

Pomona Island Charitable Trust

Annual Report

2009/10





Major Achievements 2009/10

- Pomona and Rona islands declared rat-free
- Second wave of 28 robins released on Pomona and Rona
- Robins breed on both Pomona and Rona
- A further four endangered Haast kiwi released on Rona
- Seven Haast kiwi transferred from Rona to Coal Island
- Trust Chair and Secretary train to become approved kiwi handlers
- Bird numbers on Pomona up by over 102% on baseline numbers
- 1468 hours worked – a record number of working days and hours in a single year
- Trap intensification project completed on mainland opposite Pomona and Rona
- In-kind donations to the value of \$38,700
- Mohua translocation proposal completed
- Funding for mohua translocation secured from Meridian
- New DOC Advisory Trustee appointed
- Successful Art in the Park event
- International profile of the Trust's work raised through Island Invasives Conference in Auckland
- Significant publicity in national, local and regional publications

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Introduction

The last year has been one of highs and lows for the Pomona Island Charitable Trust. The year got off to a really good start with the second release of robins onto Pomona and Rona Islands in April 2009. This was followed in November 2009 by the release of more Haast kiwi onto Rona – a kiwi crèche site. However, the discovery of a mouse on each of Pomona and Rona Islands in winter 2009 tested the resolve of Trustees as well as our biosecurity measures. A re-invasion by stoats on Pomona in the summer of 2010 and another mouse find on each island in summer 2010 has made for a challenging time for all involved in the restoration of Pomona and Rona Islands.

Whilst Trustees have always been aware that a stoat re-invasion was inevitable as the island is within the known swimming range of stoats, the discovery of two mice on each of Pomona and Rona Islands has proved to be a steep learning curve. The question facing the Trust was: are they evidence of a remnant population, did they get there by boat or did they swim? Based on the evidence available to the Trust, the best suggestion, at this stage, is that the mice have swum to the island. A moderate beech mast event prompted the Trust to make a significant investment in purchasing stoat and mouse traps in order to minimise the risk of pests re-establishing on the two islands. The Trust continues to learn and be vigilant and it remains the aim of the Trust to maintain the islands free of introduced pests in order to create a sanctuary for threatened and endangered species.

Organisation

During 2009/10 a total of four Trustees' meetings were held (June and August 2009 and January and March 2010). At the last AGM both John Whitehead and Viv Shaw were re-elected to the positions of Chair and Secretary for the fourth time and John Stevenson was re-elected Treasurer for the third time. Chris Shaw, Neil Robertson, Hunter Shaw, Kim Hollows, Lance Shaw and Stewart Bull continued as Trustees. No new Trustees were appointed. Alan Mark continues to be our Patron.

In April 2009, Lindsay Wilson became the Trust's DOC Advisory Trustee, bringing with him a wealth of experience from working with DOC on the North Island. Lindsay has attended working bees on the islands and adjacent mainland, getting to know Pomona and Rona for himself. Andy Cox at the DOC Southland Conservancy Office in Invercargill has also been a very valuable source of advice and information, especially with the mouse incursions experienced on both islands.

The Trust is registered as a charitable entity under the Charities Act 2005. This registration enables the Trust to be exempt from tax, meaning that people donating money to the Trust can claim the tax back on their donations. The Trust files annual returns which are available for public viewing on the Charities Commission website.

Managing the Project

In 2009/10 the Trust formally contracted the Trust's Secretary Viv Shaw, through Topajka Shaw Consulting Limited, to manage the 'Friends of Pomona' scheme paying a total of \$2,133 for this service. This represented the balance of the funds available, through a grant from the Meridian Energy Te Anau Manapouri Community Development Fund, for the development and implementation of the 'Friends of Pomona' scheme. None of the funds raised through the 'Friends of Pomona' scheme or from other donations have gone towards the administration costs of the Trust.

The project management of the restoration work on Pomona Island is undertaken on an entirely voluntary basis by Viv, with Topajka Shaw Consulting Limited donating an estimated \$13,620 of their time and resources to the Trust. This is a very generous in-kind donation and the Trust would like to acknowledge the significant role that Viv has played in helping the Trust to achieve its goals

Funding

In the 2009/10 financial year the Trust received funding from the following sources:

| Source | Purpose | Amount |
|--|---------------------|---------|
| DOC Haast | Haast kiwi | \$3,000 |
| Donation boxes | No specific purpose | \$1,016 |
| Friends of Pomona Including a significant donation from the Gary Chisholm Family Trust | Island restoration | \$5,100 |
| Interest | No specific purpose | \$1,723 |

In addition to the direct financial support received by the Trust, a significant amount of in-kind support has been received. This is estimated to be to the value of \$38,700 and the Trust is grateful to all organisations and individuals who have supported our work in this way.

