



# FIORDLAND COASTAL NEWSLETTER

October 2008

Kia ora from the Department of Conservation in Te Anau. In this issue we include updates on DOC activities on the Fiordland Coast, news about bottlenose dolphins in Doubtful Sound/Patea and a story about the return of the little spotted kiwi to Chalky Inlet. There is also an update on some of the work various community groups and local businesses are undertaking in the Fiordland region.

## CRAYFISH COMEBACK ON THE FIORDLAND COAST

Mark Peychers

The CRA8 rock lobster fishery which includes South Westland, Fiordland, Stewart Island and Foveaux Strait has made a notable comeback in recent years. While it has always been one of the most productive areas within New Zealand, with catches exceeding 3,500 tonnes per annum in the early years (1940 -1960) and still at levels in excess of 2000 tonnes during the 1970s, we now know that this level of catch was not sustainable and it was inevitable that the fishery would decline. By the late 1980s the fishery was depleted and the catch rate had declined.

The decline continued even after the introduction of the Quota Management System (QMS) in 1990. However the QMS did provide the "tool" to allow for the development of some innovative management measures and, in response to a request from the commercial



industry, stock assessment scientists developed an Operational Management Procedure in 1997. The management procedure essentially set the catch limit for the fishery based on the "catch per unit effort" (CPUE) result from previous years. CPUE is measured as the average weight of legal lobster retained each time a pot is lifted. This led to quota cuts and the total allowable commercial catch for the fishery was dropped by 20% in 1999 and by a further 20% in 2001, to give stocks a chance to recover.

The fishery has since recovered at a rate higher than expected and the allowable commercial catch has increased from a low of 560 tonnes to more than 960 tonnes. This is 33% of the country's total production. CPUE has risen from a low point of 0.7 kgs per potlift in 1997 to more than 2.8kgs per potlift by 2006. This is above any level recorded in the last 30 years and is still increasing.

CRA8 is now a living example of the conservation potential inherent within the QMS when fishermen and quota owners are motivated to undertake the personal sacrifices necessary to turn a struggling fishery around. Sustainability of the fishery is now a reality and the management procedure in place ensures the fishery has a bright future.

The CRA8 Management Committee Inc. has recently produced a pamphlet on the CRA8 fishery and industry. This can be obtained by emailing: [cra8@xtra.co.nz](mailto:cra8@xtra.co.nz)

Right – A cray pot being landed on the vessel *Shangrila*.  
Photo: Rewi Bull

### NEW ZEALAND'S FIORD HERITAGE: A Guide to the Historic Sites of Coastal Fiordland

This soft cover book, written by Neville Peat brings to life the legendary stories and historic locations of coastal Fiordland. The guide profiles notable historic sites along the coast and gives an account of their historical context. It is available from the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre.



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## BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN MONITORING IN DOUBTFUL/PATEA AND DUSKY SOUNDS

### Kath Blakemore

Over the past 12 months, the Department of Conservation has carried out photo-identification monitoring of the Doubtful/Patea and Dusky Sound populations of bottlenose dolphins. Field trips were conducted in both fiords during late spring 2007, February and June/July this year.

The work in Dusky Sound was somewhat of a trial due to the logistical difficulties of operating a small boat in this area. However, it proved to be very successful, and flying the boat in and out of Breaksea Sound across the Jaquiere Pass and using the Anchor Island hut as a base worked well.

The results from the spring/summer work showed that there was no change in the size of the Doubtful Sound/Patea population. Despite the birth of four calves this summer and one late calf from last summer, the population remained at 56 due to the disappearance of five other dolphins during the year. While information from the most recent winter trip is still being worked through, three animals were not seen on this trip (all less than four years old), taking the population to 53 dolphins.

Comparatively little is known about the Dusky Sound population, but this work shows they are a significantly larger group, of approximately 102 animals. Of these, nine were new calves born over last summer, with another three calves born between the summer and winter surveys. Interestingly, one common dolphin appears to have been 'adopted' by the group of bottlenose dolphins, with repeated sightings both during this survey and previously from other boaties in the area.

For a copy of last summer's monitoring report, or for any queries on this work, please contact Kath Blakemore, 03 249 0221, [kblakemore@doc.govt.nz](mailto:kblakemore@doc.govt.nz).



Above – Bottlenose dolphin.  
Photo: Rohan Currey  
Below – Stewart Bull holding an adult Little Spotted Kiwi.  
Photo: DOC

## REAL JOURNEYS SUPPORTS THE RETURN OF LITTLE SPOTTED KIWI TO FIORDLAND

### Hannah Edmonds

Kiwi-pukapuka/little spotted kiwi are back in Fiordland, possibly for the first time in many years, thanks to sponsorship from Real Journeys and their clients. In early August representatives from Real Journeys, Te Ati Awa, Ngai Tahu and the Department of Conservation transferred 14 birds from Kapiti Island to predator-free Te Kakahu-o-Tamatea/Chalky Island in Chalky Inlet, Fiordland.

