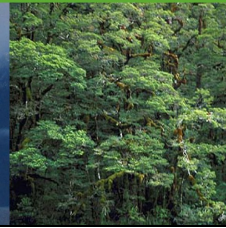
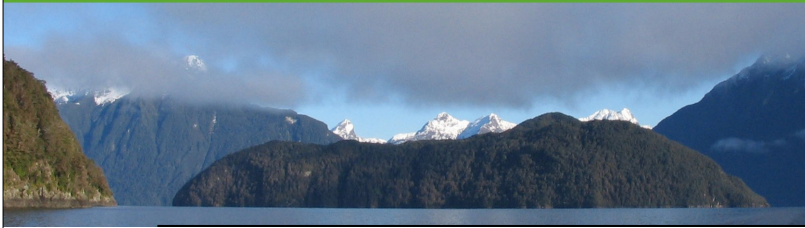


# Pomona Post



March 2016



## War on mice

In the October edition of Pomona Post we revealed our plans for controlling mice to low levels on Rona. Having been told by the Kiwi Recovery Group that Rona should no longer be used as a kiwi crèche because there were too many mice on Rona, the Trust was galvanised into action.

Following extensive research and planning, the Trust set up a bait station network. Contractors (Contract Wild Animal Control Ltd) placed 464 bait stations on Rona on a 25m x 50m grid. Meanwhile, volunteers established six tracking tunnel lines, with seven tunnels on each to monitor the success of the operation.



Map showing bait station network on Rona

DOC's standard procedure for tracking tunnels requires cards to be deployed in the tunnels for only one night. This resulted in an overall mouse tracking rate of 23.8% on Rona, with some lines showing no mouse prints. "The Trust, however, was keen to get an understanding of how widespread the mice were across Rona" explains volunteer Project Manager Viv Shaw, "so we left the cards in

the tunnels. This confirmed our suspicions that mice were all over the island as, after several nights, every single card on Rona had mouse prints on it".

Towards the end of the year the bait stations were filled with brodifacoum. The tracking tunnels were again activated and the tracking rate for mice on Rona had gone down to 0%. "We were rapt with the result" said Trust Chair John Whitehead, "but needed to make sure that the 0% tracking was not a one-night wonder".

## Where have all the mice gone?

Following another fill of the bait stations with fresh toxin, cards were again placed inside the tracking tunnels. "And incredibly" said Viv "we are still tracking at 0% for mice on Rona". The Trust has now had cards inside the tracking tunnels continuously for 158 nights with no sign of mice.

"This result well exceeds our expectations" said John. "Perhaps we can dare to hope that we have succeeded in eradicating mice from Rona". Lindsay Wilson, DOC Biodiversity Manager echoed John's thoughts saying that this is "fantastic news! An encouraging result so far".

Reducing mouse numbers on Rona is already having an impact on invertebrate life on the island. "As the mouse tracking rates decreased to 0%, so the number of insect prints on the tracking cards increased" observed Viv. We are starting to find weta inside our tunnels and traps again. "And the number of spiders turn-

ing up in our motels is becoming quite scary" said Viv, a confirmed arachnophobe.



Viv Shaw checking the tracking cards brought off of Rona Island

## Have mice been eradicated from Rona?

"Whilst it would be good to think that we have eradicated mice from Rona" said Viv, "we have to be realistic". Only time will tell whether we have been successful. Two years is the usual time for an island to be rodent-free before DOC is confident to declare an eradication attempt to have succeeded.

"We cannot afford to be complacent" said Viv. "It is possible that a small population of mice still exists on Rona in an area where we have no traps or tracking tunnels". Equally it is also possible for mice to return to the island by swimming or be accidentally brought there by boat.

"We ask all boaties who spend time near

Rona to check their boats for mice and rats to reduce the risk of an incursion” said John.

## Kiwi come back

The success of the Trust’s mouse project on Rona means that the Haast tokoeka will be returning to the island in the very near future. Plans are underway with DOC West Coast for a proposed release date of early May. The Trust would like to thank the organisations and individuals who believed in our ability to control mice to low levels on Rona. “We will ensure that the return of kiwi to Rona is a memorable experience” said Trust Chair John Whitehead.

## What no rats?

It is not just Rona that is providing a good news story. Our efforts to eradicate rats from Pomona using a combined bait station and trap network appears to be paying off. “We have now gone nearly six months without trapping a rat” said volunteer Project Manager Viv Shaw. From a high of 220 rats in Spring 2013 to no rats in the Summer of 2016 is a phenomenal result. And it is all thanks to our team of volunteers who help us check our traps on a regular basis. Again only time will tell whether we have succeeded in eradicating the rats from Pomona. So we’ll keep you posted.



Volunteers ready to check traps on Pomona in January 2016 - no rats yay! (Photo: Viv Shaw)

## Tracking along .....

The other major activity on our radar at the moment is “Project Safe Workplace”. Last year we received funding from DOC’s community partnership fund to cut 10km of track on Pomona. “Checking traps on Pomona has been a bit like tackling a jungle assault course”, said Trustee Chris Shaw. “Following bits of orange tape and weaving your way under and over fallen trees certainly makes for an interesting day out”. With volunteer safety in mind, we have employed a contractor (Huntsman Contracting Ltd) to cut the tracks that service the trap lines. So far 5km of tracks have been cut to a very good standard. We do, however, need volunteers to help mark the tracks with

orange triangles. “Over the coming weeks we will be heading over to Pomona a few times to complete this important work” said Viv “so if you are not on already on our volunteer email list and want to help please email me at [pomona.island@ihug.co.nz](mailto:pomona.island@ihug.co.nz)”.



A freshly cut track on Pomona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

## Pomona Personality

The Pomona personality featured in this edition of Pomona Post is our newest Trustee David Fortune. David is a former maths teacher from Fiordland College who went away for a few years, but has returned to live in Te Anau. David became a Trustee in June 2014 and has been an active volunteer on Pomona and Rona Islands.



### Facts

Name: David Fortune  
Age: age advantaged!  
Occupation: enjoying life  
Favourite Bird: NZ falcon but a kiwi experience on Rona is special  
Favourite plant/tree: Southern rata and orchids

We put the following questions to David and here is what he had to say:

- Q. Favourite place on Pomona or Rona?  
A. The “A” line on Pomona for its views as you work, although the views are being obscured as the bush regenerates.
- Q. Best memory of a working bee?  
A. Realising that I was being watched by a falcon as I set a trap. It was 2-3m away and I hadn’t seen it land in the tree.
- Q. Funniest moment on the islands?  
A. Helping catch kiwi on Rona—they re much trickier to catch than you’d think.
- Q. Why do it?  
A. To help regain some of the unmodified bush habitat of my youth. If it wasn’t for groups like Pomona we’d have little to offer future generations in terms of the bush and the birds. And the view from the office window isn’t bad!!!