In January 2010 the Trust was awarded a grant from the Meridian Energy Te Anau Manapouri Community Development Fund to the value of \$14,573 for the transfer of mohua from Breaksea Island to Pomona Island. This grant was to be uplifted in April 2010.

Species Translocation – South Island Robin (Kakarui)

In April 2009, the restoration of the two islands continued with the release of a further 28 robins onto Pomona and Rona Islands. These birds were translocated from the Clinton Valley and supplemented the 51 birds which had been transferred in February 2009. Members of the community ranging in age from three to over 70 attended the release, with a total of 27 different people involved in catching and releasing robins on this second transfer of birds to the islands. The Trust thanks Real Journeys for providing transport to the Clinton Valley to catch the birds and Adventure Kayak and Cruise for the transport to Pomona Island to release the robins.



In December 2009 the first juvenile robin was sighted on Pomona. Over the summer, juvenile robins have been seen on both islands, suggesting that the birds have settled in well to their new homes. Robin numbers are being monitored through regular five-minute bird counts conducted by volunteers five times a year on Pomona and once a year on Rona.

Species Translocations – Haast Kiwi (Tokoeka)



Throughout 2009/10 Rona Island continued to be used as a kiwi crèche site for the endangered Haast kiwi. As the chicks grew, the harnesses on their transmitters needed to be changed. This happened approximately every five weeks giving many of the Trust's regular volunteers the chance to see kiwis in the wild – a first-time experience for many. During 2009/10 a total of 19 different people were able to help with this valuable kiwi work. During the year a further four chicks were released onto the island bringing the total to 14. All the kiwi chicks thrived on

Rona, becoming big enough to fend off predators, such as stoats, for themselves. In December 2009, seven of the chicks were transferred from the Rona crèche site to their permanent home on Coal Island in Preservation Inlet. The restoration of Coal Island is another community-led conservation project.

During 2009/10 two Trustees, John Whitehead and Viv Shaw, started training to become approved kiwi handlers. This involved going out with DOC staff and learning to catch kiwis before changing the transmitters on the chicks. John has also been mastering the art of tracking the birds using radio telemetry.

Species Translocations Yellowhead (mohua)

In October 2009 the Trust put together a proposal to transfer mohua to Pomona Island. The request is being considered by the mohua recovery group and suitable source populations are being identified. An application to fund the transfer was made to the Meridian Energy Te Anau Manapouri Community Development Fund. The application for \$14,573 was successful with a planned date for the transfer of October 2010.



