

Pomona Island Charitable Trust



Annual Report

2018/19





Highlights 2018/19

- 45 tieke (South Island saddleback) released on Rona
- tieke breed successfully on Rona
- 15 kiwi chicks on Rona thrive in a mouse-free environment
- approval granted from DOC to transfer robins to Rona
- 50 self-resetting A24 traps installed on Pomona
- six kiwi monitored on Pomona for breeding
- installation of 13 cameras across Pomona to monitor pests and kiwi
- fantastic support from volunteers during a challenging year
- 1689 hours worked by 71 different volunteers on 63 working bees on Pomona and Rona - a record!
- Income of \$26,465
- In-kind donations to the value of over \$58,300

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Introduction

The past year has been both a very challenging and a very rewarding time for the Trust. The discovery of a family of stoats on Pomona in December 2018, the low point, was balanced out by the successful translocation of tieke (South Island saddleback) from Anchor and Breaksea Islands to Rona in August and September 2018. Our thanks to the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation and DOC staff for helping making the tieke release possible.

A core team of volunteers has well and truly stepped up as the Trust worked hard to contain the stoat incursion. The number of trap checks on Pomona increased significantly and we are extremely grateful to all individuals and financial supporters who have helped us to deal with this unprecedented event.

During 2018, the Trust started a project on Pomona to determine whether the permanent population of the critically endangered Haast tokoeka on the island have started breeding. Funding was received from Kiwis for Kiwi and the Meridian Power-Up Fund and volunteers played a major role in monitoring the kiwi throughout the breeding season. Rona continued to play a major role as a crèche site for Haast tokoeka chicks, hosting all 15 kiwi hatched through Operation Nest Egg in the 2017/18 breeding season.

At the end of the year the Trust farewelled its DOC Advisory Trustee, Lindsay Wilson. Lindsay has been advising the Trust for over ten years. His pragmatic approach to conservation and his encouragement for our work has been greatly appreciated and we wish Lindsay all the best in his retirement.

The challenges and rewards presented by Pomona and Rona help to inspire the Trust and its supporters to continue the work to restore these two beautiful islands in Lake Manapouri.

Organisation

A total of four Trust meetings were held during the 2018/19 year in May, August and October 2018 and January 2019. The AGM was held in May 2018 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, Lynley King and Harry Bull continued as Trustees Alan Mark continues to be our Patron. Lindsay Wilson worked with the Trust as its DOC Advisory Trustee. 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 2018/19 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 small amount of paid contract work, Viv through Topajka Shaw Consulting Limited, has donated an estimated \$24,000 in time and resources to the Trust. 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 especially with the increased workload due to the stoat incursion and camera monitoring.

Over the course of the year the Trust has also employed the services of local contractors to service the bait station networks on Pomona and Rona, to catch kiwi and fit transmitters.

Relationship with DOC

The Trust has maintained a very good working relationship with DOC staff both in Te Anau and Haast. The Trust is sad to lose the services of Lindsay Wilson as its Te Anau-based DOC Advisory Trustee. Lindsay has attended the majority of the Trust's meetings over the past ten years and has provided valuable, pragmatic advice, whilst encouraging the Trust to make its own decisions.

A number of DOC staff in Te Anau have assisted the Trust over the past year. We would like to thank Bex Jackson for organising all of the equipment needed for the tieke translocation to Rona and Maddie van der Wetering for helping us to catch tieke on Breaksea Island. The Trust has been working with Jenny Ricketts to facilitate the transfer of robins to Rona in Autumn 2019. We are also grateful to Pete McMurtrie for his assistance in sexing the stoats trapped on Pomona.

Staff from DOC Haast have provided good input into the kiwi monitoring project and continue to provide opportunities for our volunteers to assist the DOC Haast tokoeka team with kiwi on both islands. We are grateful to DOC Haast for the temporary loan of cameras to monitor both predators and kiwi on Pomona. Thanks to Jacinda Amey for her assistance with trap checks and the installation of monitoring cameras on Pomona.