Prior to the arrival of introduced predators over 100 years ago, little spotted kiwi roamed freely in Fiordland. However the release of ferrets, stoats and weasels to control introduced rabbits resulted in the rapid decline of these birds.

In 1900 Richard Henry, caretaker of Resolution Island, the world's first island sanctuary for birds, wrote "I think that the brown kiwi and kakapo will be too strong for the weasels, but the little spotted kiwis will soon go". Henry transferred well over 700 endangered native birds, including little-spotted kiwi, to Resolution Island and other islands in Fiordland. Between 1894 and 1900 Henry monitored and recorded the progress of relocated birds and proved that, in the right conditions, birds could survive relocation. Unfortunately, in 1900 Richard Henry sighted a stoat on Resolution Island. Once these predators became established, he realised the futility of transferring anymore birds.

The first attempt to eradicate stoats from an island occurred on Te Kakahu-o-Tamatea/Chalky Island in 1999. This eradication was successful, so that Chalky Island now provides a predator-free home for little spotted kiwi in Fiordland.

The money to fund the kiwi translocation was raised by New Zealanders aboard Real Journeys multi-day Discovery Cruises. "For the past 10 years we have held a light hearted auction of mystery prizes at the end of each trip to raise money for conservation", said Real Journeys Area Manager Paul Norris. "We are excited to be part of this project and are looking forward to bringing kiwi back to their natural habitat" said Mr Norris.

This money has been used to fund many other island restoration projects in Fiordland including the transfer of robin, mohua/yellowhead and saddleback to Anchor Island in Dusky Sound. The funding for this kiwi transfer is the latest initiative between Real Journeys, its clients and DOC. Southern Lakes Helicopters also supported the transfer by providing reduced flight fees.

Returning little spotted kiwi to Fiordland is a significant step in the recovery of New Zealand's second rarest kiwi species. "Once established on Chalky Island, this population of kiwi may be used as a source for transfers to other predator-free islands throughout Fiordland", DOC Biodiversity Programme Manager, Murray Willans said.



## LOCAL TOURISM COMPANY UNDERTAKES EXTENSIVE PEST CONTROL PROGRAMME

**Megan Willans**

Fiordland Explorer Charters are celebrating their first anniversary of establishing and funding a pest control programme in the Wilmot Pass area. This ambitious project encompasses the Wilmot Pass, West Arm, Deep Cove, the Dusky Track to the head of the Spey Valley and the Percy Saddle road to the first pylon. Since September 2007, 128 stoats, 957 possums and 11 rats have been trapped.

Owners Nigel and Paula Lamb say the inspiration for the work came from tourists regularly commenting on the lack of bird life in Fiordland. Nigel says they were also inspired by the success of other projects such as Ackers Point on Stewart Island/Rakiura and could see it would complement other conservation initiatives in the area, such as the Pomona and Secretary Islands restoration projects.

A range of species will benefit from this pest control and changes should become apparent this summer, following the second breeding season for native birds since the trapping began.

Fiordland Explorer Charters would also like to acknowledge Placemakers, Meridian Energy, Niagara Sawmilling, Alistair Dukes, South West Helicopters and Department of Conservation for their support in making the project happen.

## MOUSE ERADICATION GOES AHEAD ON COAL ISLAND

**By Nick Torr**

In July this year the South West New Zealand Endangered Species Trust began an operation aimed at eradicating mice from Coal Island in Preservation Inlet. If successful, this will be the largest island anywhere in the world from which mice have been eradicated.



The operation entailed a large scale poisoning programme with two applications of bait. The bait was shipped from Bluff at the end of June and, after a three week wait for suitable weather, the first drop took place on the 25th of July. The second bait drop followed on the 9th August. A space in excess of 10 days and good weather following each drop ensured that good quality bait was available to every mouse on the island for an extended period.

It was important to get total bait coverage of the island with no gaps in the spread. To achieve this, bait was applied using helicopters with under-slung spreader buckets and GPS navigation guidance systems. The bait used was a cereal-based pellet loaded with an anti-coagulant toxin. This technique has been successfully used to eradicate rodents from many islands both in New Zealand and overseas, including the seemingly successful eradication of mice from Pomona and Rona Islands in Lake Manapouri last winter.

As with standard practice for rodent eradications, the Trust will wait two years following poisoning then intensively monitor the island for the presence of mice, before being able to finally declare the eradication successful.

The trust received financial support from the Community Trust of Southland and the NZ Lotteries Commission for this project.