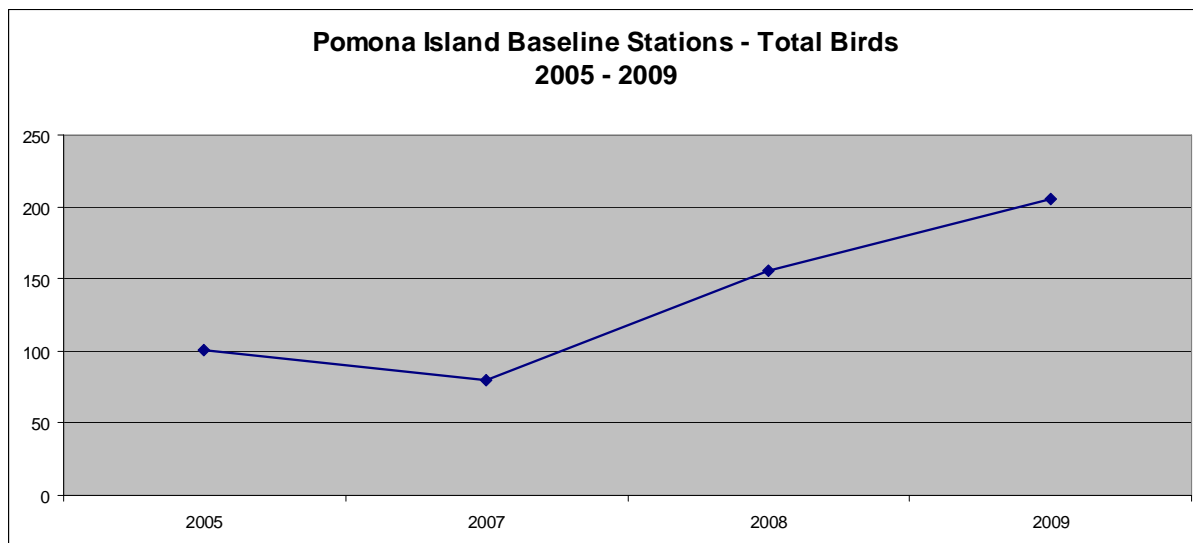
Monitoring

A key focus of the Trust's work in the last year has been on monitoring, both for pest re-invasion and for regeneration of the islands' flora and fauna.

Monitoring – Regeneration

During the year the Trust completed five-minute bird counts on Pomona on five different occasions. Prior to pest eradication, bird counts were undertaken at 10 count stations on the

island. These sites are monitored each year in December and, as the graph below shows, the numbers of birds has been steadily increasing. The increase in the number of birds in 2009 over the baseline data is over 102%. This is as a direct result of the removal of pests from the island. Similar results have been seen at the baseline bird count stations on Rona.



In addition to the annual counts at the baseline stations, volunteers conduct seasonal five-minute bird counts four times a year at 24 count stations across Pomona. This data allows the Trust to analyse the seasonal variations in bird numbers and species on the island and to get a good understanding of the preferred habitats of the different species. Conducting regular bird counts is also increasing the skill levels of some of the Trust’s regular volunteers. Volunteer Sue Bennett attended at DOC-run five-minute bird count course in November 2009.



In December 2009 two sets of “skink houses” were placed on each of Pomona and Rona Islands. Whilst it is early days in terms of reptile recovery on the islands, the Trust is now well-placed to find any skinks should they be present. Volunteers, however, are noticing an increase in invertebrate life on both Pomona and Rona Islands. A weta motel regularly has wetas

inside and the bait stations in place on the islands, in the event of a rodent re-invasion, are often found to be home to families of cave wetas.

Vegetation continues to regenerate on both island in the absence of introduced pests. The place on Pomona where the effects are most visible is at the deer pen. Where previously the vegetation had been browsed heavily it is now almost impossible to walk around inside or outside the deer pen.

Monitoring – Pests

Deer - no evidence of deer was found on Pomona Island during 2009/10. The deer pen on the island has been operational on an intermittent basis – the age of the electronic equipment has hampered the effective running of the deer pen and the Trust plans to replace the equipment during the next financial year. Given that deer have been known to swim to Pomona in the past,

having a fully functioning deer pen is important, especially as the vegetation on the island continues to regenerate.

Stoats – the Trust continues to maintain traps lines on the mainland adjacent to both Pomona and Rona Islands. With confirmation of a beech mast and the subsequent threat of increased numbers of mice, rats and stoats on the mainland, the Trust made the decision to reinforce its trap lines. As a result, in May and June 2009, 12 volunteers helped the Trust to put out an additional 43 single-set traps on the mainland opposite Pomona and 18 extra single-set traps opposite Rona.



This brings the total number of trap sites on the mainland to 116. The frequency of trap checks was also increased to monthly in anticipation of higher numbers of pests. The trap intensification project was made possible with a generous donation from the Gary Chisholm Family Trust of Christchurch. Providing high levels of protection to the kiwi chicks on Rona was a priority and financial support from DOC at Haast is also acknowledged. The mainland trap line opposite Pomona continues to be serviced by the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron and the Trust is particularly grateful to Geoff Wells for taking responsibility for checking the traps monthly.



The numbers of stoats and rats caught on the mainland opposite Pomona has seen a significant increase in 2009/2010 due to the effects of the beech mast. As the table shows, 21 stoats and 79 rats were trapped on this line in the past year. By comparison only two stoats and nine rats were trapped in 2008/9. Since the trap lines were established on the mainland opposite Rona in 2008, 79% of the total number of stoats and 97% of the total number of rats caught, were trapped in 2009/10.

