



October 2004

Secretary Island Restoration Project

What's happening?

The Department of Conservation is setting up an island restoration programme to enhance the ecological values of Secretary Island by eradicating and/or controlling stoats and deer to a level where they no longer impact on the island's ecosystem.

Where is Secretary Island and why is it so special?

Secretary Island (8140 hectares) is situated on the Fiordland coast at the entrance to Doubtful Sound. It is the third highest island in New Zealand, rising sharply to a height of 1196 metres and supports a diverse range of plant communities and habitats. The only animal pest species present on Secretary Island are deer and stoats. There are no possums or rodents which are found in many other areas of New Zealand. The absence of rats and mice has meant that Secretary Island has provided refuge for an abundant and diverse range of invertebrates, such as the knobbed weevil, cave weta and tunnel web spider. Significant plant species which possums like to eat, such as mistletoes and mountain lancewood are also found there.

What are the benefits of removing stoats?

The removal of stoats from Secretary Island will provide significant protection for native species already present on the island. These include the Fiordland crested penguin, kareara, kaka, northern tokoeka (kiwi) and kakariki. As a stoat-free sanctuary there will be increased potential for re-introducing a wide range of species that are no longer found on mainland Fiordland, including kakapo, rock wren, tieke, toutouwai and Fiordland skink.

How will we remove stoats from the island and prevent them from returning?

Stoats have been successfully removed from three islands along the Fiordland Coast since 1998: Te Kakahu (511 hectares), Anchor (1280 hectares) and Bauza Island (480 hectares).



Stoat control is also in place on 29 smaller islands along the coast.

DOC is proposing to remove stoats from Secretary Island using an intensive network of around 1800 traps. Additional traps will be placed along the adjacent mainland and several small islands around Secretary Island to minimise the risk of reinvasion.

Ongoing surveillance of the traps will take place twice a year and trained predator dogs will also be used to monitor for the presence of any stoats that may re-invade the island.



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

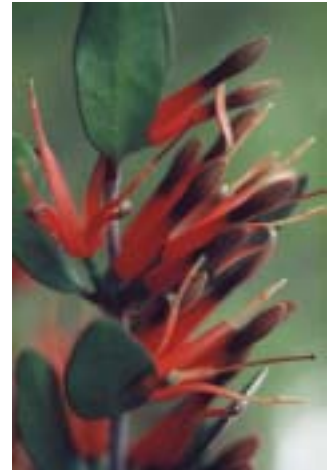
Why do we need to control deer and how will this be achieved?

Deer cause significant damage to our native forest biodiversity. They inhibit the regeneration of many plant species causing irreversible changes to the forest composition. Recent experience with controlling deer to low numbers in the Murchison Mountains Special (Takahe) Area and eradicating deer from Anchor Island in Dusky Sound will be used to design a control operation aimed at reducing deer numbers to extremely low levels and possibly eliminating the resident population. These methods may include ground and aerial hunting, deer pens, deer nets and foliage baiting (see Fact Sheet: Key Facts about Deer Control on Secretary Island).



What changes will take place on the island?

Removing deer will allow the regeneration of many plants that are vulnerable to browsing by deer. With stoats and deer no longer impacting on the native flora and fauna the island ecosystem can begin a natural process of restoration. It is hoped that in the future visitors to Secretary Island will be able to experience Fiordland how it used to be.



Does this mean I won't be able to visit the island?

Secretary Island is part of the Fiordland National Park and has been identified as a potential 'Open Sanctuary' under the Fiordland National Park Draft Management Plan. This means that all conservation, historic and cultural values on the island are protected and open access to the public would still be permitted. The island may be closed temporarily during the project when stoat and deer control is being undertaken.

All visitors landing on the island must be aware of the potential risk of carrying unwanted plant and animal pests on to Secretary Island. It is important that all clothing, bags, equipment and transport are free of any soil, plant or animal pests before landing on the island.



Further information

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