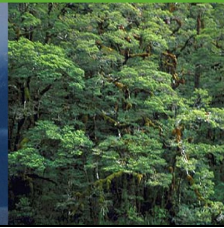
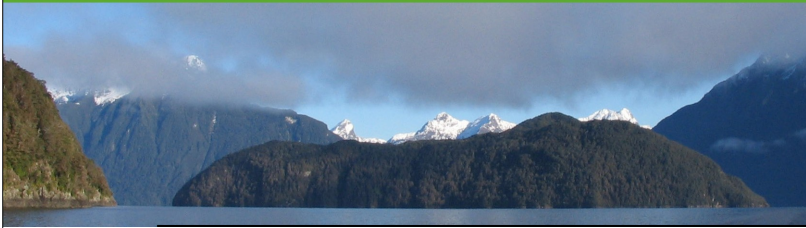


Pomona Post



December 2011



Pomona home to eight kiwis

Eight critically endangered Haast Tokoeka kiwis are settling into their new permanent home on Pomona Island. Thanks to Meridian Energy, over 30 people, ranging in age from four to seventy, were able to get a good close-up view of a kiwi. Through the use of the company's boat, Mararoa, the Trust was able to make the kiwi release on Pomona a real community event.

However, before the kiwis could be transferred to their new home on Lake Manapouri, they had to be found. On the morning of the planned release, a team of three DOC staff and two Trustees from the Pomona Island Charitable Trust travelled to Centre Island on Lake Te Anau. Their job was to catch the kiwis before the boat was due to depart Manapouri late in the afternoon. No pressure guys!!

On arrival at Centre Island, the DOC staff handed Trustees John Whitehead and Viv Shaw an aerial and a TR4 (the receiver that picks up the beeps from the kiwis' transmitters) and said "go find a kiwi". It was now time to put into practice all of the training the pair had received over recent months.

John takes up the story. "Fortunately we picked up a signal from a kiwi as soon as we landed on the island and it was quite close. Viv homed in on the bird with the aerial and TR4 until we were within five meters of it. We were petrified that it was going to do a runner on us, so we slowly inched our way towards the kiwi trying very hard to be as quiet as possible. I put my hand in the hole and managed to grab the bird's legs before gently pulling it out of its hiding place. We'd got our first kiwi for Pomona".



First kiwi destined for Pomona Island (Photo: Viv Shaw)

Catching the other kiwis on Centre Island proved to be easier than we had expected and we were back in Te Anau with time to spare. "With so many people invited to the kiwi release on Pomona, we were very relieved to have caught our birds" said John.

All birds destined for Pomona were fitted with new transmitters. Three volunteers were given the opportunity to hold a kiwi whilst the transmitters were changed. This gave people the opportunity to get a good look at the kiwis. Four year old Jasper Carter was fascinated by the kiwis noticing that "they've got really big feet"!

Safely back in their boxes, the kiwi were taken on the 20 minute journey to Pomona Island. As we travelled across Lake Manapouri, Trust Secretary, Viv Shaw, asked volunteers if they would like to release a kiwi on the island. In typical understated teenager style, two students from Fiordland College, Nicholas Humphreys and Isaac Bell, said "Yeah, OK" when asked to release a bird each. After the event, their parents told us that they were positively buzzing.



Kiwi being released on Pomona Island (Photo: Barry Harcourt)



Phoebe Shaw releasing the first kiwi on Pomona Island (Photo: Viv Shaw)

The honour of releasing the first kiwi on Pomona went to Phoebe Shaw, daughter of current Trustee Hunter Shaw. Phoebe is also the niece of founding Trustees Lance and Ruth Shaw who were the initial drivers behind the move to restore Pomona Island. "It was really awesome to release the first kiwi on Pomona" said Phoebe and that excitement can be clearly seen in the photo.

Kiwis settle into new home

In most cases the kiwis were happy to disappear down the hole that has been carefully selected for them. However, the kiwi released by Isaac didn't like its hole and, after sitting for a while outside the hole, it scurried off into the bush. This gave everyone a really good chance to see a kiwi in its natural habitat.

Neil Freer, Haast kiwi Team Leader, was really impressed with the way that everyone behaved around the birds. "It is always good to see people's reactions when kiwi are released. But it is also good to see that everyone respects the needs of the birds allowing them the space to disappear off into the bush."

Over time the kiwis will disperse across the island. "After three to four years they will pair up and start to produce off-

spring" explains Neil. "The chicks will then be transferred back to the kiwi sanctuary at Haast to supplement the population there".

Heading back on the boat to Manapouri on dusk, everyone had the opportunity to reflect on their own kiwi experience. Ross and Steph Forrester from the Southland Trailer Yacht Squadron, who maintain the stoat trap network on the mainland opposite Pomona, said "we wouldn't have missed the release for the world".

Neil Freer, Haast kiwi Team Leader, said that "this is the one of the best organised kiwi releases that I have attended". He also complimented the Trust on "its hard work to rid the island of rats and stoats to make a safe haven for this critically endangered bird".

