

Pomona Island Charitable Trust



Annual Report

2017/18





Highlights 2017/18

- Funding secured from Kiwis for Kiwi and Meridian Power Up Fund to determine whether kiwi are breeding on Pomona
- 28 kiwi chicks on Rona thrive in a mouse-free environment
- Possible new snail genus found on Pomona
- Robin is the top bird in the annual count on Pomona
- Trust signs new ten year management agreement with DOC
- Approval granted from DOC to transfer Saddleback to Rona
- Trust hosts members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand on Pomona
- Upgrade of Trust website completed
- 855 hours worked by 32 different volunteers on 34 working days
- Income in excess of \$33,400
- In-kind donations to the value of over \$41,600

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Introduction

The focus in the past year has been on keeping rats at manageable levels on Pomona and mice at undetectable levels on Rona. For the most part the Trust has achieved its objectives, but rat numbers on the adjacent mainland have stayed higher than anticipated putting Pomona at greater risk of further incursions. Fortunately the birdlife on the island has remained good meaning that the rats have had little impact on vulnerable species. A highlight for the 2017/18 year was the robin rising to top bird in the annual count on Pomona for the first time.

Rona has played a major role in the survival of the critically endangered Haast tokoeka. The Trust's work to keep mice at undetectable levels is paying dividends, with a total of 28 juvenile kiwi have spent time on the island over the course of the 2017/18 financial year. The Trust's work with the Haast tokoeka will move to another level with the securing of funding from Kiwis for Kiwi and the Meridian Power-up Community Fund to determine whether kiwi on Pomona have started breeding. The results of this project are expected to be known later in 2018.

In August 2017, the Trust signed a new management agreement with DOC enabling us to continue its conservation work on Pomona and Rona for a further ten years. Trustees are committed to building on the work already completed and we are delighted to welcome Lynley King as our newest Trustee.

Pest eradication is an on-going challenge for the Trust and we are grateful to all of our volunteers and financial supporters for their commitment to the restoration of Pomona and Rona Islands.

Organisation

A total of three Trust meetings were held during the 2017/18 year in May and October 2017 and January 2018.

The AGM was held in May 2017 at which John Whitehead was re-elected to the position of Chair, Viv Shaw to the position of Secretary and David Fortune to the position of Treasurer. Chris Shaw, Neil Robertson, and Harry Bull continued as Trustees and, in October 2017, Lynley King became a Trustee. Alan Mark continues to be our Patron. Lindsay Wilson has worked with the Trust as its DOC Advisory Trustee.

Over the course of the year the Trust has employed the services of local contractors to service the bait station networks on Pomona and Rona. Work to cut tracks on Pomona has also been undertaken by a suitably qualified contractor.

The Trust is registered as a charitable entity under the Charities Act 2005 (CC22629). 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 Services website.

Managing the Project

In 2017/18 the project management of the restoration work on Pomona and Rona Islands was undertaken by Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, largely on a voluntary basis. Viv, through her company Topajka Shaw Consulting Limited, was contracted to provide project management for projects funded by Kiwis for Kiwi and the DOC Community Fund to protect Pomona and Rona for Haast tokoeka. In addition to the paid contract work, Viv through Topajka Shaw Consulting Limited, has donated an estimated \$21,400 in time and resources to the Trust. Chris Shaw completed an upgrade of the Trust's website on a voluntary basis. John Whitehead was contracted to undertake bait station servicing as part of the DOC Community Fund project.

Viv continues to drive the restoration work on Pomona and Rona Islands and the Trust would like to acknowledge the contribution she makes to help the Trust achieve its goals.

Relationship with DOC

On 11 August 2017 the Trust signed a new management agreement with DOC for a further ten year period to manage the restoration work on Pomona and Rona Islands and the adjacent mainland. The Trust has maintained a good working relationship with DOC staff both in Te Anau and Haast. Volunteers are grateful for the opportunities they get to assist the DOC Haast tokoeka team with kiwi on both islands.

In September 2017, the Trust was invited to participate in a biosecurity workshop for DOC staff. As part of the workshop the Trust hosted a biosecurity training exercise on Pomona. It was valuable for Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, to be able to meet with and learn from senior DOC staff responsible for biosecurity.

