

# Pomona Post



*Kia ora Volunteers and 'Friends of Pomona'. Here is the latest edition of Pomona Post. Enjoy.*

See you on the next trap check! Make a secure donation by clicking this link.....[Donate to Pomona](#)



## NOTES FROM TWO SMALL ISLANDS



### Pomona

### Rona

A Rona robin enjoying a rare bit of summer sunshine

#### News brief

It's been awhile since the last Pomona Post came out.... apologies from the editor who was out of the country and activity on the islands was quiet over the winter. However lots has happened since then, so read this edition of Pomona Post to find out.



The trail camera at C05 on Pomona is busy capturing photos of kiwi

Gary Chisholm was busy visiting Pomona in July & October to do maintenance on the Trap Trigger System. Luckily the system hasn't been too busy reporting in on traps that have been triggered because Pomona has had very low rat numbers lately due to the bait station operation in late Spring 2025. Thank you Gary for donating the funds to pay for the boat

Em Oyston & Maddie Van De Wetering from DOC's National Eradication Team have finished their research trial of a network of AI trail cameras on Pomona. Their trial was "wanting to investigate confidence levels around a) the probability of detecting stoat presence and b) creating stoat population density estimates by using trail camera networks on islands where stoats are present in very low numbers". Well it is a good thing they have finished because there have been no stoats detected on Pomona since the bait station operation.

The weather over the Spring of 2025 caused havoc on both islands. Windfalls and very high lake levels have provided challenges in getting around the islands, getting on to the islands and retrieving floated away traps. One of Rona's tracking tunnels was recovered from Shallow Bay and a kayak was nearly required at Pearl Harbour to get onboard the water taxi.

Here are the results from the trap checks over the last months ..... 34 rats - 31/03/25, 29 rats- 3/05/25, 104 rats - 1/10/25, 35 rats - 7/11/25, 7 rats- 3/01/26, 2 rats- 26/01/26 .....out of 202 traps. The rat numbers will be discussed further on pg 2 of the newsletter. But the fantastic good news from the island is the low rat numbers now going into this predicted heavy beech seeding from the mast.

No stoats have been caught over the past year in traps but we knew there was a stoat on the island (probably just one) as seen on the trail cam data. However since the 1080 bait station operation- no stoats have been seen on cameras since the first week of October. Lets hope the island won't get any stoat swimmers for many a full moon or even a blue moon and the kiwis can run around the stoat free island.

We know we have had at least one successful kiwi hatching this season as the trail cameras have picked up a young bird.

Here is a new member of the Haast kiwi whanau.



Results of trap checks by the Southland trailer yacht squadron were 1 rat, 1stoat - 9/04/25, 2 rats, 4 stoats -10/10/25, 0 rats, 3 stoats -21/01/26. Thanks team for doing the mahi with the mainland traps.

Rona had lots of visits and boots on the ground up & down the bait station lines late October through to early December last year. Due to mice being detected on all 120 tracking cards in May 2025, it was decided to put out brodifacium blocks in all the 120 bait stations in Spring. The results from this operation has been great. No mice have been detected on the rodent tracking cards, mouse traps and the gecko monitoring tracking cards until 1 mouse caught in a trap found on the 27/02/2026.

The island is not mouse free but has mice present in very low numbers. This is good as we head towards this predicted heavy beech seeding event in autumn of this year, due to the beech mast. More monitoring in May of the mouse population will give us an idea of the next management steps of the island.

Kev & Mush- (Mainland opposite Rona) November 2025- 2 rats, 1 stoat, January 2026- 1 rat, 1 stoat. Awesome work done by you two.

The gecko monitoring over the summer has been very encouraging despite the cold, damp weather. With no mice interference - the gecko tracking cards have picked up lots of big & small gecko foot & tail prints.



John about to board the boat from Rona in late February 2026 with the lake back to more normal levels

#### More News..... Grants & Donations

The donation box at West Arm has collected \$669 over the past year. So a BIG thanks to all the tourists who empty their pockets of coins into the box.

Thank you Fiordland Jet for the last donation - which is really handy when the Trust needs to replace SD cards and onduline refuge shelters for geckos because the old ones floated away.

Thank you as well Real NZ for the donations from coffee sales. This money is vital to help assist the Trust in managing the islands.

Myell Smith- Thank you - once again for your generous donations.

