

# Newsletter of the South West New Zealand Endangered Species Trust

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Above: Kiwi tracks on a Coal Island beach

Photo: Hannah Edmonds, DOC

## Checking-up on Coal Island Kiwi By David Timmerman-Vaughn

From 14th-17th June DOC staff from Te Anau and Haast (along with 2 kiwi tracking dogs), 2 trustees and 2 volunteers, travelled to Coal Island on board the DOC boat Southern Winds.

The first task was to locate and catch each of the 7 Haast Tokoeka kiwi which had been released on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009. Each kiwi's transmitter would then be changed from one leg to the other and their general health and weight recorded.

The 6 male and 1 female kiwi, located over 2 days, were within 2km of their initial release area close to Moonlight Point. The general health of all kiwi was very good, with excellent weight gains (The male kiwi all weighed at least 2kg and the female 2.75kg).

The other task was starting to monitor to see if mice eradication had been successful, after poisoning which was completed in August 2008.

Tracking tunnels and mouse traps, each baited with peanut butter, were placed at alternate trap stations on Coal Island and the grassed areas between Moonlight Point and Sandfly Point. Tracking tunnels were also placed by trap stations on Steep-to, Round and Weka Islands. These traps were then checked 1-2 days later and no mice were caught or mice tracks observed in the tracking tunnels. There were also no stoats in any traps.

### In this edition....

- Coal Island Southern Winds Trip
- Southland Tramping Club on Coal Island

## Bomb Disposal on Coal Island By Ian Buick

Ray Willett and I joined Skipper Pete Young, Ali Hay (crew), Hannah Edmonds, Lindsay Wilson, Jane Tansell, Blair Hoult, Jeff Rawles, Frans Dellebeke and 2 sniffer dogs from DoC along with volunteers Steve Norris and Dave Timmerman-Vaughn. The trip down was very rough into a very strong SW and resulted in 2 of the ships compliment (no names, no pack drill) being quite ill by the time we reached Breaksea. Pete decided to go 'inside' down the Acheron Passage and park up at Cascade Cove for the night. It was a good decision as whilst the sea had settled a bit it was still pretty exciting getting around Cape Providence and Gulches Head the following morning. But this did mean we arrived a bit late and we only got to work a bit before midday.

Ray and I had the task of placing a baited mousetrap in alternate stoat traps and at selected others a rodent tunnel with a track strip baited with peanut butter. We got the Otago Retreat track done on day 1 and along with Frans, Pratts track on day 2 while Lindsay and Steve did Johans track. Meantime a team had a look at Steep-to Island and 2 teams with dogs and tracking gear set about finding the tokoeka and checking their condition. The Kiwi teams found all 7 birds and they are doing fine. As the forecast was for strengthening NW later on Thursday rising to gale force on Friday Pete again made the good call to bolt north Thursday afternoon so we departed midday and again went 'inside' at Dusky. We missed on getting any planned track maintenance done but achieved all the important stuff. The island is looking great with plenty of birds and no sign of stoats, mice or deer although anecdotal evidence suggests a deer was seen on the west side of the island earlier in the year. We noted that the many wallows near the tracks have not been used this last rut and saw no definite sign of deer so maybe a lone stag visited and left. Keep fingers crossed, especially for mice.

Something that all would have loved to see was Ray's reaction when one of the 'hair-trigger' mouse traps went off as he was carefully placing it inside a stoat trap. There's not much room in there and when he 'twitched' as the mousetrap went off he bumped the stoat trap which also went off almost sending Ray through the forest canopy to the great delight of yours truly. Ray should have been a bomb disposal man. By the end of the job his nerves were in tatters, not helped much by my shouting bang occasionally.

## Southland Tramping Club Volunteers on Coal Island

By Anne McDermott

After visiting Preservation by boat some 15 years ago I leapt at the chance to explore the area on foot and on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May some more members of the Southland Tramping Club had the opportunity to participate in checking and rebaiting the stoat traps on Coal Island and along the coast of the mainland. Five of us and Team Leader Dion Matheson clambered aboard the helicopter at Orawia and headed to the Oil Store to drop off some stores and a supply of eggs before heading over to Coal Island, where we divided into teams of two to check the traps. Denise and I checked Johans track traps and found nothing, while Jenne and Elizabeth checked Otago Retreat Track and found all the traps empty of stoats but they did find some eggs with messages and names written on them from the previous STC members who had been there in February, while Dion and Andrew checked Pratts Track and found one stoat unlucky enough to wander into a traps. John arrived in the boat to pick us up for a cool ride across to Preservation Lodge where our packs had been dropped off by Dale Green of Alpine South West.

Day 2 was quite challenging as we walked along the track from Cromarty to the Morning Star Mine and down to the beach and Te Oneroa Biv where we stopped for a late smoko after despatching a couple of stoats and a rat. From here things got more interesting as we rock hopped, passed packs round headlands, slid through an archway in the rocks and got caught by the tide, which saw most of us wet to the waist. Just when we thought the end was in sight (we could see the Oil Store) Dion informed us he had one more surprise in store, a climb straight up round the last headland and along the ridge before dropping down to the Oil Store. More stoats were caught in the traps on the ridge. The water tank at the Oil Store had a hole in the bottom so it was another walk for the boys as they filled billies and bladders with water for cooking and drinking.

Day 3 day was quite relaxing with a late start before we walked to Sealers Beach and on to the Puysegur Lighthouse where the weather was kind enough to allow us to sit and watch the waves crashing while we ate lunch. People from the Milford Wanderer had been along the track the day before and had got one stoat out of a trap and reset it so all had to do was put in a new egg in the hope of catching another stoat before it headed across to Coal Is.

Day 4 was up early and heading along the ridge to Observation Point replacing eggs as we went. After a lunch stop we headed down to the Alpha Mine and explored the relics and wondered at the lure of gold that made men lug all that heavy machinery into such a place. After returning to the ridge Jenne and I headed down, down and more down to Morning Star Mine and along the track to Powells Beach where we saw the Lodge boat going past and at the last minute the observers (Mary) saw us and offered two tired trampers a lift. The other stayed on the ridge and headed back that way via two different routes with us all arriving back at the Lodge about the same time.

The next two were cruisy with some going fishing, walking through to Revolver Bay, checking out the large Rhododendron bushes, boiler in the bush, and one last walk with an egg over to Docherty's Island and the last trap. Thanks to Dion for being an awesome trip leader. Our thanks also goes to Mary and John at Kisbee Lodge for being so welcoming and sharing their crayfish and blue cod with us.



*Left: Negotiating a difficult section of the mainland trapline*

*Photo: Anne McDermott*

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