

Pomona Island Charitable Trust

Annual Report

2010/11





Major Achievements 2010/11

- Transfer of first threatened species to Pomona - 42 mohua released on Pomona in February 2011
- Robins breed on both Pomona and Rona
- A total of 30 endangered Haast kiwi have spent time on Rona this year
- Six Haast kiwis transferred from Rona to Orokonui Sanctuary
- Six Haast kiwis transferred from Rona to Coal Island
- Five juvenile kiwis returned to the kiwi Sanctuary at Haast
- 40 volunteers have a personal encounter with kiwi
- 1340 hours worked by 62 volunteers at 44 working bees
- In-kind donations to the value of \$46,910
- Trust Secretary guest speaker at Environment Southland Environment awards function in Invercargill
- Trust Secretary guest speaker at Southern Ecological Restoration Network “Bringing back the birds” conference on Stewart Island
- Ministerial appointments for three Trustees
- Significant publicity in national, local and regional publications

Pomona Island Charitable Trust

Annual Report 2010/11

Introduction

In July 2010 the Trust celebrated its fifth birthday. The Trust has come a long way since the idea of first removing all animal pest species from Pomona and Rona was first discussed. The financial year 2010/11 has seen the hard work from our many volunteers pay off, with the introduction of the first threatened species to Pomona. The release of 42 mohua (yellowhead) was a major milestone for the Trust and went some way to making up for the disappointment that mice have re-established a breeding population on the island.

Volunteers have put in a lot of hours over the last year trying to prevent the mice from re-establishing. At the end of 2010, however, the Trust reluctantly had to accept the advice from the New Zealand Island Eradication Advisory Group that mice had colonised Pomona and were unlikely to be eradicated using ground control methods. The Trust knew when it started this project five years ago that having a mouse-free island sanctuary was ambitious. Evidence suggests that our eradication programme was a success, but unfortunately mice have managed to return to the island and re-establish themselves. The best advice is that the mice will not have a significant impact on the long term restoration of the island and that the birds already present, as well as those transferred to Pomona, will continue to thrive. This is provided the island can be kept free of rats and stoats.

Rona Island, meanwhile, has been completely free of stoats, rats and mice during 2010/11. Having Rona as part of the Haast kiwi crèche programme has given members of the local community the opportunity to see kiwi, in many cases, for the first time. As a result of this programme the Trust has a valuable partnership with the Department of Conservation in both Te Anau and Haast.

Organisation

During 2010/11 a total of four Trustees' meetings were held in June, July and October 2010 and February 2011. In addition, the AGM was held in June 2010 at which John Whitehead was re-elected to the position of Chair, Viv Shaw to the position Secretary and John Stevenson to the position of Treasurer. Chris Shaw, Neil Robertson and Hunter Shaw continued as Trustees. Kim Hollows, Lance Shaw and Stewart Bull stood down as Trustees at the AGM and Harry Bull became a new Trustee in August 2010. Alan Mark continues to be our Patron. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Stewart, Kim and Lance for their support and commitment to the work of the Trust over the last five years.

Lindsay Wilson has continued to work with the Trust as its DOC Advisory Trustee. The Trust has an excellent working relationship with DOC and in the last year has worked closely with a number of individual staff members on specific projects. Andy Cox at the DOC Southland Conservancy Office in Invercargill continues to be a valuable source of advice and information, in particular relating to the re-invasion of mice on Pomona. The Trust is also grateful to Hannah Edmonds and Jane Tansell from DOC Te Anau and Blair Hoult, Kath Morris and Neil Freer from DOC Haast for sharing their knowledge and experience of handling kiwi with Trust volunteers through the Haast kiwi crèche project.

The Trust is registered as a charitable entity under the Charities Act 2005. This registration enables the Trust to be exempt from tax, which means that anyone 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 2010/11 the project management of the restoration work on Pomona and Rona Islands was undertaken on an entirely voluntary basis by Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, with Topajka Shaw Consulting Limited donating an estimated \$24,000 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 2010/11 financial year the Trust received funding from the following sources:

| Source | Purpose | Amount |
|--|----------------------|----------|
| Donation boxes | No specific purpose | \$806 |
| Friends of Pomona | | |
| • Subscriptions, donations | No specific purpose | \$ 1,359 |
| • Meridian Energy Manapouri Te Anau Community Fund | Mohua transfer | \$14,573 |
| • Gary Chisholm | Pest eradication | \$ 2,000 |
| • Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation | Monitoring equipment | \$ 2,807 |
| Interest | No specific purpose | \$ 1,205 |

In addition to the direct financial support received by the Trust, a significant amount of in-kind support has been received. The Trust is particularly grateful to Adrian Gutsell and his team at Contract Wild Animal Control Limited for donating their time to monitor possums on Pomona. In-kind support is estimated to be to the value of just under \$47,000 and the Trust is grateful to all organisations and individuals who have supported our work in this way.