Funding

In the 2017/18 financial year the Trust received funding from the following sources:

Source	Purpose	Amount
Donation boxes	No specific purpose	\$560
Friends of Pomona subscriptions and donations	Pest control/eradication	\$360
Department of Conservation (Haast)	Kiwi work	\$8,000
Department of Conservation (Community Partnership Fund)	Protecting Pomona from beech mast threat	\$5,240
Kiwis for Kiwi	Kiwi breeding project on Pomona	\$10,000
Meridian Power-up Community Fund	Kiwi breeding project on Pomona	\$7,478
Interest	No specific purpose	\$1,705
Insurance refund	Administration	\$96

Over the past year, the Trust successfully applied for a number of grants. The Trust is grateful to Kiwis for Kiwi and the Meridian Power-up Community Fund for supporting its project to determine whether Haast tokoeka have started breeding on Pomona. Funding was also received from DOC's Community Partnership Fund to assist with the servicing of the bait stations on Pomona to keep rat numbers on the island at manageable levels.

In addition to the direct financial support received by the Trust, a significant amount of in-kind support has been received. In-kind support is estimated to be to the value of \$41620 and the Trust is grateful to all organisations and individuals who have supported our work in this way.

Monitoring – Pests

Stoats - this year Rona remained stoat-free which was good for the juvenile kiwi that spent time on the island. Two incursions were experienced on Pomona with a single stoat caught in April 2017 and another in March 2018 (see Table 1). Following a beech mast in 2016, the arrival of stoats on Pomona is not unexpected given that numbers on the adjacent mainland have been higher than in non-beech mast years. The timing of the stoat incursions in autumn means that any impact on the birdlife is minimal as most species have stopped breeding by this time. The number of stoats trapped on the mainland opposite both islands has been significantly higher (150%) than in the previous financial year.

The mainland trap line opposite Pomona continues to be serviced by the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron and the Trust is grateful to Ross Forrester and Paul Waymouth, for taking responsibility for checking the traps regularly.

Table 1: Stoat and rat trap data for 2017/18

2017/18	Pomona	Rona	Pomona Mainland	Rona Mainland
No. times traps checked	9	6	7	5
Stoats caught	2	0	14	11
Rats caught	28	0	39	43
Mice caught	155	23	6	2

Rats - the impacts of the 2016 beech mast are being felt on Pomona with rats still present in low numbers throughout the 2017/18 year (see Figure 1). Whilst there is evidence that rats are breeding on Pomona, the Trust is concerned that some rats may still be swimming across from the mainland where numbers have remained stubbornly high. And this in spite of an aerial 1080 operation to reduce the impacts from the beech mast. The Trust is hopeful that with our two-monthly trapping regime and the regular servicing of the bait station network that we can again reduce rats to undetectable levels on Pomona.

