

Pomona Post



Black piwakawaka on Pomona

*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

New signs have been installed on both islands.



Some of you readers might have noticed this edition of Pomona Post is May rather than than March. No the editor is not late with an issue but has decided to do just 2 issues a year now. One at the end of summer/autumn and one at the end of winter/spring.

The end of summer and autumn has arrived with another good fruiting of the miro on the island. Kiwi news from Pomona.... A young kiwi has been spotted on the trail cameras hanging out around K08. David Cary has done a fair bit of data analysis with his audio moths and reports of 10 kiwi pairs calling to each other. He also reports of hearing juvenile kiwi calling. So the island has a good healthy population of kiwi. The audio moths have picked up kaka on numerous occasions and ruru calling at night. Good work here David, the trust really appreciates your expertise and enthusiasm with the audio monitoring of kiwis.

Now to the pests. On page 3 the newsletter will report on the rat numbers and the recent pindone operation. The trap totals from trap checks this year are : 21/01- 5 rats, 9/02- 6 rats, 18/03- 5 rats, 22/04- 15 rats Unfortunately an unwelcome late summer swimmer has arrived on the island. Yes a stoat has been picked up on the trail cameras. So its back to trialing different lures in the traps to lure the stoat into a trap. Fingers crossed it is a male and we don't have a litter of stoats to deal with in early summer.

Ross, Paul & the Southland trailer yacht squadron crew have cleared and re-baited all the mainland traps opposite Pomona twice this year. On the first day of the year in perfect weather their total was 9 rats & 2 stoats. On the 15th March 5 rats & no stoats. The work that the yacht squadron does on the mainland is so important keeping the stoat incursions on Pomona down. This helps with the kiwi breeding on the island. Ka pai.

The trust is delighted to have a couple of Manapouri locals who have volunteered to look after the Mainland & Beehive traps opposite Rona. So welcome Kevin & Lesley Schwamm (Kev & Mush). Your work is so important in helping keep the stoats & rats off Rona.

So far Kev & Mush have cleared - 4 stoats & 7 rats on the 11/03/2023, - 1 stoat & 6 rats 13/03/2023, - 7 rats 30/03/2023 from the traps.

Volunteer Lynley King has had pleasing results for the gecko monitoring (2022/2023) season. Gecko footprints have been recorded deep in the forest in the middle of the island. So we now know they are widespread across the island. It was also quite exciting to see small (young) gecko footprints on some cards. As these reptiles can live to 35 years the recruitment of young geckos into the population is great.

Not so great was a mouse seen on camera in February on the northern shoreline (see photo below). An unwanted summer swimmer, disappointing after the huge effort last year dealing with the last mouse incursion. This is what climate change is going to bring with those much warmer temperatures.... the lake will be ideal for swimming. So far from all our recent checks with the tracking tunnels the mice have not spread in numbers or area across the island. Maybe the resident ruru will deal with the mice.

Good news to end with - 3 young Haast tokoeka have arrived on Rona in February. They have all put on weight and are loving the Rona lifestyle.

What our volunteers have been doing.



Fraser on Centre Island in January with a Haast kiwi.



Cake eating with one of Fay's yummy carrot cakes at the end of a Pomona trap check.



Paul on Rona checking one of the 120 rodent tracking cards.



Liz and Jane caught on trail camera at D09.