Funding

In the 2018/19 financial year the Trust received funding from the following sources:

Source	Purpose	Amount
Donation boxes	No specific purpose	\$790
Friends of Pomona subscriptions and donations (including a donation of \$1,000 from Gary Chisholm)	Pest control/eradication	\$1,806
Department of Conservation, Haast (including a contribution towards boat transport to deal with the stoat incursion)	Kiwi work	\$8,913
Department of Conservation (Community Partnership Fund)	Protecting Pomona from beech mast threat	\$1310
Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation	Tieke translocation to Rona	\$12,000
Interest	No specific purpose	\$1,646

Over the past year, the Trust successfully applied for a grant from the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation for the translocation of tieke from Breaksea to Rona Island. The Trust still has funds on hand for a further tieke transfer in Spring 2019. The final payment from a DOC Community Partnership Fund grant to assist with the servicing of the bait stations on Pomona was received. The Trust still has funds on hand from grants received in the 2017/18 financial year from Kiwis for Kiwi and the Meridian Power-Up Fund towards the kiwi monitoring project on Pomona.

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 over \$58,300 and the Trust is grateful to all organisations and individuals who have supported our work in this way.

Predator Control

Stoats - this year Rona remained stoat-free which was good for the juvenile kiwi that spent time on the island. Pomona, however, experienced an unprecedented stoat incursion with four predators trapped during a single trap check in December 2018. The frequency of trap checks was increased and by the end of January a total of 11 stoats had been caught.



With the help of volunteer, Dr Liz Scott, and DOC ranger, Pete McMurtrie it was established that ten of the stoats were juveniles and one was an adult male. It was concluded that the adult female, which had given birth to the young stoats, was still present on the island. With the assistance of DOC Haast staff and local contractor, Jane Tansell, a network of 13 cameras was placed around Pomona to detect any remaining stoats, especially the adult female. In February 2019 a stoat was photographed on camera in the middle of Pomona.

Unfortunately by the end of March the adult female stoat had still not been caught on Pomona. The effort to catch her will continue into the 2019/20 financial year.

The number of stoats trapped on the mainland opposite Pomona was down by half compared with the 2017/18 financial year (Table 1). With so few stoats caught opposite Pomona, the Trust can only conclude that it has been bad luck that such an unprecedented stoat incursion occurred on the island itself. Stoat numbers on the mainland adjacent to Rona have stayed similar to previous years.

Table 1: Stoat and rat trap data for 2018/19

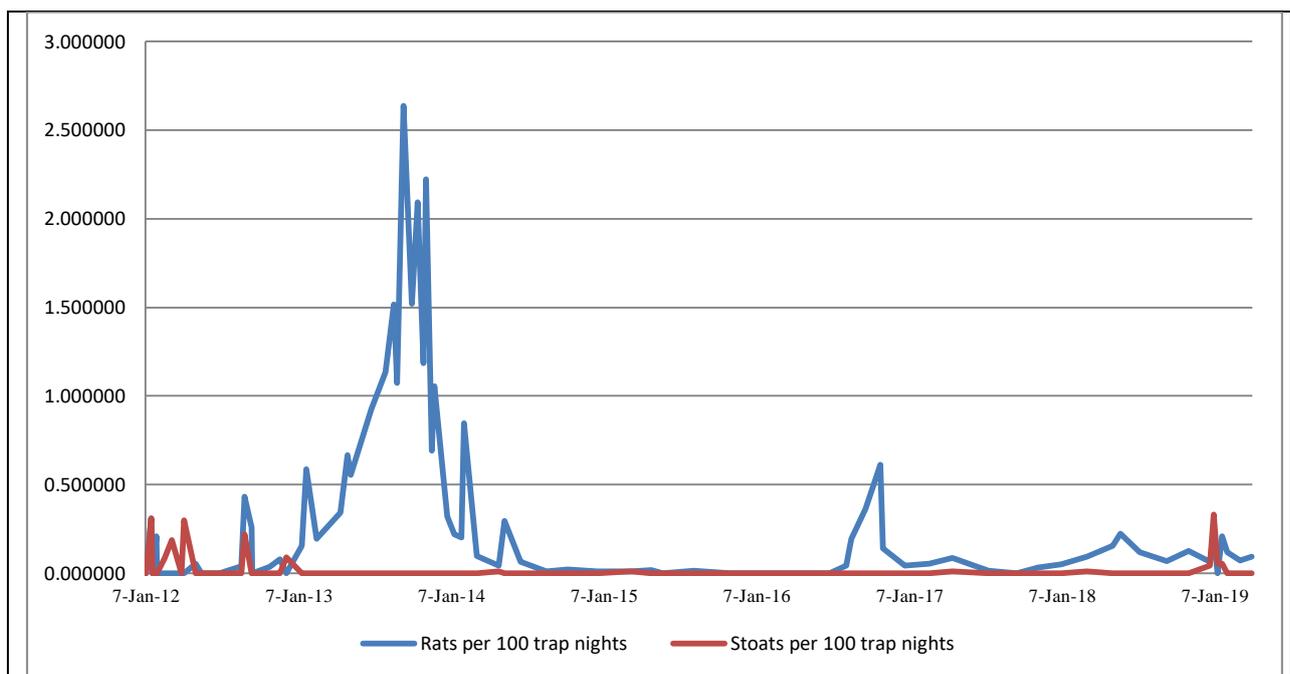
2018/19	Pomona	Rona	Pomona Mainland	Rona Mainland
No. times traps checked	19	8	5	6
Stoats caught	11	0	7	10
Rats caught	75	0	17	34
Mice caught	47	0	7	0

