

Pomona Post



Young tieke (saddleback) on Rona

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

Trust news: Since the Trust's AGM in August, Trustee Hannah Edmonds has resigned and Simon Marwick has come on to the Trust.

The trust would like to thank Hannah for her time spent on the bird call counts on both islands & helping set up & operate the Facebook site.

We know that Hannah is not far away for help & advice.



Simon has been involved with the conservation work on both islands for quite a while, so WELCOME Simon to the



management & meeting side of island work.

Simon started his duties as a trustee with the cutting of the cake last trap check.

DOC approached John about the making of boxes for snap traps for the rat incursion happening on Resolution Island. So he got busy in the workshop with help from Paul and this is the end result.....



Spring has arrived along with a heavy flowering of the mountain beech. It looks like another beech mast year, so the volunteers have been quite busy on Pomona trying to get the rat numbers down with trap checks and topping up of pindone in the bait stations



The rats are now going in the traps. They are hungry. So trap check totals have increased with the last trap check 8th Nov, 100 rats out of 203 traps. No stoats caught but the stoat on the island is still popping up on the trail cams. We have been trialing lots of different types of lures in the traps but with high numbers of rats the stoat isn't interested in fishy & rabbit smells.

Trust members have had a meeting with DOC recently to come up with a plan to deal with mast years and high rat numbers. As a result the bait station network on Pomona now has bait stations on the trap lines. A total of 264 bait stations across the island.

On the 11th August Ross, Paul & the Southland trailer yacht squadron crew cleared & re-baited all the mainland traps opposite Pomona. They reported on conditions fine but very, very cold. Their efforts were rewarded with 2 rats and a mouse. Ka pai.

Question here.... why don't the rats swim back to the mainland if the numbers & pressures (food supply) are high on Pomona?

8 shoulder bags I made for the Pomona Island Trust, plus my own in yellow. These are designed to hold 2 dozen eggs plus odd and ends, and accommodate an A4 catch Form or map. #fiordlandpacks



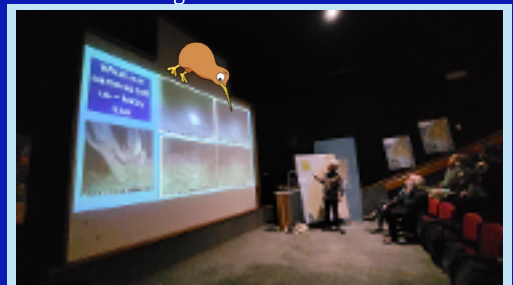
Read page three to find out about the results of the mouse incursion.

Trap checks on the mainland traps have restarted after a winter break. On the 7th Sept trap check, 33 rats and 1 stoat. Interestingly the stoat (+2 rats) were caught in the "new" motel on the peninsular opposite the western end of Rona. The stoat was caught in a snap trap, not the DOC 150 trap mechanism inside the motel. For readers who don't know what a trap "motel" is, it is a box with multiple traps inside. A full house is scored when all trap units are full. No Vacancy!!!

On the mainland trap check, 31st Oct 16 rats and 0 stoats. Over the coming summer months regular checks of these 53 traps on the mainland will help against pest incursions on Rona.

Volunteer Lynley King has started the gecko monitoring for the 2022/2023 season. While setting out the tracking cards lured with canned pear she observed young and adult tieke across Rona. The falcons haven't got them all.

In August Pomona Trust in conjunction with DOC had a successful evening sharing information about the highs & lows of the past year. Always good to have a catch-up with everyone. Thank you to Crystal & team for hosting us.



Volunteer David Cary volunteered and made the Trust these awesome shoulder bags for our volunteers to use on trap checks. Gary Kirkman in the photo on the right said on the last trap check 'these are brilliant and I really like using it'. Thank-you David and your pack making business of Fiordland Packs. The editor of this newsletter as an owner of 2 of David's packs, I too think the designs are brilliant.





VIPP... Very Important Pomona Person

Nick in Shackleton's Hut, Antarctica

Nick Key really is a **Very Important Pomona Person**. Without his and his wife Maree's business 'Adventure Kayak & Cruise' (soon to become Manapouri Water Taxi), looking after the islands would be very difficult.

Talking with Nick you realize he is a man of many hidden talents and life experiences. The best experience was being taught how to fly by the then, Chief flying instructor of the South Canterbury Aero Club. He then married her and he and Maree still fly together in their two seater Tecnam P2008 plane. Children Bailey & Caitlyn are keen to be taught how to fly by their Mum - when she's not flying Boeing 787 Dreamliner's to Asia & America for Air NZ.

