southern sides. But we all won by putting out our ration of pellets in the bait stations. Since then Simon has upgraded the bait station network, numbered easy to see pink triangles and we make our way from station to station by light blue track markers. Our mission impossible is now possible.

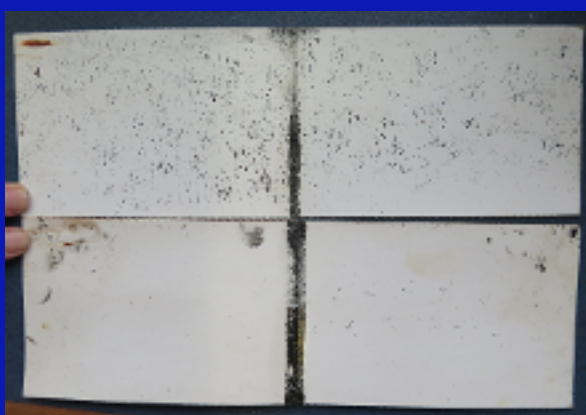
3 weeks later the troops returned to carry out a bait station top-up fill. They also checked all other monitoring devices like mouse traps, cameras and the existing 42 tracking tunnels. Results showed 8% of the bait had been taken. 17 tracking cards had mouse footprints and 13 mice caught in traps in 28 different locations mostly around the western northern shoreline. The incursion was still very active so more TAG meetings and reporting to the Incident Controller was next.

Using the bait stations minimizes the amount of bait into the environment compared to an aerial drop.

Photo showing an example of the new bait station, tracking tunnel network on Rona and with lovely pink and numbered markers.



A volunteers GPS tracks from the first bait station fill where very little was marked or numbered. The ultimate 'Lost & Found'



A tracking card comparison from the same tunnel. The top one has many little mice footprints about the third week into the eradication and the one below was 3 months later.



A dawn start 16th May at Pearl Harbour. Getting the days mission briefing

The volunteer army assembled in the darkness of dawn on the 16th May to carry out mission bait station No 3. Nick our Transport Controller had another job after sunrise, hence the early start. We don't normally do our volunteer work in the dark but keen we are to eradicate the mice. This trip had the biggest uptake of bait taken: 19.7% of the incursion response. The tracking cards were also very busy with mice foot traffic: 31 out of the 42 cards. So still an active situation.

Mission 4 rolled around just like the Queens birthday on the 6th June and the volunteer's efforts are starting to pay off. Bait up-take is down to 5.1% and 15 out of 42 cards are mouse print positive and only 1 mouse in a trap. The Planning, Intel and Reporting Manager was pleased to report to TAG and after zooming in, the next target to act on was increase the number of tracking tunnels. So a small unit of the team was deployed and after two trips Rona now has 118 tracking tunnels positioned beside bait stations on alternate bait station lines.

When it was time for mission 5 on a cold and frosty July morning (-7 C recorded in the Operations Managers garden) the volunteers were very keen to see what all the new tracking tunnel cards showed. After warming runs up & down the bait station lines the volunteer army was very pleased to report back NO mice foot traffic on the 118 cards and no mice in trips but a 0.2% uptake from the bait stations. Three stations had some bait taken but no mouse poo in the stations and the bait could have been taken way back on the 6th June and before the new tracking tunnel network was put in place. So time will tell if it is still an active situation.

However once the Incident Controller was informed of the results he wrote back.....

Man – that's a fantastic result – awesome – well done to all of the team!!

Nevertheless TAG want the Volunteer Army to undertake 1 more mission before withdrawing all the bait and continue the on-going vigilance with the tracking tunnels. So once again volunteer service will be required. Keep up the morale team we're nearly there WELL DONE !!!