Unfortunately in February 2010 three stoats were found in traps by volunteers on Pomona. Whilst disappointing, their discovery is not wholly unexpected. Stoat numbers have increased on the mainland and, given that Pomona and Rona are within the known swimming range of stoats, a re-invasion was inevitable at some stage. Other islands within Fiordland, such as Coal and Secretary have also experienced re-invasions by stoats so it is important to keep the finds on Pomona in perspective. The good news is that the trap network on the island appears to be doing its job and the three pests were caught before they could do much damage. Fortunately, by comparison, Rona Island has remained free of stoats.

| 2009/10 | Pomona | Rona | Pomona Mainland | Rona Mainland* |
|--------------------------------|--------|------|-----------------|----------------|
| No times traps checked | 6 | 6 | 12 | 11 |
| Stoats caught | 3 | 0 | 21 | 15 |
| Rats caught | 0 | 0 | 79 | 94 |
| Mice caught | 2 | 2 | 14 | 16 |
| Pests caught since 2006 | | | | |
| Stoats | 21 | 3 | 75 | 19 |
| Rats | 312 | 0 | 16 | 97 |

*Trap line established in October 2008; additional traps were placed on the mainland opposite Pomona and Rona in winter 2009

Possums - in September 2009 the Trust had a bit of a fright with volunteers finding sign of possums on Pomona in the form of droppings. Whilst the droppings were old, it was not possible to ascertain how exactly how old they were. The Trust, therefore, treated the find very seriously and put out 19 kill traps in the area immediately around where the possum sign had been found. The Trust wishes to thank the Department of Conservation for the loan of these traps. No possums were caught in the traps so the Trust contracted Wild Animal Control Limited to check the island for possums. Two contractors with dogs spent 10 man days on Pomona setting 100 leg-hold traps. No further sign of possums has been detected. The Trust, however, remains vigilant for fresh sign.



Rodents - there has been no sign of rats on either Pomona or Rona Islands since the aerial applications of brodifacoum in July and August 2007. The Trust can therefore confidently declare the islands rat-free. However, the discovery of two mice on each of Pomona and Rona has provided a significant challenge for the Trust. Again the beech mast in Fiordland is the likely



explanation for the reinvasion of the islands by mice. As soon as the first mouse was detected on each island in winter 2009, volunteers, assisted by the Trust's DOC advisory Trustee Lindsay Wilson, swung into action and put out over 100 temporary mouse traps in key locations on both Pomona and Rona. The temporary traps, borrowed from DOC, were replaced with 125 permanent mouse traps inside wooden boxes over winter and spring 2009. Mouse traps were also placed inside each existing stoat trap box on Pomona. It was nine months before the second mouse was found on each island, giving the Trust some confidence that the mouse was more likely to be a re-invasion rather than evidence of a remnant population of mice on the islands.

The Trust's best information when we started the rodent eradication programme was that both islands were outside the known swimming range of mice. Discussions with experts within the Department of Conservation suggests that knowledge of mice and their behaviour is still in its infancy. Through projects such as Pomona and Rona not only are the Trustees learning a lot, but those who have been involved in eradications over the last 20 years are also learning from our experiences.

Volunteers

Between April 2009 and March 2010 the Trust organised 68 working days. A total of 87 different volunteers completed 1468 hours work on the islands and the adjacent mainland. This is a record number of working days and working hours in a single year for the Trust. There are a number of reasons for the record number of working days: the need to increase the number of trap checks on the mainland in response to an increase in rodent and stoat activity; the need to change the transmitters on the Haast kiwi chicks every five weeks in summer and autumn 2010; the need to react quickly to the mouse incursions and set up mouse trap networks on both

Pomona and Rona and check them regularly. These hours do not include the significant number of hours of work that go into the administration of the Trust and the time devoted by Trustees to meetings and the preparation of written documentation. The following volunteers deserve a special thanks for the number of working days they have completed in 2009/10:



- ◆ John Whitehead – 38 working days
- ◆ Viv Shaw – 30 working days
- ◆ Chris Shaw – 26 working days
- ◆ Geoff Wells – 12 working days
- ◆ Martin Sliva – 10 working days



Three of these volunteers are also Trustees so their overall contribution to the work of the Trust is much higher. Special thanks is given to Geoff Wells from the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron who has “adopted” the Pomona mainland stoat trap line and once a month heads out to check the traps for us using his own boat for transport. During 2009/10 the Trust also had the services of the Hokonui Tramping Club and Meridian Energy staff also joined us to check the traps on Pomona. During the year the Trust welcomed back some volunteers who had helped out on the very first working bee on Pomona – they certainly noticed the difference on the island in terms of the birdlife and plant regeneration. It is also pleasing that new volunteers are still coming along all of the time and that they are able to enjoy their time on the island.