Nick started his working life learning a trade as a Fitter & Turner in Timaru with a wool processing plant Annett&Darling. Having a good trade background led to a job at the University of Canterbury as a support technician with the Geography Department which later became the Earth & Environment School.

This job supporting post-graduate students, lecturers, scientists with their research took Nick to many different field sites. To name a few the volcanoes of Vanuatu, humpback whales near Rarotonga, Heron Island by the Great Barrier Reef, the Darwin & Hatherton glaciers of Antarctica, the breeding colonies of seals near Scott Base and the lake shore of Manapouri. Nick's work involved a lot of technical problem solving to come up with practical solutions on monitoring that work out in the field. Designing and installing weather stations for climate research kept him busy along with other jobs applying his practical and technical skills.

Examples in Antarctica : setting up a network of seal cameras in the breeding season at Scott Base , installing weather stations and high precision GPS monitoring of glacial movement on the Darwin & Hatherton glaciers or building a massive sled for ground penetrating radar monitoring.

Nick out in the field in his University technician days. Recognize the lake.



Nick never forgets the experience of finding and following a female humpback whale & calf with a drone for scientific data gathering research. They managed to identify the heartbeat rate of the whale from the drone.

He says that he's "done lots of weird stuff over the years". So how did he end up with the water taxi?

Nick has been involved with monitoring on Lake Manapouri for many years both with the University work and lake shore monitoring for Meridian. Every 1 to 2 years he would come down from Christchurch and skipper the Universities boat "Muritai ...Ocean Breeze". This was the start of being a commercial skipper and got him thinking about having a crib down this way. So in 2016 the crib was bought and in March 2020 the Key family moved down and they now get to enjoy the view over the lake towards Rona over coffee.

Between working with his other business Wilderness Technical (Environmental monitoring) and driving the water taxi, Nick enjoys the perks of the job like the 'cakes' on Pomona trap checks. Ka pai Skipper.

Nick at Scott Base with a drone fitted with a thermal camera for spotting Weddel seals.



POMONA PLANT HOTSPOT

This edition of Pomona Plant Hotspot features a little known but a rather interesting fern. **FORK FERNS : Tmesipteris tannensis**

To find these epiphytic ferns on Pomona, look closely at the trunks of tree ferns and the distinctive pattern of the leathery fork ferns leaves will help identify them from other epiphytes which might hang around like orchids.

The fork fern featured here is *Tmesipteris tannensis*, the most common of NZ's four species of fork fern.

Tmesipteris- from the Greek *tmesis* (cutting) and *pteris* (fern) alluding to the forked appendages on fertile fronds. The "T" is silent so is pronounced *Mesipteris*. *Pteris* is pronounced "Teris".

Fork ferns can be found as an epiphyte on both tree ferns and other trees and occasionally on the ground.

Close up of the leathery leaves of the fork ferns with insect.



Fork fern *Tmesipteris tannensis* on tree fern near trap T10 on Pomona.



Fork fern (*Tmesipteris tannensis*).
Photo: Jeremy Rolfe.

Four species of fork fern occur in shady, wet forests in NZ and all four occur on the West Coast. So the next time exploring that wild and wet bush on the Coast, look out for these unusual ferns.

Why are they rather unique ? To the uninitiated, fork ferns are just another easily overlooked small plant, but to botanists they are as exciting as tuatara are to zoologists - and fork ferns have an even older lineage. I like to think of them as fossil ferns.

They are not ferns at all but belong to a group of plants considered by some botanists to be the most primitive group of terrestrial plants. They are regarded to be a "fern ally".

They have no true roots or leaves, instead having leathery, flattened stems and grow using rhizomes. The fork ferns produce pairs of spore bearing capsules on the upper margin on their leaves.

Today, fork ferns are only found in NZ, Australia, New Caledonia and a few other Pacific Islands. Walking to Trap T10 on Pomona is a good spot to see a fork fern. Maybe you might discover knife & spoon ferns as well!





The Volunteer Army having a rest. Objective to eradicate the vermin has been achieved.

Map showing current traps, cameras tracking tunnels on Rona.

RONA

Last Pomona Post reported on the mouse incursion on Rona. This issue the report back from Rona is 'Achieved with Excellence'

Over the Spring months a small unit of the Volunteer Army was once again deployed to run rodent tracking tunnel checks on the alternate bait station lines that have the tunnels at every second bait station. Since June, there have been NO sign of mice (or rat) prints on the 118 cards.

As well all the traps big & small haven't had any catches.

Very good news idea for the Intel & Reporting Manager to report back to the Incident Controller.