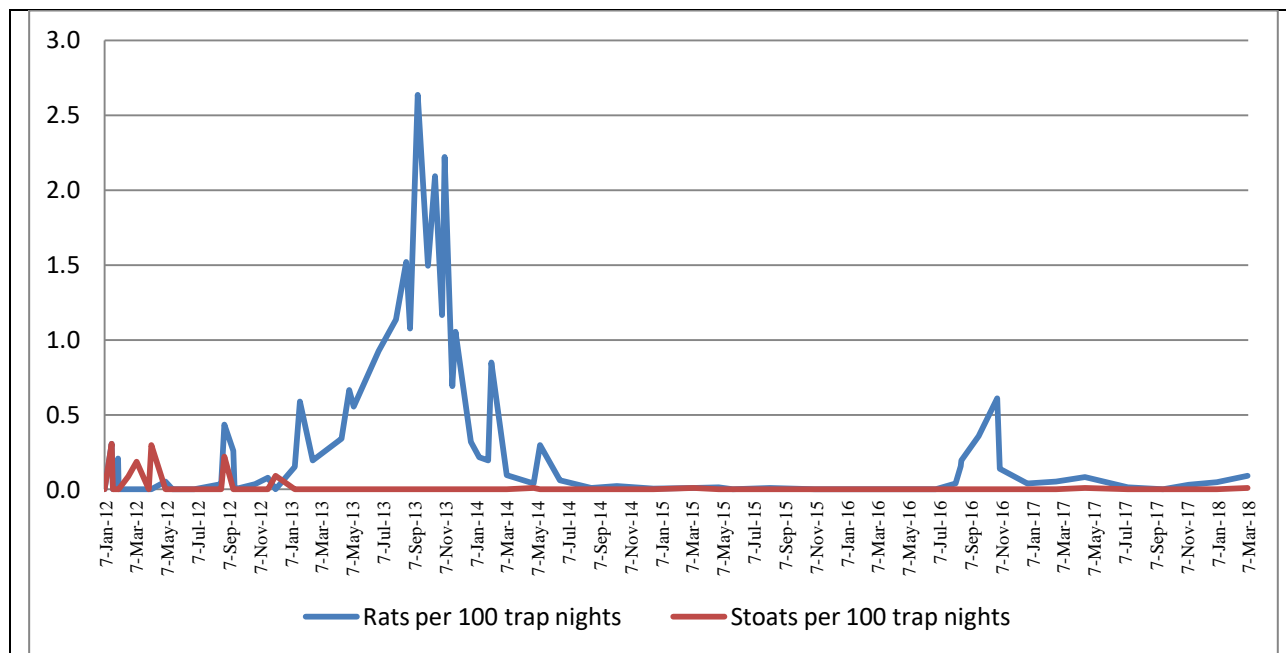


Monitoring of the birdlife suggests that the small number of rats present on the island are not having a significant impact on the birdlife (see later).

Rat numbers on the mainland opposite both islands, whilst lower than in 2016/17, have remained much higher than expected. This has put additional pressure on Pomona with possibly more rats swimming to the island than the Trust would have liked.

There have been no rat incursions on Rona during the last year.

Figure 1: Rats and stoats on Pomona per 100 trap nights (since January 2012)



Mice - over the past year the Trust has managed to keep mouse numbers at very low levels on Rona. Autumn 2017 saw a spike in mouse numbers with 19 caught in our traps across the island. Mouse prints were also detected in 28 of our tracking tunnels. A fresh deployment of a small quantity of brodifacoum in the bait station network on the island reduced the mice back to undetectable levels. With mice at such low levels on Rona the kiwi that have spent time on the island have really thrived (see later).

Monitoring

Birds - the Trust undertakes bird counts at 10 baseline count stations on Pomona and four count stations on Rona Island once a year. Figure 2 shows that the presence of low numbers of rats on the island has not had a significant impact on the birdlife.

Consistently, on Pomona the most common birds are bellbird, grey warbler, tomtit and rifleman. However the big success story for 2017 was the number of robins seen and heard during the annual count. For the first time since they were released on Pomona in 2009, robins were the top bird in the annual count (see Figure 3).



Figure 2: Abundance of birds at the ten baseline bird count stations on Pomona 2005 - 2017