Species Translocation – mohua (yellowhead)

The highlight of the last year was the release of the first threatened bird species on Pomona. In February 2011 volunteers, together with DOC staff, travelled aboard the Southern Winds down to Breaksea Island off the coast of Fiordland. A total of 42 mohua were caught on Breaksea and transferred by helicopter, over two days, to Pomona Island. Volunteers were heavily involved in both catching the birds and releasing them on Pomona (photo courtesy of Barry Harcourt).

The Trust is very grateful to the Meridian Energy Manapouri Te Anau Community Fund for providing financial support for the translocation. And to Meridian Energy for volunteering a Meridian staff member, Brian Sinclair, to be part of the capture and release team. We



thank Barry Harcourt for sharing his superb photographs with the Trust and Hannah Edmonds, Jason van der Wetering, Warren Simpson and Jo Whitehead from DOC for helping catch the birds.

Species Translocations – Haast Kiwi (Tokoeka)



Throughout 2010/11 Rona Island continued to play a key role in the recovery of the endangered Haast kiwi. During the year over 30 chicks spent time on this kiwi crèche island. A particular highlight for the Trust was being part of the team that captured six kiwis on Rona for transfer to the Orokonui Eco-sanctuary in Dunedin. Three Trustees and our Patron, Alan Mark, attended the release of the birds by the Minister of Conservation at Orokonui. A further six chicks were transferred to Coal Island in Preservation Inlet to supplement the seven kiwi which were transferred there from Rona in 2009. Five juvenile kiwi were also returned to the Haast kiwi Sanctuary.

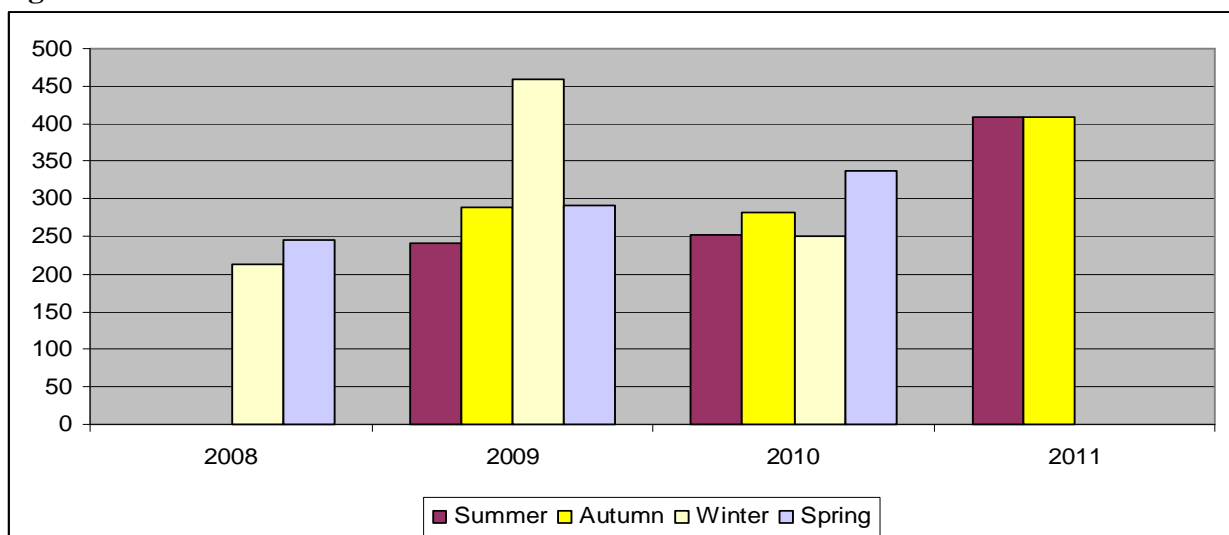
Having the Haast kiwi chicks on Rona has provided an excellent opportunity for members of the local community to see kiwi, often for the first time. Over the last year 40 different volunteers have had the opportunity to interact with kiwi, including pupils from Fiordland College (Photo of Taz Fujino courtesy of Fiordland College).

During 2010/11 two Trustees, John Whitehead and Viv Shaw, continued their training as approved kiwi handlers and have now gained sufficient experience to track the birds and change transmitter harnesses without DOC supervision. In the last few months the Trust has also started talking to DOC about the possibility of releasing Haast kiwi onto Pomona Island.

Monitoring – Regeneration

A key focus of the Trust’s work during 2010/11 has been on monitoring, both for regeneration of the islands’ flora and fauna and for pest re-invasion.

