Pomona Post



Heading home after a Pomona trap check

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

News brief

Since March's newsletter the volunteers have been undertaking trap checks to the islands and the trail camera network on Pomona have been flat out capturing lots of images of kiwis all over the island. This is really heartening to see, so read this edition of Pomona Post to find out what else has been happening on the islands.



Volunteer Sue Marwick with one of the many Pomona kiwi and the trail camera photo below shows two of Pomona's kiwi playing chase in the early hours of the morning.



Grants and Donations.....

Thank you Gary for donating the funds to pay for the boat and we look forward to the trip out to Pomona with you later on this month.

Myell Smith- Thank you- once again for your generous donations. It is amazing the way you support our work with the islands on our beautiful Lake Manapouri.

James Tittsle- all the way in Japan, you too are amazing in your support for the Trust. Thanks.

D. Cromptom and K A Bake you both put in regular donations in our bank account which is great. Thank you .

Pomona

Here are the results from the trap checks over the last months ..... 8 rats - 1/04/26, 13 rats- 29/05/26, 17 rats - 22/07/26, 30 rats - 11/10/26 .....out of 202 traps. From trap and trail camera data its quite clear that the rat numbers are on the increase again. Food has been plentiful over the autumn and early winter due to the mast seeding event and the Trust will probably have to do another bait station operation next year to control the rats.

The good news is NO stoats have been seen on the cameras or caught in traps for 370 days (last trap check 11/10/26. Therefore all those kiwis running around the island should have a very good breeding season this year. We look forward to seeing baby kiwi on the trail cameras.

The first sighting of a weka was seen on the island (11/10/26) by volunteer Ray Walker and the weka was caught on camera - see picture below.



Results of trap checks by the Southland trailer yacht squadron were 7 rats, 1 stoat - 29/05/26, 18 rats, -11/08/26, 38 rats, -23/10/26. The rats are also on the increase on the mainland.
Thanks team for doing the mahi with the trapping.

Fiordland Jet. Thank you for the last donation. Your on-going support is fantastic in helping us get out to the islands to run the trap checks.

The donation box at West Arm keeps on giving. So a BIG thank you to all the tourists who empty their pockets of coins into the box

Thank you as well Real NZ for the donations from the coffee sales. Those tourists really love their coffees !!



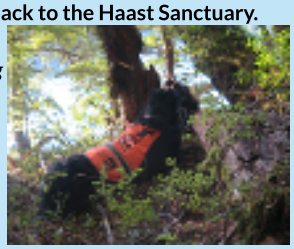
Rona Island seen from the Mainland.

Rona

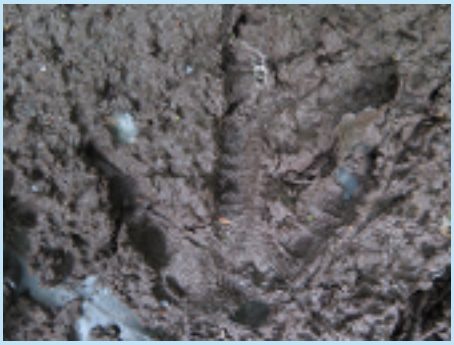
Winter monitoring of the geckos with 14 tracking tunnels at 6 different locations has taken place to see how active the geckos are over the cold months. They were out and about- for example over June out of the 14 TT cards 8 had gecko prints from 5 sites.

But not only were the geckos having a good winter on Rona - the 4 kiwis put on the island earlier on in the year were also out and about exploring ferny gullies. Unfortunately two of transmitters on the birds failed. Having 50% of the transmitters failing isn't very successful on the manufacturers part and has created a lot of work for kiwi ranger Jane Tansell and kiwi dog 'Ink'. They have 'found' one of the kiwis, one still to go and when all 4 kiwis have working transmitters they will be transferred back to the Haast Sanctuary.

Kiwi dog 'Ink' waiting patiently while out on the job.



But not only were the geckos and kiwis having a good winter, the mice have been busy breeding. From getting no detections from the tracking tunnels over summer and most of the autumn, they are all now picking up mice prints. The Trust will be busy shortly undertaking another bait station/mouse control operation. Trapping results from Kev & Mush- (Mainland opposite Rona) May the 5th 2026- 2 rats, June the 26th 2026- 20 rats, 1 stoat, October the 8th- 30 rats. The rats are also on the increase over on this part of the mainland.
Awesome work done by you two.



Impression of a Haast tokoeka footprint left behind in Pomona mud

POMONA PLANT HOTSPOT

This edition of Pomona Plant Hotspot features not just one plant species but the whole forest ecosystem of both the islands. WHY ? ... we have no deer on both Pomona and Rona and we have an amazing diversity of plant species which make up the forests, something that is sadly absent in the forests on the Mainland .