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.

Rats - the impacts of the 2016 beech mast are still being felt on Pomona (Figure 1). Having achieved our objective of controlling rats to undetectable levels following the 2014 beech mast, we had set ourselves the same goal following the 2016 beech mast. Unfortunately the Trust has not been able to reduce rats back to undetectable levels of Pomona - in spite of our best efforts. This means that we are heading into the 2019 beech mast with higher numbers of rats than is ideal. For this reason the Trust has started to invest in self-resetting A24 traps as an additional tool in our fight to control rats to low levels. Using the Trust's reserves and a donation from Gary Chisholm, 50 A24 traps were installed on Pomona in January 2019 (Photo: Chris Shaw). Funds for the purchase of more self-resetting traps are being pursued.



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



Rat numbers on the mainland opposite both islands have remained much higher than expected, so it is possible that re-invasion is adding to the number of rats on Pomona. No rats have been caught on Rona, however, rat prints were found on a tracking card in June 2018. At the time, brodifacoum was present in the bait station network on the island and rat droppings were found inside a bait station a few weeks later. No further evidence of rats has been found on Rona since, however the Trust is vigilant and cards are deployed permanently inside tracking tunnels on the island.

Mice - over the past year the Trust has managed to keep mouse numbers at undetectable levels on Rona. A network of 42 tracking tunnels is operational on a permanent basis and no mouse prints were found on any cards during the course of the year. In addition, no mice were caught in

the mouse traps on Rona. Mouse numbers are down on Pomona, probably because of the presence of stoats and higher numbers of rats than usual.

Haast tokoeka

Kiwi breeding on Pomona - with funding from Kiwis for Kiwi and the Meridian Energy Power-Up Fund, the Trust started a project in 2018 to monitor the Haast tokoeka on Pomona to determine whether they have started breeding. Transmitters were fitted by an approved kiwi handler to six birds - four males and two females. The transmitters emit a series of signals which were recorded by volunteers every 2-3 weeks during the breeding season (Photo: Viv Shaw). The data from the signals was analysed and graphed in order to ascertain whether a kiwi was sitting on an egg.



Of the six kiwi being monitored, two birds did not make any attempt to breed. However, the other four kiwi did spend time incubating eggs. Early on it was established that one male and one female were in fact a pair. This pair had two attempts at breeding, the first failing after approx. 50 days. The second attempt went almost the full course of incubation, but the egg did not hatch. The other two kiwi had one attempt at nesting each, with one incubation ending after 25 days and the other going almost the full course of incubation.

Unfortunately the stoat incursion on Pomona occurred during the kiwi breeding season. However, DOC staff at Haast responded immediately to prevent possible predation by stoats of any kiwi chicks hatched. Cameras were deployed at two nest sites, but it was established that neither egg had hatched. It was disappointing that there was no clear evidence of successful breeding by the Haast tokoeka on Pomona, but it was a relief that the kiwi were NOT predated by a stoat. Failure to successfully hatch an egg is very common in Haast tokoeka with the main reasons being poor incubation, damage to the egg or the egg may be infertile. The kiwi breeding project is set to continue for the 2019/20 breeding season.

The Trust is extremely grateful to the volunteers who helped monitor the kiwi and to DOC Ranger Jacinda Amey and contractor Jane Tansell for their quick response to the threat posed by stoats to the kiwi on Pomona.

Rona kiwi - throughout 2018/19 Rona continued to be used as a crèche site for the critically endangered Haast tokoeka. All of the kiwi that went through the Operation Nest Egg process during the 2017/18 breeding year (15 birds in total) spent time on Rona. As a completely predator-free island, Rona provides a really good habitat for the kiwi to grow strong and healthy. Every year in autumn the kiwi that have spent time on Rona are rounded up and taken back to their permanent home in the sanctuary at Haast. This is a great opportunity for volunteers from the community and Fiordland College to help catch the kiwi (Photos: Viv Shaw).