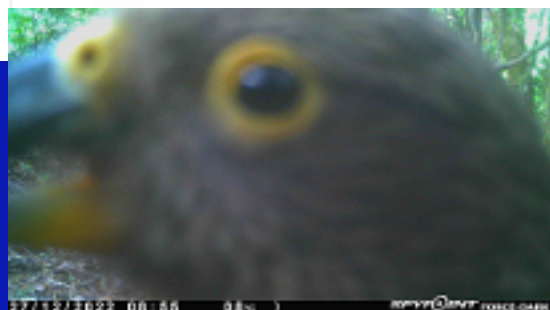
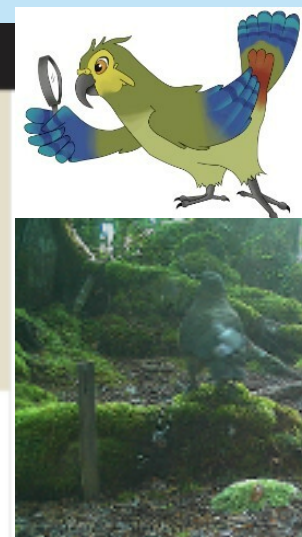
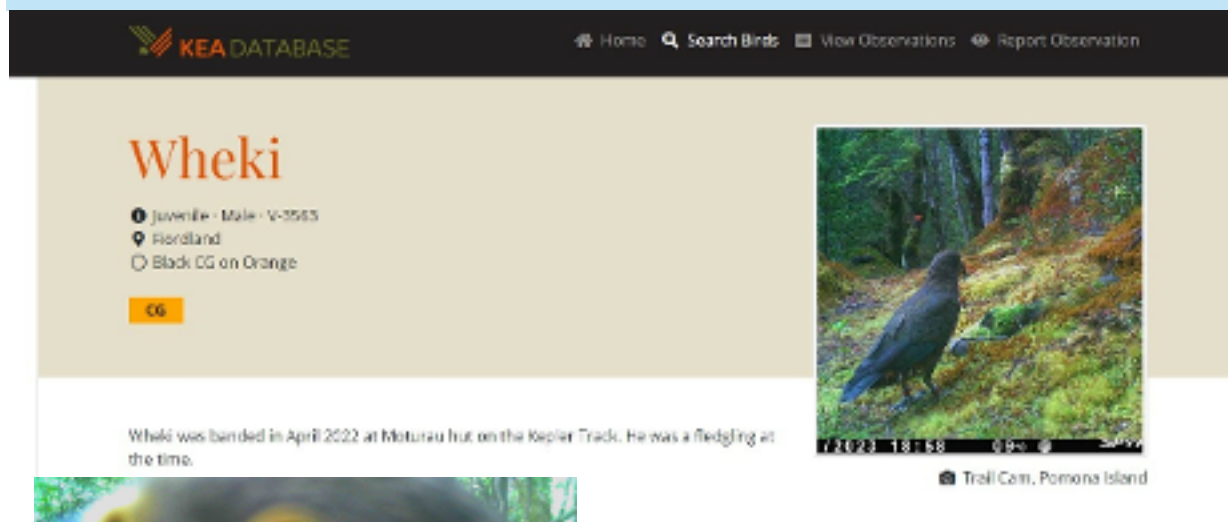


VIP.. Very Important Pomona ... Kea



This edition of Pomona post is featuring WHEKI.

Wheki is a juvenile male kea who has been making his home on Pomona Island over the last 6 months. Wheki has been spotted on several trail cameras in different locations across the island getting up to mischief. He was able to be identified on the kea data base due to his black letters on orange bands and one of his trail cam photos was submitted into the data base. This photo of Wheki at G05 is now his profile picture.



The close up photo to the left, is Wheki on the camera at P09. He had been caught on camera trying to see if he could open up the Automatic Lure Dispenser and then came over to see if the camera could be destroyed. Luckily both pieces of monitoring equipment survived (this time).

However Wheki was caught by the cameras destroying all the kiwi measuring sticks (rulers) at other locations. Why a kea needs to fly off with a 30cm ruler, we really don't know.

Not only has this juvenile kea been visiting but unbanded adult birds have also been checking out the monitoring equipment. Two cameras have been destroyed and four lure tea strainers taken.



POMONA PLANT HOTSPOT



This edition of Pomona Plant Hotspot features a quite rare fern, volunteer Lynley King found on Rona Island before Xmas - **PARSLEY FERN : *Botrychium australe***

She spotted this single unusual coloured plant on the bush / shoreline margin of the island while checking the tracking tunnels. A good hunt around the area for further plants of the same species was undertaken but none were found. Photos were sent to the 'expert's' for identification and *Botrychium australe* it turned out to be. The common name 'Parsley fern' is quite suitable as the green fronds do resemble parsley leaves. Lynley last checked the fern in mid April and it has died away. Hopefully the fern will be spotted again on Rona in the future.

The photo on the right shows the fern with a milk bottle lid for size reference. The bronze frond of the fern is its sterile portion with a green bud of another developing frond which is pictured in the photo below (taken a month later). If the fern had developed its fertile frond it would have been a longer and narrower frond .



On the NZ Plant Conservation Network website, *B. australe's* current conservation status is listed as - 'At Risk'- Naturally Uncommon (2012). As it has never been seen on both Pomona and Rona before, it is definitely uncommon.

Habitat to find this fern is lowland to alpine. A species of open ground, tussock grassland, forest clearings, river flats and shrubland.

The name *Botrychium* means a bunch of grapes ; from the Greek word botrus; grape like spore clusters.

australe - means Southern - from the Latin australis.

So look out for a 'bunch of grapes' in a southern locality which resembles a parsley leaf . Apparently Early Maori ate the leaf of this fern they called Patotara.

Early European also ate the fern, no doubt cooked in a parsley sauce.

POMONA RATS

Everything you need to know about rats (but were afraid to ask.....)