Readers of this newsletter might be aware of all the news lately about the huge impact deer are having around Aotearoa. Fiordland National Park has been singled out about "How deer are destroying the forests of Fiordland" (Otago Daily Times 22/08/2026). Reporter Mary Williams wrote a very in-depth article about the impact deer are having in Fiordland, interviewing many people. She started of her article writing about the present state of the forests in Fiordland- for example- on the 'mainland' opposite Pomona and Rona.

To quote Mary from her article, "If allowed to breed unchecked, deer can increase by 30% a year, doubling within 3 years. Conservationists say rapidly breeding deer in Fiordland are eating and trampling vast tracts of the 1.2 million hectare park's precious forest and alpine plants, risking ecological collapse and loss of vital biodiversity haven and carbon bank. One leading forest ecologist (Prof David Norton) describes the state of Fiordland's Kepler forest as 'buggered' due to deer and has written a paper calling for a National strategy to protect all conservation land from exploding deer numbers before its too late"



The photo on the left shows a healthy forest ecosystem on Pomona, showing a wide range of understory plant species below the mature trees.

The photo on the right shows a forest ecosystem impacted by deer in Fiordland NP near Lake Manapouri. There is no thriving understory of plants below the mature trees.



The Pomona Trust Chair John Whitehead was one of the folk interviewed for the article. He started of explaining about the history of Pomona and the deer. On our 262 ha island 5 red deer were removed in 2005. There has been two occasions lately where 2 young male deer were seen on the island in the 'roar' season but thankfully they swum back to the mainland. As a result of being 'deer free' the forest diversity is magnificent. John then explained- that the plant species that the deer love to eat, including fuchsia and broadleaf were initially absent and now grow in abundance. He then said, he was "amazed" at the difference (before 2005 - then after 2005). To get back to something pristine you have to take deer numbers back to virtually nothing. You get this moving baseline and people think, "oh' look at these lovely beech trees and crown fern', but crown fern is unpalatable to deer and that is why it is still there.



Forest on the Kepler, near Lake Manapouri which has been impacted heavily by deer browsing showing just beech trees and crown fern.

We need to celebrate our 'SPECIAL' forests of Pomona and Rona for being unique places in the Fiordland National Park.

The forest of Rona Island has never had deer browse, so is 'pristine' .



These two photos of the forest floor show quite clearly the impact that deer have on plant species.

The photo on the left was taken on the Kepler, near Lake Manapouri and all you can see are small crown ferns and moss.

The photo on the right was taken on Pomona and you can see kidney ferns, totara and Pseudopanex seedlings, plants deer browse on if given the chance.



The forest floor is the nursery for the forest. Future trees, shrubs, ferns and mosses should all be found there in seedling form.

VIPP... A VERY IMPORTANT POMONA PERSON



Back in April, Ross Forrester from the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron wrote to the Trust that he was retiring from doing all the mahi with the Mainland traps. Wow - Ross that has been an amazing contribution, 20 years of boating and trapping.

The Trust's Chair John wrote.... " As you say we all are getting older, the hills get higher and the tracks rougher, there is a time when we reflect on all we have achieved and feel it is the right time to retire. Thank you for all you have done for the Pomona Island Trust around the shores of Lake Manapouri".

All the best Ross for a trapping-free retirement.....no more disgusting, smelly rats or stoats to scrape out of those trap boxes. Just in case you are missing the experience here is a photo of a stoat ready to scrape out.



Celebrating 20 years of the Pomona Island Trust, 2006 to 2026

The first full working-bee in 2006 - a younger looking John our VIPP- Very Important Pomona Person and dedicated Chair for the past 20 years.



Kiwi release of the Haast Tokoeka 2011, with DOC kiwi rangers Blair and Hannah

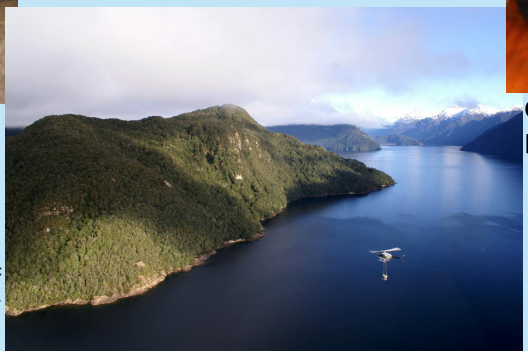




The editor was searching for a file the other day and realised that it has been over 20 years since the Pomona Island Trust was formed and the big operation of predator/pest removal from both islands began. So here are a selection of photos from the archives to remember a few key moments.



John, Chris Shaw and Sue Bennett up at John's workshop with the end results of a trap building session... Ka pai



Green Ribbon Award -2011 Viv Shaw,John, Nick Smith and Russell Norman.

Photo to the right shows the aerial drop of poison on Pomona about to happen in 2007

John Whitehead, you have been everywhere man, doing so much over the past 20 years. Just amazing !! THANK YOU