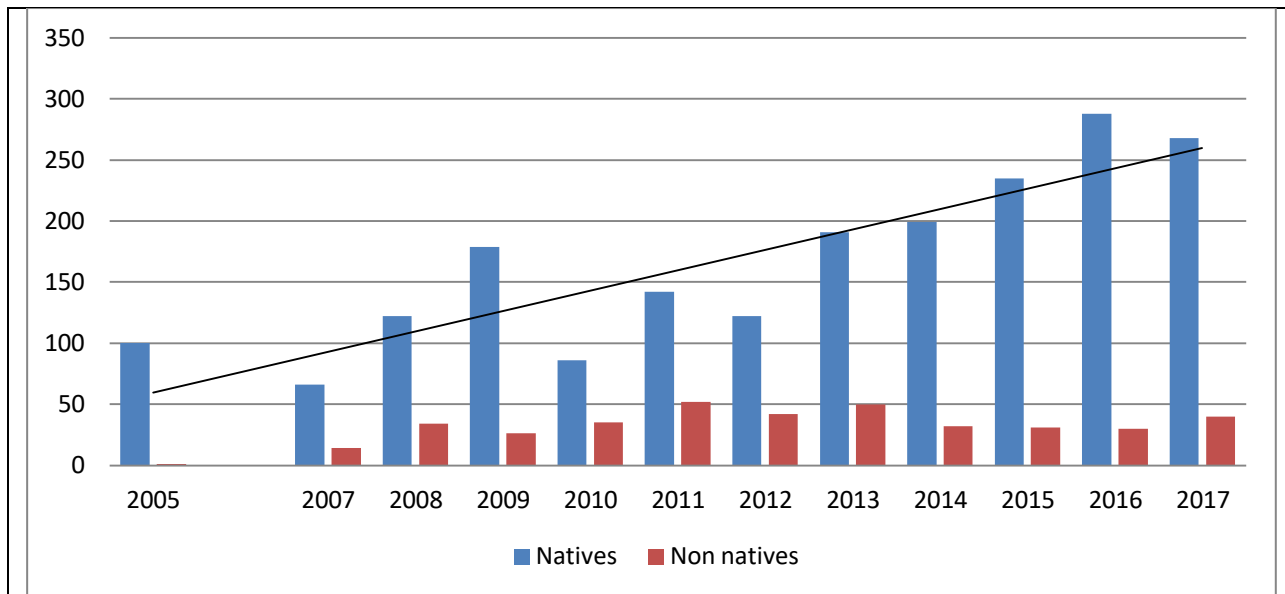
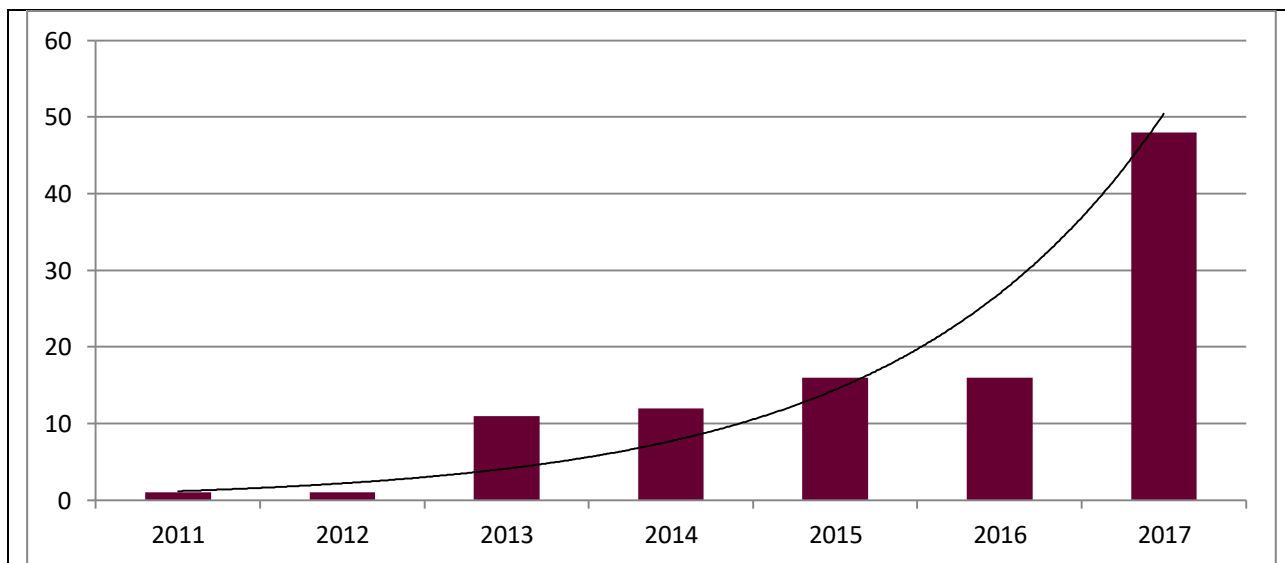


