

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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Stoats have been trapped
in the last 3 years

*Right: The sign says it
all. Sign made by
Trustee Ray Willett
Photo: Donald Whyte*



Goodbye Mice

Following on from the Trust's efforts to rid Coal Island of stoats and red deer, the third operational phase of the Pest Management Plan, the eradication of mice took place during July and August. After months of planning and preparation, the "Fouveau Freighter" sailed into Preservation Inlet on the 29th of June to deliver the cereal bait, helicopter fuel and associated equipment. That afternoon and the following morning this was unloaded onto the beach at Moonlight Point on the eastern corner of Coal Island ready for suitable weather for the first bait drop. Then it was a matter of waiting.....

Although the bait was stored in plywood containers, for the next 4 weeks volunteers camped on the island at the Moonlight Point bivvy to carry out regular checks of the bait for moisture damage. While Preservation Inlet was probably getting better weather than the rest of the country during July, it was not until the 24th that the first suitable "weather window" arrived. To ensure the optimum efficacy of the bait, a minimum period of 3 days dry weather following the drop was required. Trust chairman Ian Buick along with project managers Viv Shaw and Nick Torr were constantly monitoring forecasts and in regular

contact with Kisbee Lodge for actual weather conditions in Preservation Inlet. Within 2 hours of the decision being made to go ahead with the first drop, the helicopters and loading team were on the ground in Preservation Inlet ready to go.

Two Jetranger helicopters were used to apply the cereal bait pellets with a team of 8 people providing support for loading and refuelling. The actual application of the pellets was tracked using GPS—at regular intervals data was downloaded from the helicopter GPS systems to a laptop mapping application to enable the coverage of the island to be checked. By the end of the first day about half of the island had been covered. Work resumed early the next day and by noon on the 25th the first bait application had been completed. Then it was a matter of keeping fingers crossed that the weather held for at least the next 3 days and a similar period of weather in 7 to 10 days time. The weather did hold and it was over a week before there was any rain on the island.

However the weather became fickle and it was not until the 6th of August that the helicopters and loading teams returned to Preservation Inlet for the second drop. Despite a forecast for fine weather, the helicopters and teams

then remained grounded for the next 2 days—just when the weather looked like it had settled another shower would roll in from the south.

The waiting was over when the day dawned fine and frosty on the 9th of August. The loading teams were on Coal Island early and by 8.30am the first helicopter was away from Moonlight Point with its load of bait. With only the occasional stop to refuel helicopters and download GPS the loading team was kept busy and by 4pm the helicopters and loading team were back at Kisbee Lodge ready to leave Preservation Inlet. Four days after the second drop the weather broke.

And now it is a matter of waiting and monitoring the island for any sign of mice for the next two years. Then we will know if we have been successful in eradicating mice from Coal Island.

The Trust would like to acknowledge the support of the NZ Lotteries Grants Board, the Community Trust of Southland, Southwest Helicopters, Rakiura Shipping, Puysegur Holdings, the Department of Conservation and the volunteers who have made this project possible.



Volunteers Needed

Are you interested in taking part in our stoat trapping work. Volunteers are required for trips to Preservation Inlet in May, September and December next year. Check out our website for more information.



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