Tieke

In August and September 2018 the Trust achieved a major milestone with the release of 45 tieke on Rona Island. With the financial support of the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation and logistical support from DOC, the tieke were transferred from Anchor and Breaksea Islands by helicopter to Rona. The planning for the operation was started back in 2012, so to finally release the tieke on the island was a very special occasion. Trustees David Fortune and Viv Shaw had the opportunity to help catch the tieke on Breaksea and are extremely grateful to Jo Hiscock and Maddie van der Wetering for sharing their bird-catching expertise with them. The Trust was pleased that Boyd Peacock from the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation was able to help with the release (Photo: Chris Shaw).



The translocation of tieke to Rona means that these distinctive birds can now be seen in a more accessible location in Fiordland for the first time. On-going monitoring is in place to assess how well the tieke settle on the island. In March 2019, Trustee Lynley King was the first person to see a juvenile tieke, known as a Jackbird, on Rona (Photo: Lynley King). This and subsequent sightings have confirmed that the tieke have successfully bred during their first season on the island. A further translocation of tieke to Rona is planned for August 2019 to increase their chances of success in the longer term.

Robins

The Trust has approval from DOC to translocate robins from Anchor and Breaksea Islands to Rona. Poor weather delayed the operation until autumn 2020.

Monitoring

Cameras - as a direct result of the stoat incursion on Pomona, DOC Haast together with the Trust and local contractor Jane Tansell, deployed a network of cameras. A total of 13 cameras were situated right across the island with the aim of detecting the elusive adult female stoat that is likely to still be present on the island. As noted above, a stoat was photographed on one camera in February 2019. No further stoat detections have been made on camera, however, the cameras are still active.

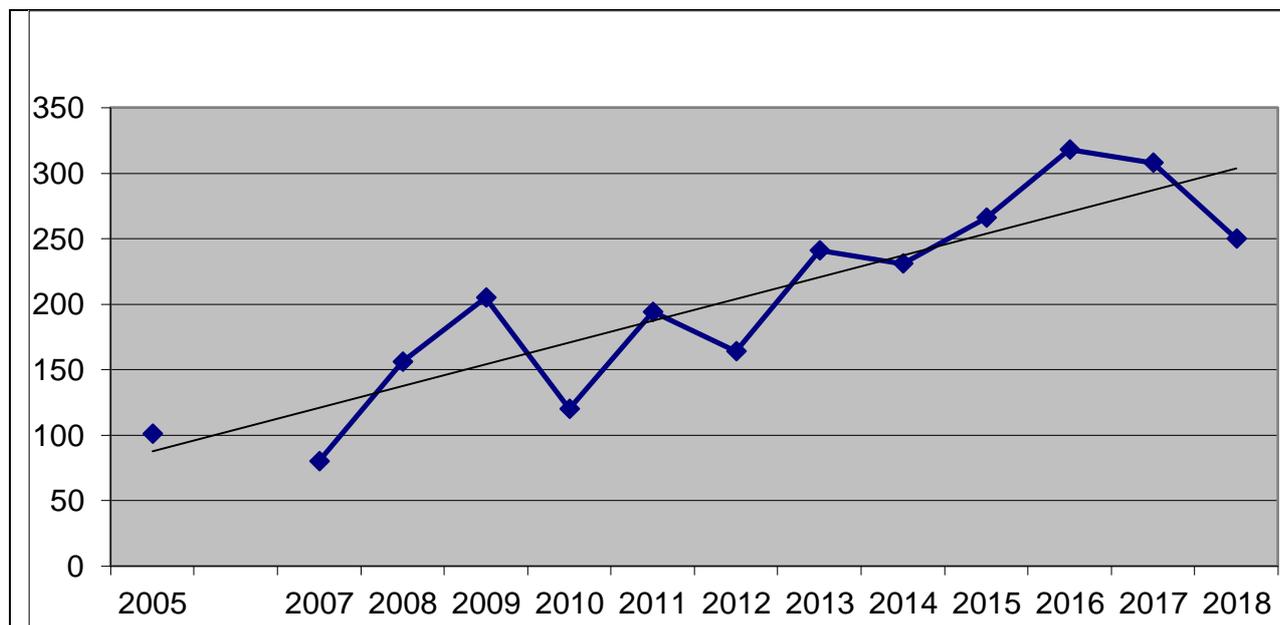
Although the main purpose of the cameras was to detect stoats, they have proven to be a very good detection tool for both rats and kiwi. By the end of March 2019, 11 of the cameras had footage showing kiwi and 12 cameras showed rat activity. The cameras have enabled the Trust, and its contractor, to target specific areas of the island to be able to add new kiwi males to the kiwi breeding project for 2019/20. They have also enabled us to determine where best to place the self-resetting traps for best effect.