Figure 1: Pomona Island – total number of birds seen or heard 2008-2011



Note: large flocks of redpoll (a European bird) were seen during the winter count in 2009



Five-minute bird counts were undertaken five times on Pomona over the past year. Counts were completed in summer, autumn, winter and spring so that variations across the seasons can be analysed. The Trust now has data from these 24 count stations over a three year period (see Figure 1). Bird numbers on the island show a clear upward trend with the biggest difference recorded in the number of kakariki, an indicator species of forest health. Particularly pleasing is the number of unbanded robins seen on the island. The birds transferred to Pomona in 2009 have now had two breeding seasons and continue to thrive on the island.

On Rona bird counts are completed once a year in summer at four baseline count stations. Bird numbers continue to increase with summer showing a record number of birds per count station.

The regeneration of vegetation on Pomona is very noticeable, with tracks in some places becoming quite overgrown. Regeneration is most noticeable in the area of the deer pen, with the fencing now almost invisible due to re-growth.

Monitoring – Pests

Deer - during 2010/11 the deer pen on Pomona has not been operational due to the age of the electronic equipment. Fortunately no evidence of deer has been found on the island. The Trust is, however, aware that deer can swim to Pomona and need to address this issue.

Possums – in June 2010 Contract Wild Animal Control Limited spent ten man days on Pomona setting over 100 leg-hold traps across the island where possum sign had been detected. The Trust is pleased to report that no sign of possums has been detected on Pomona Island. The Trust remains vigilant and is confident that the island is possum-free, but will continue to monitor the situation.

Stoats –pest numbers on the mainland adjacent to Pomona and Rona Islands have been much lower in 2010/11 than in the previous year. As a result the frequency of trap checks has been reduced accordingly. The Trust has 72 trap sites opposite Pomona and 44 on the mainland adjacent to Rona. On the mainland opposite Pomona only 10 stoats were trapped compared with 21 in the previous year. The number of stoats caught on the mainland opposite Rona at 15 was the same as the previous year. 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 regularly. Two stoats were caught on Pomona Island in May 2010 (see Table 1). This followed a beech mast year in which rat, stoat and mouse numbers were higher than usual. Whilst disappointing, the Trust is well aware that stoats can swim and the trap network on the island worked well as the pests were caught before they could do any damage. No stoats were caught on Rona which



suggests that the mainland trap network is doing its job to help keep the kiwis on the island safe from stoat predation.

Table 1: Stoat and rat trap data for 2010/11

| 2010/11 | Pomona | Rona | Pomona Mainland | Rona Mainland |
|------------------------|--------|------|-----------------|---------------|
| No times traps checked | 9 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Stoats caught | 2 | 0 | 10 | 15 |
| Rats caught | 1 | 0 | 9 | 25 |
| Mice caught | 182 | 0 | 6 | 4 |

Mice – 2010/11 has been a frustrating year for the Trust with regard to mice. Unfortunately, in spite of a huge effort by volunteers, a population of mice has re-established on Pomona. The Trust believes that its rodent eradication programme was successful, but that mice have returned to the island through swimming, taking a ride on a log raft or by taking a ride on a boat. The Trust put in a large number of mouse traps in the areas where single mice were initially found in the hope of preventing mice spreading to other areas of the island. We also placed a mouse trap inside each stoat box. This strategy appeared to work in the short term, but, over time, the mice have spread to all parts of Pomona. The advice from the New Zealand Island Eradication Advisory Group was that we should give up on the mice, however the Trust was not prepared to give up that easily. One hundred tracking tunnels were purchased and placed around the island to detect the presence or absence of mice in particular areas. Poison bait was placed inside each tunnel to try to reduce the numbers of mice. Mouse numbers did drop initially, but the Trust has now reluctantly accepted that mice are all over Pomona Island.

We are working on a strategy to keep mouse numbers at a manageable level and will be deploying more rodent motels over the coming year. Removing mice from Pomona was always considered to be ambitious. The Trust is proud of its success in eradicating mice from Pomona and is understandably disappointed that mice have been able to re-establish on the island. The Trust is now keen to help other conservation organisations get a better understanding of mouse behaviour, including how far they can swim and how quickly they colonise an area after eradication.



The Trust is pleased therefore to be assisting DOC with a DNA project to better understand these issues.

Meanwhile, Rona Island remains mouse-free. In spite of two mice returning to the island, one in 2009 and one in 2010, the Trust has succeeded in preventing them from establishing a population on Rona. In a similar operation to that on Pomona, the Trust has mouse traps in every stoat box as well as a number of bait stations across the island. We have 30 tracking tunnels on the island which are checked regularly for sign of mice. The Trust will increase the number of rodent motels on the island in its efforts to prevent any mice that do get to the island from establishing. The Trust is doing everything it can to maintain Rona as a rodent-free sanctuary.