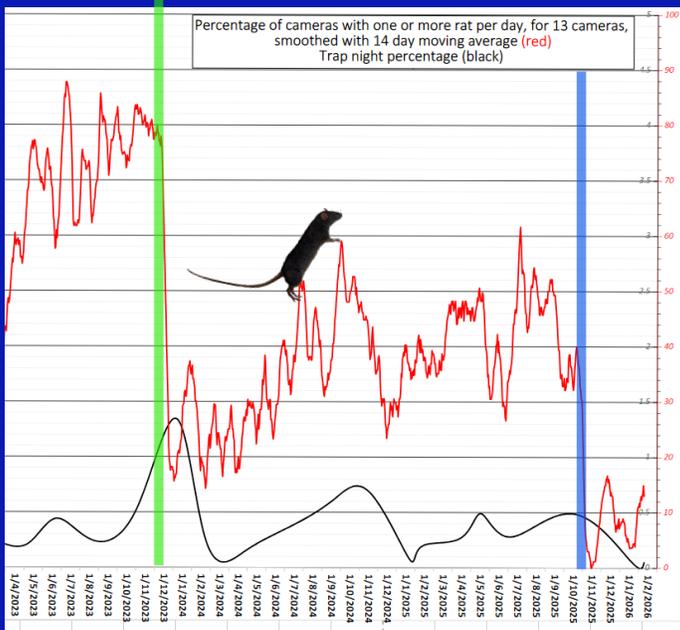
J.Tittsle- all the way in Japan - your donation was just great. Thank you.

Weston & Taylor- with your generous donation and all the other generous folk has enabled the Trust to replace water damaged trail cameras on Pomona. These cameras are of great importance in the monitoring of both predators and the kiwis.

And our GIV2 donation system has finally started giving... \$550 in the last year. Never give up !!!



# The Results of the latest Bait Station Operation on Pomona



**Springtime on Pomona.....** High lake levels, grotty weather, windfalls, the bait station operation was on hold until the weather settled. CWAC - Contract Wild Animal Control NZ - were contracted to carry out the bait station operation and on the 23rd September the pre-feed went out. Heavy packs full of those yummy dry cereal pellets were carried up & down & around the island. The rats really had a free takeaway feast for the next 2 weeks. The toxin (Sodium Fluoracetate) went out during the next dry spell (7/10/25) and again more takeaway food for those rats.

The end result from supplying all this food to the rats was a very good result.

The graph opposite shows this result quite clearly. The knock down of the numbers was awesome. Low rat numbers (20% or lower/camera data) will protect the bird population from predation. It will also protect the invertebrate population on the island, an important food source for birds including our breeding population of Haast tokoeka kiwis. Also it's great only having to scrape out a grand total of two rats from 202 traps. Long may this continue.

A big thank you to the CWAC team and Nick Key (Southern Frontiers) with the boat transport in getting this job done.

By reducing the rat population on Pomona to such low levels puts the island in the best possible place to cope with the predicted mast/seeding event this autumn.

The CWAC team doing the coastal bait stations



Graph above explained...The green line was the 1080 bait station operation in 2023. The blue line was the 2025, October operation. The red line is the trail cameras showing the % of one or more rats per day, for 13 cameras, smoothed with a 14 day moving average. The black line is the trap night %. Both the red and black lines show a marked drop-off when the 1080 was deployed in the bait stations. Interesting to note is the results of the 2025 operation had a better drop off in the rat numbers.



## POMONA PLANT HOTSPOT

This edition of Pomona Plant Hotspot features the yellow flowered mistletoe - *Alepis flavida*

### *Alepis flavida*, yellow flowered mistletoe, pirirangi.

Maori called mistletoe pirirangi, which translates as "climbing to the sky". Waipounamu tradition tells of Tane, God of the Forests, creating the forests to cover Papatuanuku, his Earth mother. Pirirangi was the last and smallest plant in his basket. He did not want his smallest child to lie on the earth, so he placed it on the treetops, close to the sky (rangī) where it would be safe.

As both Pomona and Rona islands are possum free and are home to the yellow flowered mistletoe, the plant is safe. Why?... because possums are the main threat to mistletoe, they think of mistletoe as 'ice-cream', yum, yum and more yum!! The other threats to mistletoe is wind which can bring down the host trees the mistletoe have attached themselves to, fire, and lack of their pollinators /fruit eating birds or even geckos in Rona's case.