The Trust thanks DOC Haast for the temporary loan of the cameras, until we are in a position to buy our own. We are grateful to Jacinda Amey, Jane Tansell, Paul King and Sharon Lake for their deployment and to Viv Shaw for the analysis of the camera footage.

Bird counts - annual bird counts are undertaken on both Pomona and Rona in summer. The count on Pomona showed a decrease of 18.8% in the number of birds seen and heard in December 2018 compared to the previous year (Figure 2). This could be due to the unprecedented stoat incursion on the island and the higher number of rats present. The Trust continues to monitor vulnerable birds such as mohua and robins. Both species appear to be surviving well, however the Trust is planning to undertake a more formal survey of these and other bird species.

Figure 2: Abundance of birds at the ten baseline count stations on Pomona

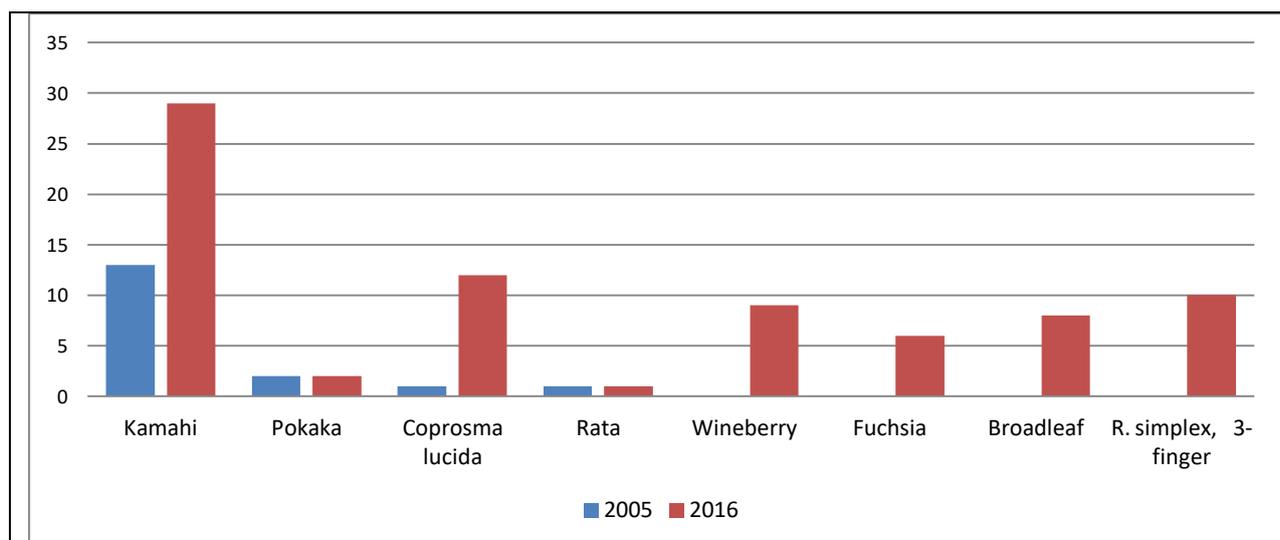


Geckos - over the course of 2018/19 there have been a number of gecko sightings on Rona (Photo: Lynley King). The mouse-free status of the island has helped boost the population of this cryptic species. The geckos have been identified as *Woodworthia* 'Otago large' and, according to herpetologist Tony Jewel, the sightings on Rona are the first time this particular species has been found West of the Waiiau River.



Vegetation plots - over the course of the past year, Trustee Chris Shaw has entered the vegetation plot data from the surveys undertaken in 2005 and 2016/17 into the Landcare National Vegetation Survey (NVS) database. Early analysis shows that the changes in vegetation on Pomona are significant. The removal of deer and possums has had a major impact on plant species such as wineberry, fuchsia, broadleaf, *R. simplex*, 3-finger, kamahi and coprosma Lucida (Figure 3). Further analysis of the data from both Pomona and Rona is planned for 2019/20.

