



pened after 1792 during the intense period of sealing that began as a result of Cook's reports.

Richard Henry's arrival at Pigeon Island in Dusky Sound in 1894, with a brief from the Government to transfer the vulnerable ground-birds kakapo, kiwi and weka to the "safety" of the recently designated Resolution Island bird sanctuary, heralded a new period in western Fiordland's history. During the 1890s, Henry saw hordes of rats throughout the area and noted that species such as kokako, piopio and saddlebacks were declining. Sadly, his beloved birds were to be even harder hit with the arrival of stoats; kakapo, little spotted kiwi, bellbirds and robins rapidly disappeared, as did the rats. Being good swimmers, stoats quickly reached Resolution Island. Understandably very dispirited, with 15 lonely years of hard work doomed to failure, this notable early New Zealand conservationist left the solitude of Dusky Sound in 1908 to become one of the first custodians of Kapiti Island<sup>3</sup>. It is only in recent years that the work begun by Henry in Fiordland has been brought closer to fruition.

### Biological Surveys

Much of Fiordland was reserved as a National Park in 1904, and attracted a steady

stream of visitors, but the remoteness of the fiords meant that scientific studies there were few and generally confined to occasional, privately-arranged visits by enthusiasts. However, with the advent of the 16.4m Fiordland National Park research vessel *Renown*, a concerted effort to document coastal Fiordland's natural history began in 1974 when Park staff and the Ecology and Botany Divisions of DSIR embarked on a series of biological surveys in Doubtful, Breaksea and Dusky Sounds.

In the early 1970s, the search was on to find a suitable place to shift the last remnants of the once-thriving Fiordland kakapo population. Stoats had been found on all the larger islands in the Park, but they were not known from Breaksea Island. Reports of good numbers of robins there were encouraging, since they had virtually disappeared from western Fiordland, but during a brief preliminary inspection in 1974 Sir Charles Fleming found signs of rats on both Breaksea and Hawea Islands. The presence of Norway rats on Breaksea Island was easily confirmed when a survey team later that year saw them regularly, even by day, in most habitats. Trapped rats were completely cannibalised overnight, and one evening three were caught in a single snap-trap in ten minutes. Intermittent monitoring since

Opposite: Breaksea Sound with Breaksea Island in the foreground, Hawea and Wairaki Islands tucked in behind, the Gilbert Islands clustered around Disappointment Cove and Entry Island beyond. Photo: DoC.

Above: Large weevils with bulbous noses suck sap from the Anisotome on Wairaki Island and sleek, black Fiordland skinks festoon the rocks. Potential disaster for these fascinating creatures has been avoided with the successful eradication of rats on neighbouring Hawea Island. Photo: Bruce Thomas.



The seed crop was gathered for consumption by rats and the few that were missed were grazed as seedlings; but now that the rats have gone fallen fruits lie scattered about and seedlings carpet the forest floor on Hawea Island. Photo: Bruce Thomas.