*Alepis flavida* is one of three species of beech mistletoes. The other two species are *Peraxilla colensoi* and *Peraxilla tetrapetala*, the red and scarlet mistletoes. On the islands yellow mistletoe is usually found growing in mountain beech trees but can be located growing on *Coprosma rigida*.



The opened and unopened flower of the mistletoe.



The flowers are yellow turning orange with time.



Spot the yellow mistletoe high up on mountain beech, Pomona.

Mistletoes are partial parasites, relying on their host trees but also using photosynthesis to fuel growth. Mistletoe roots, called haustoria penetrate the bark of their host to extract water and nutrients. Now that's quite a clever way of living with a host.... no rent to pay for the accommodation. Also clever is that the yummy looking fruit of the mistletoe is well liked by native birds. They eat the fruit, dispersing the seeds inside by wiping their backsides to be free of the sticky seeds on the bark of a tree. If the seeds land in the right place on a suitable host, they will adhere, germinate and take hold. Then new mistletoes will grow. Some host trees can 'host' numerous plants.... see the big mountain beech behind the DOC building in Te Anau. This tree is the 'Holy Grail' of *Alepis*. Don't chop it down.



The yellow mistletoe fruit.



The oval shaped leaves of *Alepis*

# KIWIS



Back in May last year Heath Sinclair (DOC Haast) lead a team of kiwi catchers to carry out an audit on Pomona Islands Haast tokoeka kiwi population.

How many birds? Where are the birds? How many of the original population (2010) of 19 birds put on the island could be found? How many 'new' kiwi to locate and fit with transmitters?..... These were all questions the team were hoping to get answers to. And did they??

From the 12th to the 24th May the DOC team, contractors and their kiwi dogs camped on the island and undertook a combination of day and night work to locate the kiwi. The weather was awful which had a major effect of the survey.

Dogs don't like seeking out kiwi in the wet and kiwis can't be handled in the pouring rain. Nevertheless the team carried on.



The kiwi catchers A-Team on Pomona

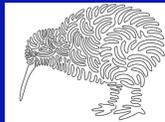
So approx - the kiwi population of the island is probably mid to late twenties. But who knows it could be over 30 now. We know from the camera data of at least one new kiwi chick last year and with no stoats on the island at present it is looking good for the next breeding season.



12 C 28.75 inHg TRAILCAM01 01/26/2026 02:04AM  
Kiwi with its fitted transmitter at the J04 trail camera location



The DOC team caught 9 birds, banding them and putting on transmitters. These transmitters on the birds have since been great when looking at the trail camera data from each trap check. Pairs of birds can be identified at different locations from around the island, one kiwi with a transmitter and one without. Other birds at locations the survey team didn't get to - who don't have transmitters, can be counted as 'other' birds. This all helps to give an overall estimate to the size of the island kiwi population.



Three young Haast tokoeka kiwi got released on Rona Island in early March. These 3 young kiwi are part of Operation Nest Egg (ONE). This is a NZ conservation program that raises kiwi chicks in captivity to improve their survival rates and to restore wild populations. The program addresses the fact that only about 5% of kiwi chicks survive to adulthood in the wild, primarily due to stoat predation and other introduced predators. By raising eggs and chicks in a controlled environments, ONE increases survival rates to approximately 65%. So these 3 kiwi have had a good head start to life already by being hatched in Franz Josef West Coast Wildlife Centre. They then got transported to the Orokonui Ecosanctuary to put on weight and learn to run around the forest in the night. Once they get to approx 900g in weight, they are ready for their next life stage.... Rona Island.



Kiwi Ranger Jane Tansell and future Kiwi Ranger Blair Marsh, checking on one of the newly released kiwi on Rona. Making sure the kiwi is staying put in its new burrow.



## Trap Check between RealNZ & the Pomona Island Trust

RealNZ folk with volunteers & members of the Trust out on a Trap check on Pomona at the end of January 2026..



Another trap check on the 26th January with RealNZ employees was organised. Now this was a good trap check to be on as only 2 dead rats had to be scraped out of the 202 traps. It could have been the 104 which were scraped out in October. It was a good opportunity to see how effective the recent bait station operation worked on the island. It was a great day with good company and we hope you all learned something about the island.

Come again.....

Oh that's right, we have another one in the end of March. See you then.



Kiwi footprint