Figure 3: Sapling counts at the five vegetation plots on Pomona



Health and Safety

The Trust takes the health and safety of its volunteers seriously. The Trust has applied to the DOC Community Fund to upgrade the batteries in its radios and to purchase new radios to cope with increasing numbers of volunteers attending working bees on the islands. At the end of the 2018/19 financial year, the Trust was still awaiting a decision on its application.

Volunteers

Over the past year volunteers have put in a record number of hours on Pomona and Rona Islands and the adjacent mainland. Between April 2018 and March 2019 the Trust organised 63 working days and a total of 71 different volunteers completed 1689.5 hours work on predator control and bird monitoring. Volunteers this year included the Meridian Energy Hydro Assets Management Team (Photo: Viv Shaw).



Our volunteers have stepped up over the past year not only to help monitor whether the kiwi on Pomona have started breeding but also to help the Trust respond to the unprecedented stoat incursion on the island. We would like to say a BIG thank you to all of our volunteers over the past year and in particular those who support us year after year. In 2018/19 we have had an amazing core of volunteers who deserve special mention for the number of working bees that they have completed on Pomona and Rona Islands and the adjacent mainland:

🌿 Viv Shaw	40 working bees	🌿 Fay Edwards	18 working bees
🌿 Chris Shaw	29 working bees	🌿 Sharon Lake	15 working bees
🌿 John Whitehead	28 working bees	🌿 Liz Scott	7 working bees
🌿 Paul King	22 working bees	🌿 Ross Forrester	5 working bees
🌿 Lynley King	19 working bees	🌿 Paul Waymouth	5 working bees
🌿 David Fortune	18 working bees	🌿 Shawn Heron	5 working bees



The record number of hours spent on working bees does not include the work that goes on behind the scenes. In 2018/19 a significant amount of work has gone into reviewing the camera footage and our thanks for this go to Viv Shaw, David Fortune and Sharon Lake. We acknowledge Paul King's work to set up cameras on Pomona and Chris Shaw's work to enter all of the Trust's vegetation plot data into the National Vegetation Survey database.

Special thanks go to Liz Scott for volunteering to dissect the stoats trapped on Pomona to help determine their age and gender. On top of all of this a significant amount of volunteer time and effort goes into the administration of the Trust as well as the time devoted by Trustees to meetings and the preparation of written documentation.

Communications

Pomona Publicity – in 2018/19 the Trust's work featured in articles in publications such as the Southland Times and the Stuff website, Advocate South, Predator Free 2050 newsletter, EnviroSouth and DOC newsletters. Due to the heavy workload on the islands, the Trust only produced one newsletter in October 2018. In February the Trust hosted a group from the Otago-Southland Regional Embroiderers on Pomona to help them get creative ideas for their needlework (Photo: Viv Shaw).



West Arm display - in September 2018, the Trust's display panel at the West Arm visitor centre was completely revamped. The donation box with the display is a valuable source of income for the Trust.

Kiwi hui – in June 2018 Trustees Viv Shaw and Chris Shaw attended the National Kiwi Hui at Living Springs at which Viv presented an overview of the kiwi work on both Pomona and Rona. The hui was a good opportunity to network with kiwi professionals and a site visit to ZIP (Zero Invasive Predators) at Lincoln provided useful insights into predator behaviours and pest control methods.

Conclusion

Overall 2018/19 has been a year of highs and lows for the Pomona Island Charitable Trust. The discovery of so many stoats on Pomona was definitely the low point, but this has been balanced out by so many highs. The release of tieke on Rona was a significant highlight, as was the fact they have started breeding successfully on the island. The Trust was pleased to be able to monitor the kiwi breeding cycle of six Haast tokoeka on Pomona. Given the stoat incursion, the inability of the kiwi to successfully hatch an egg meant at least that stoats could not predate their

chicks. The additional monitoring in place on Pomona is providing new insights into both the behaviour of native species such as kiwi and predators such as rats. Their use will be able to guide our predator control activities in the future.

Finally, the Trust would not be able to achieve its goals without the support of our volunteers and financial supporters. We thank you all for stepping up when we really needed you. The Trust is in a good position with such a strong core group of volunteers to continue its restoration of Pomona and Rona Islands, whatever nature throws at us!

**Trustees of the
Pomona Island Charitable Trust**

June 2019