Rats – 2010/11 has seen the first appearance of a rat on Pomona since the rodent eradication in 2007. Rat prints were initially detected inside a tracking tunnel. This prompted the Trust to

invest in a new trap line on the western flank of the island. An additional 10 tunnels were put in place containing a single DOC 150 trap capable of catching both stoats and rats. A mouse trap was also placed inside each tunnel to reduce mouse numbers. A rat was initially detected in September 2010, but was not found in a trap until November. The rat was found inside a rodent motel which is prompting the Trust to increase the number of motels on both Pomona and Rona. It is likely that the rat swam to Pomona and again shows the need to maintain a fully functioning trap network on the island as well as the adjacent mainland. Since November 2010 no further rats have been detected on Pomona and no evidence of rats has been detected on Rona.

Volunteers



Between April 2010 and March 2011 the Trust organised 44 working days. A total of 60 different volunteers completed 1340 hours work on pest monitoring on the islands and the adjacent mainland. This does 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 2010/11:

- ◆ Viv Shaw – 33 working days
- ◆ Chris Shaw – 24 working days
- ◆ John Whitehead – 23 working days
- ◆ Neil Robertson – 10 working days

All of these volunteers are also Trustees so their overall contribution to the work of the Trust is much higher.

Communications

Friends of Pomona – the Trust received income from Friends of Pomona in the form of subscriptions, donations and the sale of “restoring Pomona” T-shirts. The original sponsors of the “Friends of Pomona” scheme, the Meridian Energy Manapouri Te Anau Community Fund, has provided the finance for the transfer of mohua to Pomona Island.

Website – Trustee Chris Shaw continued to maintain and update the website during 2010/11. The website received 13426 visits over the past year, representing an increase in visits of 34% over the previous year. The website was revamped in March 2010 and is clearly having an impact.

Pomona Publicity – in 2009/10 the Trust continued to receive a high level of publicity with mentions in 38 printed articles in publications such as the Southland Times, Otago Daily Times, The Press, Southland Express, Fiordland Advocate, Fiordland Focus, and The Eye. Rona Island and the Haast kiwi made front page news in the Otago Daily Times in October 2010, as members of the Trust and DOC staff were accompanied by a reporter and photographer to catch kiwi for transfer to Orokonui Eco-sanctuary in Dunedin.

The work of the Trust featured in a number of internal organisational newsletters such as Shipshape (Real Journeys), Meridian Energy news, Southland Natural History Field Club, Fiordland Tramping and Outdoor Recreation Club. The work on the islands was also noted on a wide range of websites including Radio New Zealand, Tourism Industry Association, 100% pure New Zealand, Southland Ecological Restoration Network (SERN) and nznewsuk. In July 2010, Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, was interviewed by Cue TV on the restoration of Pomona and Rona Islands. The Trust continues to have a display and donation box at the West Arm visitor centre. Letters were received in September 2010 from the Minister of Conservation and the MP for Clutha Southland commended the Trust on its “magnificent work”.

Guest speaker – In July 2010 Viv Shaw was the invited guest speaker at Environment Southland’s annual environment awards event where she talked about the factors that can make community conservation groups successful. In April 2010 Viv Shaw and John Whitehead attended the two day SERN “Bringing back the birds” conference on Stewart Island where Viv was also an invited speaker.

Ministerial Appointments – during the last year the Minister of Conservation appointed Trust Chair, John Whitehead, and Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, to the Southland Conservation Board. Trustee Chris Shaw was appointed by the Minister to the position of Chair of the Guardians of Lakes Manapouri, Te Anau and Monowai.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Pomona Island Charitable Trust has had a year of highs and lows. The Trust has reluctantly had to accept that a population of mice has been able to re-establish itself on Pomona Island. The discovery of a rat on Pomona also caused some disquiet, but there was satisfaction in knowing that the defence network in place on the island had worked and that a population of rats has not been able to become established. Over the last five years volunteers have worked hard to make Pomona a safe haven for threatened species and the release of 42 mohua, the first threatened species, on the island was without a doubt the highlight of 2010/11 (Photo courtesy of Barry Harcourt).



There have been no pest incursions on Rona Island in 2010/11 and the island continues to impress everyone who visits. The birdlife is amazing and the presence of the Haast kiwi makes Rona a very special place.

As always 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. We look forward to your on-going support as we continue bringing back the birds to Pomona and Rona Islands.

John Whitehead
Chair
on behalf of the Trust

June 2011