

Ao-ata-te-pō Cooper Island project update

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Project update – Gerard Hill, Project Manager (Edge Effect)

A few rats (19) but no stoats, were caught on Cooper Island during the second conservation trip of 2021 (23 – 25 May). However, the monitoring cameras installed earlier this year, picked up the presence of at least one stoat (three times).

All 305 of the island's stoat traps were checked and re-baited, the 273 rat grid traps were re-baited, and the 12 monitoring cameras were serviced. The 56 stoat traps on the mainland, south of the Nine Fathoms Passage were also checked and re-baited.

All the DOC-200 traps were baited with an egg, fresh rabbit meat, and a squirt of Goodnature stoat lure paste. The A24 traps along the internal lines were checked and test fired, and had new stoat auto lure pumps (ALP) replaced.

The three lines of monitoring cameras detected stoats three times on two separate cameras and slightly more rat activity than the last visit, (many of the activations may have been the same animal). These cameras provide us with an index of pest activity independent of trap catch results. Two of the cameras had malfunctioned and will need to be replaced.

Other animals recorded on the cameras include deer, tomtits, thrush, bellbirds and blackbirds.

The scheduled six-month service of the high-density grid of A24 self-resetting traps at the eastern end of the island also found several traps to be faulty or seized. They seem to require more frequent test firing to keep them functioning than just the twice-yearly recommended by the manufacturers.



Cooper Island - photos: Gerard Hill

Since Real Journeys began conservation work on Cooper Island in 2017, 67 stoats and 715 rats have been removed.

South Island robins were heard a couple of times on the north side of the island, and a few kaka were seen feeding and calling. Several kakariki were heard calling, particularly on the northern and eastern end.

To read Gerard Hill's full report please click [here](#).



Monitoring camera with lure



Stoat caught on monitoring camera

Walking the talk on Cooper Island – Discovery Expeditions Nature Guide Richard Heyward

When Richard Heyward's not working on the Discovery Expeditions, he can often be found helping out on the Cooper Island Restoration Project.

Trapping expeditions can take one or two nights. The latest, was a two-night trip, because we've been having a few issues with the A24 self-resetting rat traps and they needed testing, refuelling and rebaiting.

Southern Lakes Helicopters flew four of us from Manapouri to Breaksea Sound, landing on the deck of their Uni vessel which is where DOC's (Department of Conservation) inflatable 4.3 metre dinghy is stored that we use to get around. Half the team is then flown to the top of Cooper Island, to do all the inland traps as they make their way down to the shore. The other half set off from the Uni by boat – since I have a skipper's licence, I drive the dinghy. It takes us about 45 minutes to make our way round the Acheron Passage to Sportsman Cove on Cooper Island.

Normally the timing works perfectly, so one of the guys who was dropped off on the top of the island has made their way doing the inland traps to the shore and I pick him up to help us with the shore-line trapping. The traps are 100 metres apart and sit just above the high tide mark. I drop one of the team off to rebait and set a trap and while he's doing that – I drop off the other and then return for the first one. Rather than waiting – we sort of leapfrog along as it speeds things up and we manage to get quite a lot of traps done. The fourth trapper does another inland line and calls me up on the radio when he's done – normally at around 5pm when we call it a day. Then we start at 8am and do it all again the next day – completing the second half of the island.

We either stay at a DOC hut on the Mainland or the houseboat Georgina, at the eastern end of Cooper Island. This trip was on the Georgina. We're really lucky to use the boat when we're doing conservation work and one of the owners was on board with a group of his friends for a fishing trip. His friends seemed really interested to hear about



Richard Heyward driving dinghy

the project. People occasionally turn up and when you're trapping they immediately assume you're with DOC. When I explain that I work for Real Journeys who are sponsoring the island work – they're really surprised to hear we're out here doing it.

This trip was a bit different. On the third and final day, we were joined by One News reporter Jared McCulloch for a news story about the increased number of Discovery Expeditions passengers resulting in more funds for the project.

We're always looking at ways to spread the word and when I get back to work – I tell our guests all about the latest trapping expedition, and share in depth how it's all gone and what it's like. I also share with them that not every animal will get caught by our extensive traps. That, like taxes, they just keep on coming. But we are working hard at it, and hopefully, soon, we will get the predators low enough to release birds that will do well out there.

Creator of Cooper Island Restoration Project appointed Real Journeys Chief Conservation Officer

Real Journeys GM, Paul Norris, has been promoted to Wayfare Chief Conservation Officer - believed to be a New Zealand first for a tourism business. Paul will lead conservation and sustainability initiatives across the Wayfare group, which includes Real Journeys.

Paul instigated and has led the Cooper Island Restoration Project from the beginning. He helped ensure the funds were raised to get it started, approaching the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation for the first \$100,000, then holding two Real Journeys Conservation Balls which raised another \$100K. Making sure the project would endure and be there for the long-term, Paul set it up to be funded by those who travel to remote Dusky Sound on either



Paul Norris and Governor-General Dame Patsy Reddy

Discovery Expeditions (\$100pp from each ticket goes the project), and Conservation Expeditions (\$500pp towards the project).