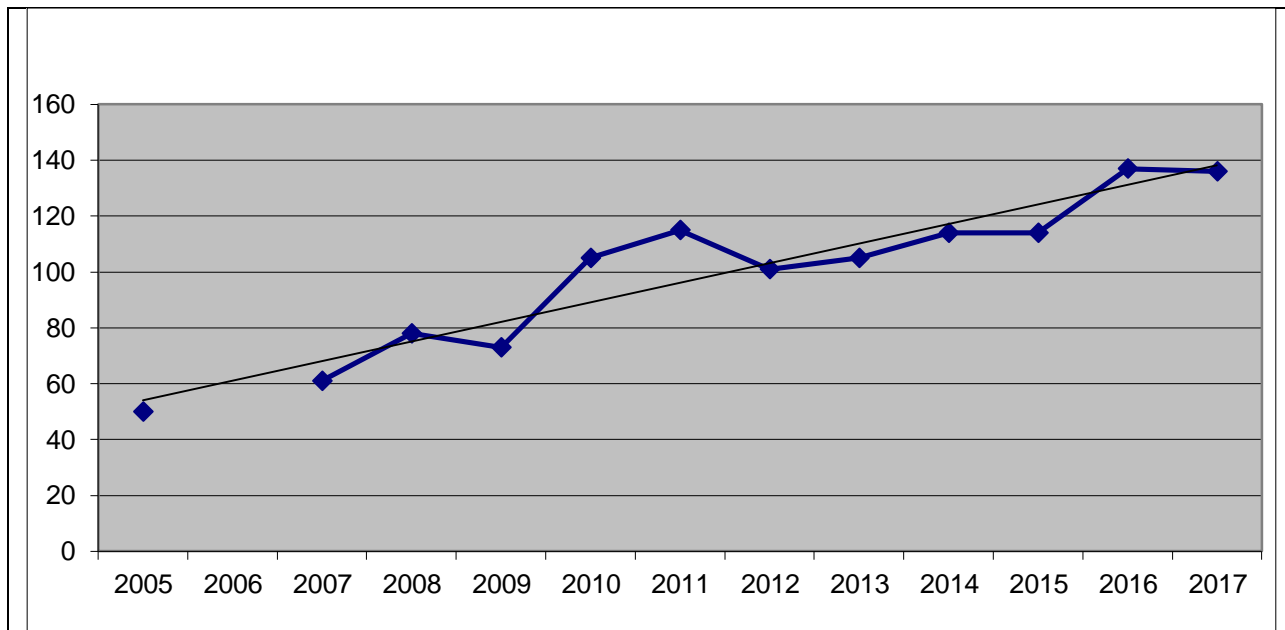
Figure 3: Robin abundance on Pomona at the ten baseline count stations



Meanwhile bird numbers on Rona in 2017 remained more or less on a par with those counted in 2016 with brown creeper, grey warbler, bellbird, rifleman and tomtit being the most common birds on the island.

In October 2017, the Trust received approval from DOC to translocate up to 60 Saddleback (tieke) From Breaksea Island to Rona with a planned release date of August/September 2018. The Trust also started work on a proposal to transfer up to 100 robins to the island.

Figure 4: Abundance of birds at the baseline count stations on Rona 2005 - 2017



Haast tokoeka - 2017/18 was a very busy year for Haast tokoeka having had all 15 kiwi from the 2015/16 breeding season spend time on Rona. As a crèche site, kiwi typically spend up to a year of their young lives on Rona before being moved to their permanent home. So in April 2017, Trust volunteers helped DOC staff to catch nine kiwi on Rona for transfer back to the sanctuary at Haast. By the end of 2017, a single bird remained on the island having lost its transmitter.



Due to change in DOC's management of the Haast tokoeka, the Trust was not expecting Rona to be used as a kiwi crèche in 2018. However, drought conditions in Haast forced DOC staff to remove kiwi chicks from the sanctuary and place them on Rona Island. Operation Nest Egg was implemented for kiwi in the Arawhata and Selborne ranges and chicks hatched through this programme also made their way to Rona. By the end of March 2018 there was a total of 13 Haast tokoeka on Rona. Having arrived on Rona in relatively poor health, the kiwi chicks have gone from strength to strength.