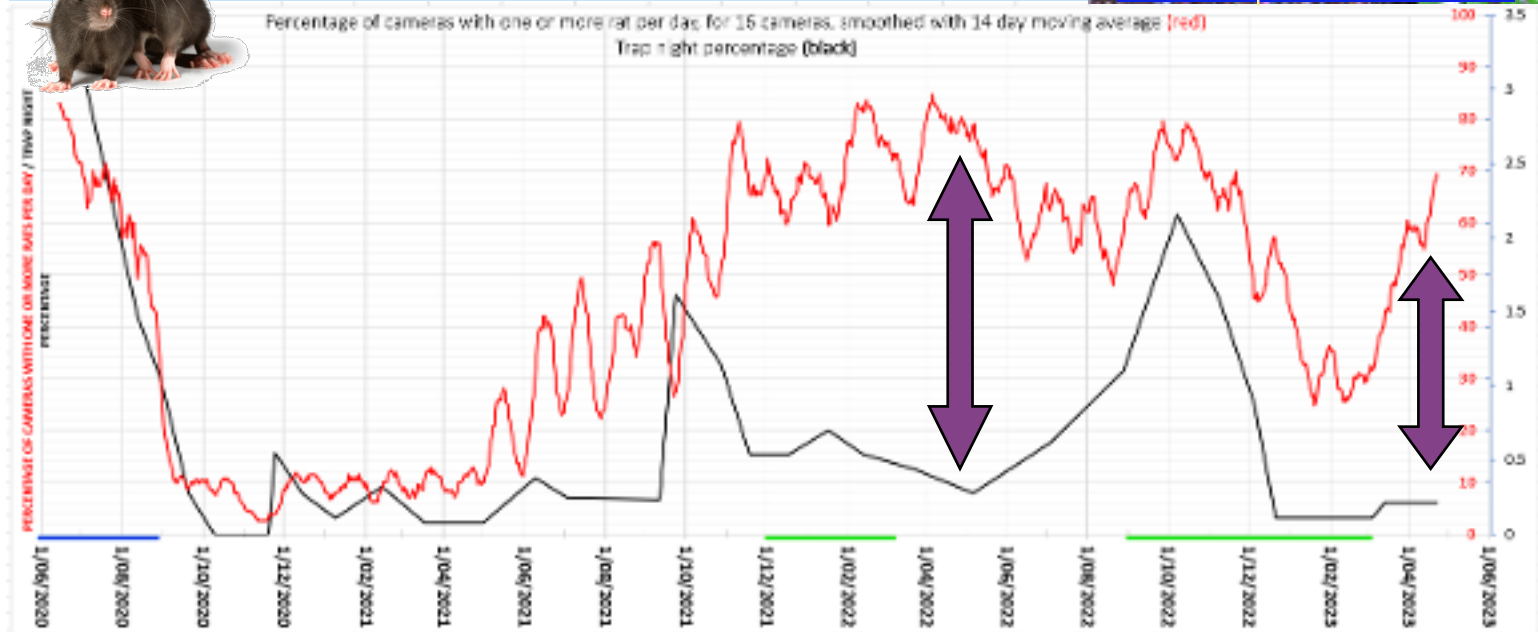
The graph tells the story since 2020 - the red line shows the number of rats seen on camera. We think this is a good measure of the number of rats on the island. It fluctuates depending on the season, food availability, breeding, trapping and poisoning regimes.

-the black line shows the trap night percentage (TNP). If the TNP is 1% then 1% of the 200 traps (2 traps) will catch a rat on any given night: after 30 days we can expect to catch 60 rats etc. This is really a measure of the willingness of rats to go into a trap, perhaps because of food scarcity, population pressure etc.

This is where it gets interesting. There can be a large population of rats as seen on camera which are refusing to be caught, probably because there is plenty of food around. See the disparity between the lines this time last year and also now: there are plenty of rats but we can't catch them: purple arrows on the graph show where.



Plenty of food for rats - miro berries in profusion



Brodifacoum was used on Pomona in mid-2020 (blue bar) and it did a good job of knocking rat numbers right down - and numbers stayed down for nearly a year.

More recently, we have tried using Pindone to control rats (green bars). The attempt in summer 2022 was not successful as the rats were not taking the bait - as seen by the low TNP.

In October last year we tried again and this time we did have a better bait take because the rats were hungry (high TNP). Unfortunately, rat numbers are increasing again (and we are not catching them - low TNP).

The Trust, in conjunction with DOC and contractors are working on a longer-term and more reliable solution to the rat menace on Pomona.



Photo showing a rat chewed Pomona bait station. Taken down from L09 to be replaced. That is rather a lot of plastic to eat.