Last month, Paul received his New Zealand Order of Merit from Governor-General Dame Patsy Reddy, for services to tourism and conservation.

A positive COVID-19 outcome

The Cooper Island Restoration Project coffers have been boosted by close to \$50,000 this year as Discovery Expeditions have been held for an extra four months on the Milford Wanderer.

The additional expeditions were scheduled after the Wanderer was no longer required for international

visitors as a second overnight vessel in Milford Sound.

One News ran a story on the Cooper Island Restoration Project on Wednesday May 26th.

www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/covid-19-speeds-up-tourist-companys-efforts-rid-fiordland-national-park-pests



Top of Cooper Island - photo: Richard Heyward

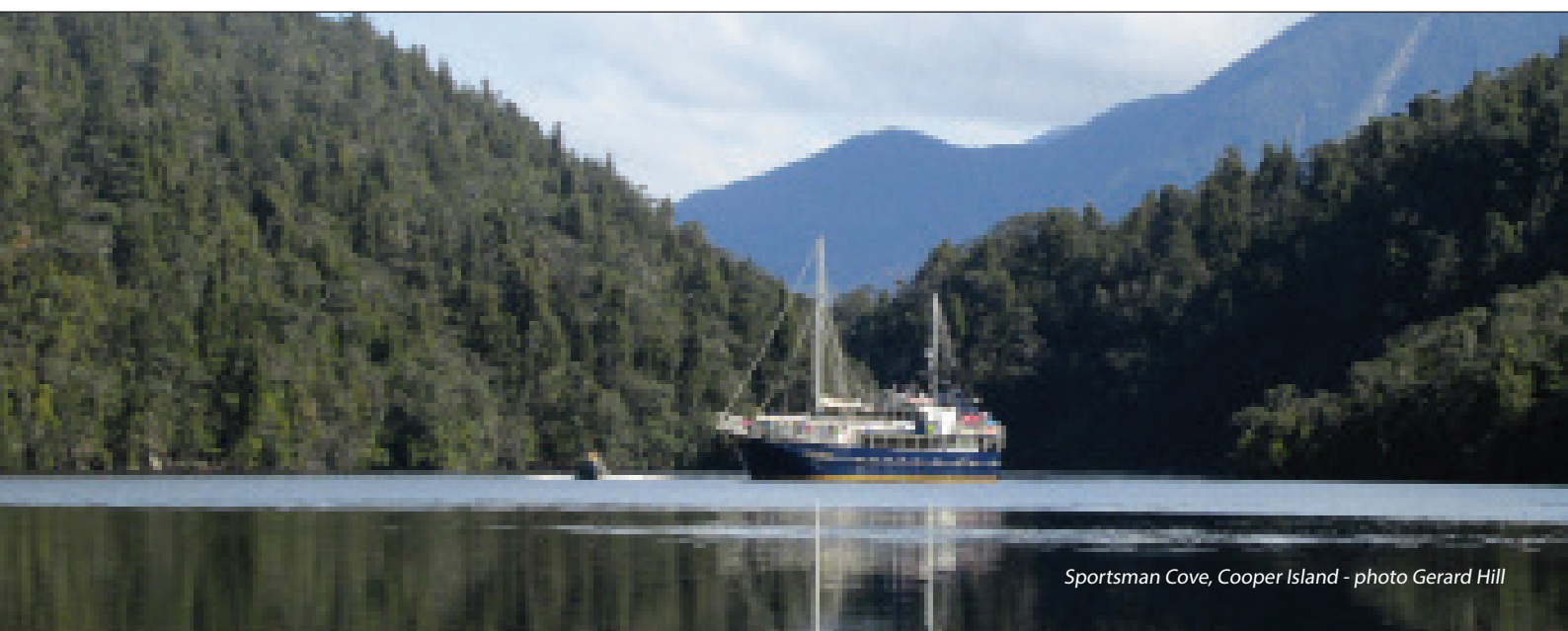
Upcoming Expeditions:

If any of your friends are interested - please let them know that there are four [Conservation Expeditions](#) coming up in October (2021), March and December (2022). There is also a small amount of space on [Discovery Expeditions](#) to Preservation Inlet in September and October and Dusky Sound in January next year. An additional Stewart Island Discovery Expedition has also been scheduled in 2022 winter (late July).

Thank you

- To all the Discovery Expeditions and Conservation Expeditions guests who purchased traps for Cooper Island and whose fares contribute to the Restoration Project.
- The Milford Wanderer crew for their ongoing support, passion and help to drive this project
- Real Journeys Nature Guide Richard Heyward who skippered the West143 vessel while servicing the traps
- The Georgina syndicate members for project support and accommodation
- DOC Fiordland for project support and use of the West143 vessel
- Edge Effect and the team Ben Crouchley, Ian Thorne and Gerard Hill who checked and re-baited traps during this trip
- Southern Lakes Helicopters for their ongoing support for travel to this remote part of Dusky Sound
- The Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation for the initial funding.

If you have any feedback or contributions towards this newsletter or questions about the Cooper Island Restoration Project please contact media@wayfare.nz



Sportsman Cove, Cooper Island - photo Gerard Hill