

Newsletter of the South West New Zealand Endangered Species Trust



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www.tepukahereka.org.nz

Our Mission

“To fund and establish a world class sanctuary on Te Puka-Hereka for rare and endangered native species of flora and fauna that will be jointly developed by private philanthropists and government participants.”

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The remotest mainland lighthouse

Right: Sunset over Coal Island. Hopefully the sun will soon set on the island's mouse population.

Photo: Don Goodhue



The May volunteer trip found no stoats on Coal Island. Eighteen stoats were found in mainland traps. Since December 2006, there have been 68 stoats trapped on the mainland and 4 on Coal Island

Mouse Eradication Update

Since the last newsletter work has continued on preparation for the mouse eradication project.

The eradication of mice from Coal Island is the last step in what has been a 3 year project to rid the island of introduced pest species. This started in 2005 with the initial “knock-down” of the stoat population and has been followed with maintenance stoat trapping and a deer culling program. While the impact of pests such as stoats and deer on the island were obvious, the impact of mice, while not as obvious is significant. Mice survive on a diet of insects, fruit and plant seeds, all of which are necessary components of the island's ecosystem.

A major milestone in the preparation for the mouse eradication was reached in early May when the Trust obtained resource consent. Since then planning has continued on the operational aspects of the project and the ordering of bait for the operation to commence on or after the 1st of July. The eradication involves two aerial applications of cereal pellets which have been treated with Brodifacoum toxin. Readers may be familiar with Brodifacoum in its more common form as “Talon” or “Pestoff”.

In late June the bait will be shipped to Coal Island where it will be stored at Moonlight Point ready for the first suitable period of weather for the application of the bait. Ideal conditions include dry ground conditions, calm and dry weather conditions on the day of the application and a forecast of fine, dry weather for the following 3 days. A second bait application will take place a minimum of 7 days after the first. The application of bait will be tracked and recorded using differential GPS.

Because it is critical that the stored bait remains dry and undamaged volunteers will camp at the Moonlight Point bivvy and carry out regular checks of the bait and packaging from the time the bait is unloaded until the completion of the second bait application. Other volunteers will fly in to assist with the loading of bait for each of the aerial applications.

Like many pest management projects, the success of the mouse eradication will not be immediately known. The Trust will need to monitor then island for 2 years after the bait application and if at that time, there is no sign of mice on the island, the project will be successfully completed.

[BY TELEGRAPH.]
[UNITED PRESS ASSOCIATION.]
INVERCARGILL, THIS DAY.
The steamer Invercargill returned from Preservation Inlet this morning, having made the home trip in eight hours. She left 14 passengers, making, with those already at the locality, 41. Gold is got on the Coal Island, in the mouth of the Inlet. Six claims have been taken up, but the precious metals are also found on the mainland. Some good results have already been obtained, and those in the secret allege that a promising quartz reef has also been discovered.

From the Evening Post, 15 March 1890. Courtesy National Library “Papers Past” website

Puysegur Point New Zealand's Remotest Mainland Lighthouse

While many New Zealanders may not know where Preservation Inlet is, many have heard of Puysegur Point—its lighthouse and extreme weather.

Standing guard over the southern approach to Preservation Inlet, the Puysegur Point lighthouse was first lit on the 1st of March, 1879. The settlement that was established to support the operation of the lighthouse was continuously occupied until the lighthouse was closed in the 1980's. An automated light was installed on Windsor Point, a few kilometers to the east of Puysegur Point but this was later closed and the Puysegur light re-commissioned as an automated light.

In 1871, HMS Clio with the governor Sir George Bowen on board was holed after hitting an uncharted rock near Bligh Sound. As a result of this and the increase in shipping movements, a suitable site was needed for a lighthouse to mark the western approach to Fouveau Strait. By 1874 a site had been found at Puysegur Point with reasonable access from Preservation Inlet. Work on building the lighthouse, access road and settlement buildings started in 1875. This original lighthouse was a timber structure around 13 metres high. The first lighthouse settlement was located close to the end of the point near the lighthouse.

Access to the settlement was via a road from the landing just inside the southern entrance to Preservation Inlet. Supplies were landed and stored at what is still referred to as the "Oil Store". (This name comes from the days before electricity when the light was lit with lamp oil). The Oil Store building remains and is used for an overnight stay by volunteers checking the mainland trap line. Close to the Oil Store a small cemetery is testament to the hardships of early life at the lighthouse and the sometime treacherous conditions for landing boats.

There are a couple of interesting connections between Coal Island and the Puysegur Point lighthouse. The first came about in 1886 when assistant lighthouse keeper Philip Payne started prospecting for gold on Coal Island. This prospecting eventually led to the Coal Island gold rush and Philip Payne quit the lighthouse service to pursue his interest in gold.

By the early 1900's the fortunes of Coal Island gold had largely been won but the island continued to attract the occasional itinerant prospector and visitor. In 1942, the island had become home to a former psychiatric hospital patient. Not happy with the continued flashing of the light that could be seen from his hut on the island, he set fire to the lighthouse, completely destroying it. Despite the fact that there was a war on, the lighthouse was quickly replaced with a short tower that had been earlier removed from Godley Head near Christchurch. At the same time a generator was

installed to power the light and provide electricity to the settlement.

Before it closed, the settlement was home to 3 families. Today, apart from the lighthouse, an automatic weather station and one other building, all that remain are piles of concrete rubble slowly being covered by scrub and flax.

The lighthouse is a 40 minute walk from the Oil Store landing in Otago Retreat. There are 7 trap stations on the walk between the Oil Store and Diggers Creek.



*Above: Lighthouse settlement in 1973.
Photo: Jon Lindqvist*

*Below: Photo taken from the same place in 2006.
Photo: Don Goodhue*



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