

Newsletter of the South West New Zealand Endangered Species Trust



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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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- **February Volunteer Trip**
- **Coming Up**
Stoat trap replacement

Right: The February Volunteer group (Warwick, Jo, Gail, Dave, Sarah and Avon) in front of the Tarawera Smelter site.

Photo: Ken Bradley



Above: Easter orchids (Earina autumnalis) a sure sign of coming autumn. Photo: David Timmerman-Vaughan



February Volunteer Trip A Bumper Stoat Harvest

By David and Gail Timmerman-Vaughan

The February 2009 Coal Island Volunteers drove to Tuatapere in the rain with a forecast for more rain. After some difficulties getting all the groceries and gear into the helicopter, the group took off in the usual fashion with a nose-dive toward the Waiau River finally rising into the murk, then following the coastline to Coal Island.

On Coal Island, all traps were empty of stoats or rats, as they have been for the past three years. Vegetation and birdlife is continuing to improve with plenty of kaka, kakariki, bellbirds, brown creepers, tomtits, fantails and wood pigeons. A group of 5 kaka were seen on Johan's Track near No. 3 and No. 4 creeks, and a group of 4 kaka were seen on the Otago Retreat Track. No obvious deer sign was noted. Traps on Steep-To, Round and Weka Islands were also clear.

Eleven stoats were cleared by the volunteers from traps on the Mainland. In the previous six weeks, seven stoats were caught in traps around Kisbee Lodge and a further two (in one trap) on the track to the Puysegur Point Lighthouse.

In spite of the inauspicious weather at the start, the group had 5 fine days out of 6, with flat seas for fishing and diving was clear that autumn is nearing, however, since the Easter orchids were beginning to bloom.

Below: A fantastic Fiordland sunset.
Photo: Gail Timmerman-Vaughan



Elephant Seal

A horrendous-smelling elephant seal was found near the beach at the bush edge by the large rhododendron close to the old Cromarty hotel site on about 21 February. There was much concern that he was an old fella who had pulled up to die, with some interesting speculation about how to dispose of his foul smelling corpse. However, A few days later DoC staff in the vicinity on Southern Winds determined he was just a juvenile who was parked-up having a rest.

Crowd at Puysegur Point

While Puysegur Point has a reputation as being one of the most isolated spots in the country, it was very busy while the group was there. In addition to the 6 Coal Island Volunteers, there were four DoC staff doing their annual 10 day track and historic site maintenance. Ken Bradley (trip leader and DoC Southland historian) couldn't quite get the mountain radio operator to understand "Hut Numbers 10!". To top it all off, a MetService staffer arrived at Puysegur Point for the annual check and service of the weather station while the Volunteer group explored the area by land and sea. A total of 10 other people were seen coming and going in the vicinity of the Lodge.

Historic Sites Visit

Southern Winds offered us the chance to accompany them to the historic Tarawera Silver Mine and Smelter site in Isthmus Sound, where they did their annual clean up and site check. On the way back we were briefed by Ken Bradley on the Cuttle Cove whaling station. As a special treat, we were joined by a pod of bottle-nosed dolphins, an unusual sighting for Preservation Inlet.

Lodge caretaker, Adrian Hilterman, looked after the group well. Special thanks for his hospitality and for sharing the bounties of the sea and the land. Thanks also to the Kisbee Lodge owners for the chance to share their magic place; and to Southwest Helicopters and pilots Sam and Dale.

Right: Ken Bradley (Department of Conservation) demonstrating "Spray and Walk Away" technique for moss management while team members Al and Margaret slash away.

Photo: Gail Timmerman-Vaughan



*Above: Kisbee Lodge was visited by an elephant seal during February. Cute, eh?
Photo" Warwick Bethwaite*



Coming Up Stoat Trap Replacement

Thanks to generous support from the Department of Conservation and The Pangaea Young Explorers Project (a Swiss based organization), 300 new stainless steel stoat traps are being provided to upgrade the existing steel traps. While the existing traps have performed well over the last 4 years, being steel and in use in a coastal environment some are showing signs of corrosion.

The new traps will be used to replace the 194 traps currently in use, to position additional traps in "high risk" areas on the mainland trap line and to extend the mainland trap line from Te Oneroa to Kisbee Bay.

The existing steel traps will be overhauled and offered to other trapping projects.



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