Communications

Friends of Pomona – during 2009/10 the Trust received income from Friends of Pomona in the form of subscriptions, donations and from the sale of “restoring Pomona” T-shirts. An agreement was reached with the Department of Conservation to sell the T-shirts at the Visitor Centre in Te Anau. Four issues of Pomona Post were published in May, September and December 2009 and March 2010.

Website – during 2009/10 the Pomona Island Charitable Trust website was completely revamped with the new look site launched in March 2010. Trustee Chris Shaw spent many hours, on an entirely voluntary basis, bringing the Trust’s website completely up-to-date. The website continues to be well used with 10015 visits over the past year, representing an increase in visits of 6% over the previous year.

Meet the Locals - A four minute video clip showing Trustees Viv Shaw and Hunter Shaw talking about the restoration work on Pomona was shown regularly during 2009/10 on TVNZ Channel 7’s ‘meet the locals’ series showing conservation projects from around New Zealand.

Art in the Park – in February 2010 the Trust hosted 21 people, ranging in age from seven to over 70, for the annual Art in the Park event on Pomona. Once again local, award-winning photographer Graham Dainty and artist Chris Wilkie helped participants to hone their photographic and artistic skills. A nature walk along Hurricane Passage was led by the Trust’s secretary Viv Shaw. An exhibition of the participants’ photos and artwork was held in the Te Anau library at the end of February 2010. The quality of the work keeps improving every year – a testament to the skills and patience of Graham and Chris (*photograph courtesy of Beth Masser*).



Pomona Publicity – in 2009/10 the Trust continued to receive a high level of publicity with mentions in 52 printed articles in publications such as the Southland Times, Otago Daily Times, Southland Express, Fiordland Advocate, Fiordland Focus and the Fiordland Coastal Newsletter.. Regular updates on progress have also been provided to the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron and the Fiordland Tramping and Outdoor Recreation Club. The restoration of Pomona Island was featured in the November/December 2009 edition of New Zealand Geographic as part of an article on the 50th anniversary of the “Save Manapouri” campaign. The Trust’s Chair John Whitehead was interviewed on Te Kaea (the news programme on Maori TV) about the transfer of Haast kiwi from Rona Island to Coal Island.

Conference Presentations – In February 2010 the international profile of the Trust was raised when Trust secretary Viv Shaw presented two papers at the Island Invasives Conference in Auckland. The conference brought together experts from all over the world to share experiences on eradicating pests from islands. The first paper, co-authored by John Whitehead and Chris



Shaw, entitled “Creating an island sanctuary: A case study of a community-led conservation initiative” focussed on the overall activities of the Trust and was attended by over 100 people. The second paper, co-authored with Nick Torr, was entitled “Eradicating pests from Pomona and Rona Islands in Lake Manapouri: A focus on rodents” and concentrated on the operation to remove rats and mice from the two islands. Both papers are being peer-reviewed and will be published later in 2010 (*Photograph courtesy of Tracy Tibbles*).

Displays and Presentations – the Trust was invited to have a display at the Manapouri Arts Group Easter exhibition in April 2009. Previous participants of Art in the Park kindly displayed their photographs and artwork. The Trust’s restoration work was also on display at the Southland Boat Show in Invercargill in August 2009 as part of the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron’s exhibition stand. In October 2009 the Trust had a display in the registration tent for the Te Anau Manapouri Fishing competition. The aim was to raise awareness of the pest-free status of the two islands and the need for the boaties to help the Trust by ensuring they do not inadvertently take rats or mice to the island.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Pomona Island Charitable Trust has had an interesting year. The Trust has faced some new challenges in our aim to maintain Pomona and Rona Islands as pest-free island sanctuaries. However, members of the Trust have learned a lot over the last 12 months and are committed to continue to work hard to ensure that the islands provide an accessible location for locals and visitors to see, hear and learn about the flora and fauna native to Fiordland.

We are extremely grateful to the local community for getting behind us and supporting us either financially or by volunteering their time on the island. A number of organisations locally also support our work either through direct sponsorship or by providing in-kind support.

We look forward to your on-going support as we continue restoring Pomona and Rona Islands.

John Whitehead
Chair
on behalf of the Trust

June 2010