Above – Loading bait for an aerial poison drop on Coal Island. Photo: DOC

## DOC TE ANAU INVESTS IN NEW QUARANTINE STORE

**Andrew Smart**

Many of the islands on the Fiordland coast are now either completely pest free or have limited pests present. Community groups and DOC (sometimes supported by local businesses) have put considerable effort into removing and/or controlling pests on these islands. It is essential that everyone visiting these islands or the coast helps to ensure they remain pest free. Carrying out simple, appropriate quarantine measures before you embark on any trip down the coast or to Pomona and Rona Islands will help.

DOC has built a new Quarantine Store in Te Anau for servicing its trips to the Fiordland coastal islands. The new purpose built store is located at the Department's workshop complex in Caswell Street and has been in use since May.

The building is divided into three distinct areas; a general store where field equipment is housed and incoming stores can be received, a packing room where clean gear and stores can be packed into sealed containers and a clean room where gear that has been packed and known to be clean can

The following are some of the suppliers of rodent bait stations, traps and poisons.

- Pest Management Services – <http://www.nopests.co.nz/>
- Phone 0800 111 466
- Wrightsons
- PGG Farm Supplies
- Connovations – [www.connovation.co.nz](http://www.connovation.co.nz)

Charlie, the Hostel manager at Deep Cove also has a number of bait stations available for use on boats.

This newsletter is available online at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

For further information on any of the articles please contact the Department of Conservation, Te Anau Area Office, ph 03-249-0200.

be stored awaiting departure. The two inner rooms are completely rodent proof and set up so they are easy to keep free of any invertebrates or plant material that would present a weed risk to the islands.

As the most frequent visitors to many of a growing list of pest-free islands on the Fiordland coast, the new store is part of DOC's commitment to protecting these valuable places.

## THE GREAT FIORDLAND COASTAL CLEAN UP – COMPLETED

**Helen Dodson**

Hundreds of kilometres of coast, approximately 200 volunteers, over 500 cubic metres of rubbish and the Great Fiordland Coastal Clean-up is finally complete. Rubbish was cleared from the last section of coast between George and Milford/Piopiotahi Sounds in March this year; six years after the clean-up began at Te Wae Wae Bay.

The clean-up was born from a discussion between South-West Helicopters pilot Wayne Pratt (now based in Karamea and, word has it, planning a clean-up of beaches up there) and fisherman Peter Young (retired from fishing but regularly returning to Fiordland to crew and skipper DOC's vessel Southern Winds). Flying over Fiordland they noticed the amount of rubbish on the coast and conceived a plan to clean it up.

Poor weather stalled the clean-up in 2007; however the completion of the final section means that rubbish has now been collected right around the Fiordland Coast from Te Wae Wae Bay to Martins Bay. Although plastic drink bottles, fishing buoys and rope made up much of the rubbish, some unusual items have also been collected along the way, including coconuts, an aircraft wing, a car arm-rest and a rusty wheelbarrow.

The project was developed as a community partnership comprising South West Helicopters, the fishing industry, Guardians of Fiordland Fisheries, DOC and Environment Southland. Donations and contributions were received from Environment Southland, CRA 8, South West Helicopters, Department of Conservation, Meridian Energy, Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation, AB Lime, Fiordland Lobster Company, Real Journeys and a number of other companies and individuals.



Right – Just some of the rubbish collected on the Fiordland coast during the Fiordland coastal cleanup.

Below – Traps being flown ashore on Resolution Island.

Photo: DOC

## TRAPPING STARTS ON RESOLUTION ISLAND

**Nick Torr**

In the last six months there has been good progress on the Resolution Island stoat eradication project. In Te Anau 2350 wooden and wire trap tunnels were completed, shipped around the coast from Bluff and flown ashore to strategically placed sites in mid March. Teams were busy on the island for the next two months placing the tunnels at 100 metre intervals along the 230 kilometre track network.

In mid May the first of two pre-baiting cycles was undertaken. During pre-baiting each tunnel was baited with a fresh hen's egg and a piece of fresh meat, without the trap being set. This was to encourage individual stoats

that may have been wary of entering a tunnel to become more comfortable and familiar with them, if they can smell other stoats have visited. The second pre-baiting took place in June. During this phase more than 4000 eggs were taken by stoats.

The traps were finally set in mid July. Each trap was re-baited then checked twice within a two week period, with 258 stoats caught during this time. In August the traps were checked and re-baited again and a further 32 stoats were caught. The traps will now remain set and be checked again in November. Because Resolution Island is within the known swimming range of stoats, there is a network of traps maintained on the adjacent mainland, helping protect the island from re-invasion.

We expect the 290 stoats caught so far to represent a high proportion of the island's total stoat population. However, one interesting aspect to emerge is that only 66 (23%) of stoats caught were male. Although there was a similar sex bias with the stoats caught on Secretary Island, it was not as dramatic.