Great work in organising the incursion response (Operations & Logistics Manager) and a huge thanks to Nick our Transport Controller getting the Volunteer Army to the island whenever they needed to go. This successful result would not have been achieved without you and your boat.

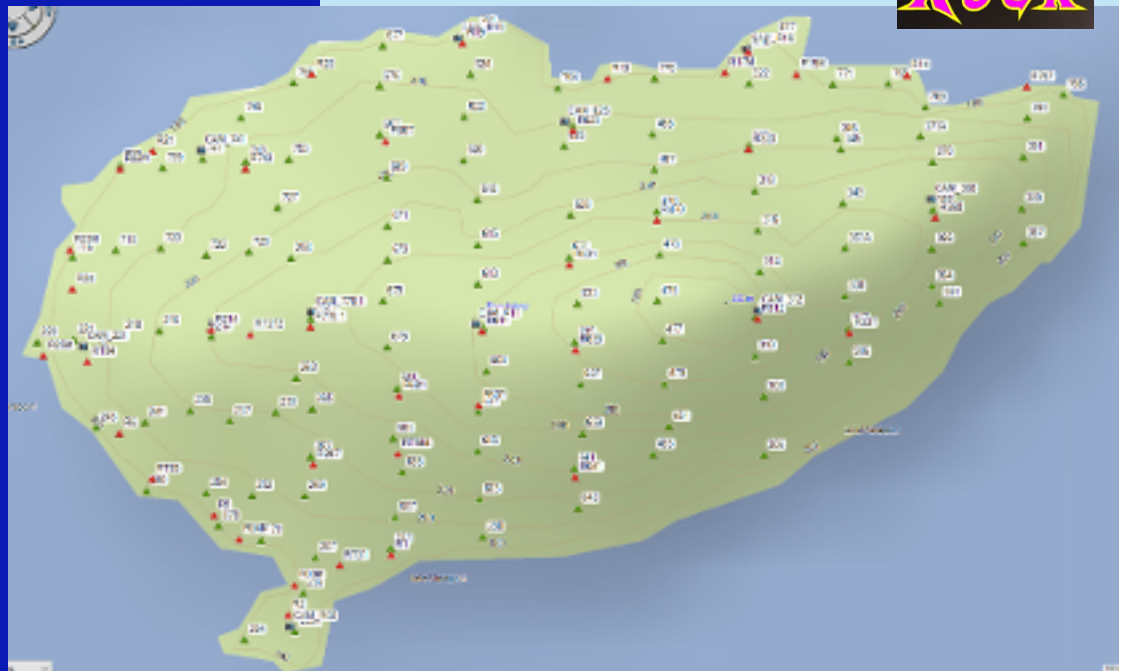
Last but not least 'Volunteer Army' what a team, you

ROCK

Over the course of a sunny couple of days, two volunteers camped on Rona and undertook the fun task of carrying traps over & under supplejack thickets. Why? Because all the internal island traps and cameras have all been relocated to the bait station/tracking tunnel lines to make field work on the island more efficient. Lots of old flagging tape was cleared from the island and old track markers removed. In fact the island had a good old Spring Clean.



Once again Rona at the moment is a predator free island. One of the few left in Fiordland with the latest stoat & rat incursions on Chalky & Resolution.



SERN- SOUTHLAND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION NETWORK - VISIT WITH THE POMONA ISLAND TRUST

The Pomona Island Trust has been busy networking with members of the SERN group recently on their 'Fiordland Focus Weekend'. On the Friday night the trust did a presentation on the conservation work undertaken on both islands. The audience were very interested in the research and innovative ideas volunteers were doing. Ideas like the trap trigger detection system operating on Pomona and the species work on: Rona geckos and the audio moths and kiwis on Pomona. They could see restoring islands is not always about dead animals and trapping.



Paul King on Rona showing SERN members how an ALD operates.

Enough of talk.... time for field trips to both islands the following day. Lasting impressions people took from their visit to the islands was the flora, untouched by deer & possums. Orchids, gaultheria and tiny lake shore violets were flowering. Botanist Brian Rance got off the boat on Rona and in 10 minutes within a 100sqm area, he had written down 30+ different species in his notebook. It was Brian's first visit to Rona and we are sure it's not going to be his last.



Flowering orchid Earina mucronata on Pomona impresses



On Pomona there was a fresh rat in a trap and a good discussion on rats was had. One group member claimed our dead Pomona rat was in such good condition he would eat it. Needless to say no one else agreed with him.

It was great 'networking' with other like minded people from around Southland and thank you to Environment Southland for funding for the boat and Skipper Nick Key.