

Newsletter of the South West New Zealand Endangered Species Trust



No 5, April 2006

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.”

In this edition....

- **Bivvy erected on Coal Island**

- **Red deer population assessed**

Hunt South gives a read on the deer population

- **Five minutes and counting**

Bird population assessed



Right:

Up goes the bivvy, one step at a time. Walls, floor then roof.

Photos: Rex Pratt

Bivvy Erected on Coal Island

In the last newsletter we ran a story on the “Portacom” provided to the Trust by Arrow International. Well, there is now more to that story.....

Late last year the Trust was donated another bivvy to use instead of the Portacom. After some maintenance work in Tuatapere, this bivvy was flown into Coal Island in kitset form. A suitable site had been found near Moonlight Point during the track-cutting work in February 2005. In late January, volunteers Don Goodhue and Rex Pratt along with Trustee Wayne Pratt spent 2 days on Coal Island assembling the bivvy.

Sitting in a pile on-site the pre-fabricated walls and roof looked quite flimsy and rather complicated. However, once the piles were in the ground assembly was simple. The structure consists of a number of steel-framed panels with sheet metal covering which were bolted together. Once the four walls were up the floor was inserted and then the roof put on.

While not quite 5 star, the bivvy will provide sufficient room for the storage of equipment and as temporary or emergency accommodation for contractors and volunteers working on the island. First to make use of the bivvy were contractors from Hunt South - see story on page 2.

Below:

Hunt South team member “Moose” on deer culling duty on Coal Island

Photos: Hunt South



Red Deer Assessment—(and a six footed deer!!)

In February specialists from Hunt South were engaged by the Trust to carry out a preliminary assessment of the red deer population on Coal Island. It was agreed that the work would include:

- a general assessment of the island, inclusive of areas frequented by deer;
- a general assessment and judgement of the numbers of deer on the island;
- a general assessment of future hunting requirements, and;
- to hunt and cull deer encountered.

Two hunter/dog teams were flown to Coal Island on the 20th of February for eight days.

While it was found that deer are utilising the whole island, they were found to favour the western side of the island and the faces along Otago Retreat and around Curnow Lake. The hunters also observed a number of bird species but found no sign of kiwi or weka, nor any sign of rodents.

The hunters judged the deer population on the island to be in excess of 50 animals. They also found the deer to be in good health as the island has a good range of suitable food. They also found that because of hunting pressure over the last year, the deer have become very wary and that hunting without dogs would have been significantly less productive.

In all, the hunters worked for 118 hours and culled a total of 24 red deer. Of significant interest was a deer culled near the centre of the island which was found to have 6 feet – each of the front legs has 2 feet. The deer was otherwise in good health and able to move in a normal manner.

*Below: Front leg of six-footed deer culled on Coal Island
Photo: Hunt South*



Five Minutes and Counting

Immediately following the first round of stoat trapping in August 2005, a team from Otago University spent time on Coal Island in an effort to gain a measure of the current bird population. This was done using a method known as “five minute bird counts”. This basically involves recording all birds seen or heard from one point over a 5 minute period. If carried out regularly this information may be used in future years to assess how the bird species on the island respond to no or minimal numbers of stoats.

The five minute bird count technique is a measure of the relative density of bird species range and abundance that provides an easily produced index for detecting changes in bird population numbers over time, but will not yield any information regarding absolute population numbers. If the same methodology is followed in the future, it should be possible to detect changes in the relative abundance of bird species on Coal Island which in turn gives us a measure of the effectiveness of our pest management work. Counts were also carried out on the mainland to provide control data.

However the five minute bird count method is subject to a number of variables. For example, weather conditions can affect bird activity as well as the observer’s ability to see and hear birds and counts can be affected by the experience and ability of the observer in detecting birds both visually and aurally. While conducting the counts the researchers attempted to reduce the levels of observer bias by carrying out the counting in pairs and repeating the counts over the course of two days with different pairs of observers on each of the count transects. Levels of observer bias were further reduced by pairing some of the more experienced observers with those with less experience.

While this work did not tell us how many birds there are on Coal Island, over time it will tell us if there are more birds.

Birds observed during the counts included: brown creeper, tomtit, fantail, chaffinch, bellbird, grey warbler, silvereye, kaka, rifleman, kereru and thrush.

Thanks to Oliver Gansell and the team from Otago University Postgraduate Diploma in Wildlife



FiordlandLink
experience



Puysegur
Holdings Ltd



ASTRA PRINT

For further information contact:

South West New Zealand
Endangered Species Charitable Trust

C/- PO Box 102
TE ANAU

email
info@tepukahereka.org.nz

phone
03 249 7402

fax
03 249 7409