In 2017, the Trust received funding from Kiwis for Kiwi and the Meridian Power-up Community Fund for a project to determine whether the permanent population of Haast tokoeka on Pomona Island have started to breed. The results of this project are expected to be known in late 2018.

Vegetation - following the resurvey of the vegetation plots on Pomona and Rona in 2016/17, the data is being entered into the Landcare National Vegetation System (NVS). This will enable the Trust to analyse the changes in vegetation in the plots from the baseline data measured in 2005. The Trust would like to thank Trustee Chris Shaw for completing the data entry.

Snail - in August 2017, whilst filling the bait stations on Pomona, one of our contractors found an empty snail shell. The snail was taken to Te Papa for identification where we learnt that it could be a new species within the Rhytida genus or that it could even be a completely new

undescribed genus. The snail is a Gondwanaland species and work is currently underway to identify New Zealand snail genera with this snail discovery playing an important role in that research.

Health and Safety

As part of our new management agreement with DOC, the Trust undertook a complete review of its health and safety plan. The revised plan was formally accepted by DOC in July 2017. The Trust acknowledges the work put into the plan by Trustees Viv and Chris Shaw.

As part of the Trust's commitment to our volunteers' health and safety, in June 2017 our contractor finished cutting the last of the tracks on Pomona Island. Volunteers then completed marking the tracks with orange triangles. The Trust acknowledges the financial support from the DOC Community Fund and the Lottery Grants Board for this important work.

Volunteers

Between April 2017 and March 2018 the Trust organised 34 working days. A total of 32 different volunteers completed 855 hours work on pest monitoring on the islands and the adjacent mainland and track marking on Pomona. 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.



We would like to thank all of our volunteers over the past year and in particular those who support us year after year. In 2017/18 we have had a core of volunteers who deserve special acknowledgement for the number of working bees that they have completed on Pomona and Rona Islands and the adjacent mainland in 2017/18:

✿ Viv Shaw	22 working bees
✿ John Whitehead	18 working bees
✿ Chris Shaw	16 working bees
✿ Paul King	10 working bees
✿ Lynley King	8 working bees
✿ David Fortune	8 working bees
✿ Ross Forrester	6 working bees
✿ Sharon Lake	6 working bees
✿ Fay Edwards	5 working bees
✿ Paul Waymouth	5 working bees

Communications

OSNZ conference– in June 2017 the Ornithological Society of New Zealand held its annual conference in Te Anau. The programme included a field trip to Pomona Island for a group of participants to experience the birdlife on the island. Thanks to Trustees Neil Robertson, John Whitehead and David Fortune for helping with this event.

Pomona Publicity – in 2017/18 the Trust's work featured in articles in publications such as the Otago Daily Times, Manawatu Standard, DOC newsletters, and on the Meridian Energy website. Pomona Island also rated a mention on TV One's 6 o'clock news in an item on the Haast tokoeka. The Trust also produced two newsletters during the year - in October 2017 and March 2018.



In October 2017, DOC launched a book entitled *Conserving Fiordland's biodiversity 1987-2015: The Challenges, the achievements, the knowledge* in which the work of the Trust to restore Pomona and Rona Islands was well acknowledged.

As part of Waitangi Day celebrations in Te Anau, our Patron, Sir Alan Mark gave a talk on the *Save Manapouri Campaign* and acknowledged the work of the Trust.

In March 2018, Trustees had the opportunity to share some of the work being undertaken on Pomona and Rona with the new Minister of Conservation, Eugenie Sage.

Website – in 2017, Trustee Chris Shaw completely revamped the Trust's website providing up-to-date information on the Trust's activities as well as making the website accessible on smart phones as well as PCs.

Conclusion

Overall 2017/18 has been a good year for the Pomona Island Charitable Trust. We continue to learn from our experiences of trying to keep rat numbers at low levels on Pomona as well as from our on-going commitment to keep mice at undetectable levels on Rona. We are extremely grateful to the volunteers who help us achieve our goals and to our financial supporters for their generous assistance for our work.

**Trustees of the
Pomona Island Charitable Trust**

June 2018