Thank you

The Trust would like to thank everyone who helped us to achieve this major milestone. "We'd like to thank DOC for entrusting these special birds into our care" said John Whitehead. "We'd also like to thank the DOC staff, in particular Hannah, Blair and Neil, who we have worked with on the kiwi project over the past couple of years". A special thanks

goes to Meridian Energy. The use of their boat, Mararoa, meant that more people could be a part of the kiwi release on Pomona. A particularly big thank you goes to all of the volunteers and benefactors who have supported the Pomona Island Charitable Trust and helped us achieve our goals.

Elusive kiwis evade detection

The Trust has committed to monitoring the kiwi over the next couple of years. This involves using an aerial and TR4 to check that the birds are still alive and to record the area in which the birds are living. Following the release, the Trust agreed to check on the birds once a week for the first month.

A week after the release, Trustees went to the island to "beep" the birds. Of the eight kiwi now living on Pomona we only managed to pick up signals from six. All birds were alive and some had moved quite a distance from where they were released. A week later only four birds could be located and a week after that only three. "We were beginning to get a bit concerned" said Viv Shaw. "We'd been entrusted with eight kiwi and after three weeks on the island we could only track down three of them".

Pomona Island though is a large island with lots of nooks and crannies and places for kiwis to evade detection from a boat. So, a month after their release,



Ruth Shaw with a kiwi destined for Pomona Island with Fiordland College students Isaac Bell and Nicholas Humphries looking on (Photo: Barry Harcourt)

volunteers spent a day on the island "beeping" the kiwi. "We were delighted and relieved to find all eight birds alive and well" said Viv.

After six months, the transmitters will need to be changed. Whilst DOC will take responsibility for this, volunteers from the Trust will be able to accompany DOC staff. "Having had experience of tracking kiwi on Rona, which is much smaller, finding the birds on Pomona will be much more challenging" said Trust Chair, John Whitehead. We will let you know how the kiwis on Pomona are getting on.

The Trust received some excellent publicity on the kiwi release, including Viv being interviewed for the Radio New Zealand Checkpoint programme. Thanks to Barry Harcourt's amazing photography, the kiwis made the front page of the Southland Times and also made it into the Christchurch Press. CUE TV shot some amazing footage of the release which we now have in our archives.

Rona kiwis not so elusive

Meanwhile, three of the four kiwis still on Rona, have finally been tracked down. Having lost their transmitters, some of these birds have been on the island for over two years. A team, complete with a trained kiwi dog, spent a couple of days on the island earlier this month. These elusive kiwis now have transmitters on and, early in the new year, will be transferred to their new permanent homes. We are hoping that two of them may join their fellow kiwis on Pomona. In 2012 more kiwis will be moved to Pomona to increase the population to 16 birds.

Wait, there's more

As if releasing kiwis on Pomona was not exciting enough, the Trust has experienced another first this year. During a routine trap check on Rona Island this month, Trust Chair John Whitehead had a most unusual find. On inspecting a rodent motel for pests, John found something inside a mouse trap. Suspecting



A live gecko recently found on Rona Island (Photo: Viv Shaw)

the worst, he was very surprised, on close inspection, to find that he had trapped a gecko. Sadly the gecko was dead, but shortly afterwards, in another rodent motel, John found a live specimen. "I couldn't believe what I saw" said John. At a Trust meeting only three days before the find, we had been discussing the possibility of transferring lizards to Rona. "To then find not one, but two, geckos on the island was incredible" continued John.

The geckos were both found inside new motels which had only been deployed in September. Thanks to a donation from Gary Chisholm for the motels, we now know that we have a gecko population on Rona. James Reardon, a herpetologist working for DOC, tells us that our live

gecko is most likely a female *Wordworthia* 'Otago large' common gecko. We will profile our latest island residents in the next edition of Pomona Post.

Helping hands and ears

Towards the end of 2011, the Trust was fortunate to be able to call on the services of some of the students at Fiordland College to help us with our regular bird counts on Pomona. Back in May, a number of College students completed DOC's 5-minute bird count course and were in need of some field practice. Four lads spent a day on Pomona in November alongside four regular volunteers. Their younger ears were quickly attuned to the different bird calls and they were



College students with regular volunteers at the end of the bird count on Pomona (Photo: Viv Shaw)

valuable members of the team on the day. We are hoping that more College students will help us with the bird counts in the future. Next time though we'll need to provide more biscuits at the end of the day so that the rest of us have a look in!

Highlights of 2011

2011 has been a phenomenal year for the Trust. Two threatened species have been translocated to Pomona this year. February saw the release of 42 mohua on the island followed by eight Haast tokoeka kiwi in October.

In June the Trust was joint winner of a Green Ribbon Award from the Ministry for the Environment for "protecting our

biodiversity". And just when we thought it couldn't get any better, we found geckos on Rona for the first time.

Thank you to everyone who has helped the Trust have such a successful year.

A very merry Christmas from us all at the Pomona Island Charitable Trust.