Conservation Project "Rat Control"

December 2013 saw the conclusion of the Branch rat control program at Homestead Block at Mason Bay on Stewart Island.   As usual six parties of four men undertook a trip to the Island for up to ten days at two weekly intervals from the end of August to the first week in December.   This is the eight year we have been running this program in conjunction with Department of Conservation on the Island.   Once again we were assisted by other southern branches and members from Wanaka, Balclutha and Blue Mountains branches took part.

Hunters stay in the Hunters hut on the block and again this year we supplied cooking facilities to help with the trip as well as subsidised transport cost.

The intention has been to kill as many rats as possible to allow the native birds their best chance of breeding and raising their young without the continued predation of the nests by rats.

We have some 315 rats traps spread over about 14 kms of tracks around a defined section of Mason Bay.

The task is to visit each trap at least twice by the party members clearing away dead rats and rebait each trap with peanut butter. This required a minimum of eight working days. A portion of the airfares are subsidised but each member makes a significant financial contribution of this ongoing project.

Kills this year
Party one = 124 rats   Party 2 = 129 rats   Party 3 = 107 rats
Party four = 33 rats   Party 5   = 53 rats   Party 6 = 25 rats   Total 471 rats

As well as the rats 43 possums were killed in a series of self setting traps. Members also recorded bird sightings encountered around the trap lines. All parties shot at least one deer.

Our annual rat kills have been
    2006 = 327 rats   2007 = 213   2008 = 276   2009 = 665
    2010 =181   2011 = 342   2012 = 233   2013 =471

Of interest is the new release of the DVD by South Coast productions titled "To the Back of Beyond" Farming at Mason Bay Stewart Island which of course is the area our rat program is centred on.
    https://www.videosouth.com/index.php?page=shop.product_details&flypage=shop.flypage&product_id=45&category_id=1&manufacturer_id=0&option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=1