



Summer Newsletter 2023 Number 80

Kia ora tātou,

Some of the work undertaken over the past three months:

- Organisation of upcoming Piako/Waihou Forum event May 29. Details to follow.
- Participating in on-going National Science Challenge Co-design hui: Scaling collective action through shared learning
- Chaired and took minutes for WBF Focus group meetings
- Responded to 24 information and support requests from WBF members and public

Mangaiti Gully Restoration Trust - Fantail Research in Hamilton Gullies

Manaaki Whenua, Landcare Research are doing a research programme on fantails in a number of gullies in Hamilton including Mangaiti to see if they can ascertain how long they live and to what extent they travel around. Although fantails are one of our most common native species there is not a lot of basic knowledge on their life style or their longevity particularly in an urban setting.

There are two parts to this research. The first part is Landcare staff seeking out fledglings and putting coloured leg bands on each. Each with different colour combinations that individually identifies each bird. The second part is that some of these fledging will also have a tiny (about the size of a grain of rice) radio tag glued temporarily to their back feathers. These radio tags will be monitored by up to ten aerials in Mangaiti Gully that have been installed around the gully edge (see photo).

While the programme got off to a late start this breeding season some birds have already been banded. The programme will go through the full breeding 24/25 season.

And this is where the community can participate, particularly those that live on the gully. If you see a fantail in Hamilton with coloured leg bands record the colour combination on each leg (a photo or video would be great) and send to John Innes text 027-846-7344 or email innesj@landcareresearch.co.nz



Purangi Conservation Trust - Update on NZ Dotterel | Tuturiwhatu at Cooks Beach, Flaxmill Bay and Front Beach 2023/24

This is a good news / bad news story. The good and positive part is the interest and care expressed by our local folk and our beach going visitors. Seeing the birds sitting on their nests despite rain or summer heat, and the delight of small dotterel chicks scooting around the beach, is proving a huge point of interest for many people. Their immediate reaction is a real determination to protect these small, endangered New Zealand birds.

The bad news is the despairingly low number of chicks that flew away. So far (mid-February), one chick from Flaxmill Bay and one from Cooks Beach have flown off to explore other dotterel hang-outs. One small peanut of a chick remains on Cooks Beach making the most of the wide expanses of beach available now that most visitors have gone. Both the parents remain on guard watching the whereabouts of their offspring and immediately warning of any danger such as a dog coming onto the beach. A short cheeping will see the chick

duck for cover or hunker down and freeze in the nearest hollow. Hopefully this small bird will fly away by early March.

And the bad news? The answer is that these are the only three chicks to survive out of the nine which hatched from 37 eggs laid from Front Beach, Flaxmill Bay, Lonely Bay and Cooks Beach. The easy reasons for mortality are a high tide which took out one three-egg nest on Lonely Bay, birds abandoning their nest, and predators. At Front Beach, nine eggs were lost, most likely to hedgehogs or stoats. I would encourage residents here to utilise their traps if they can next breeding season to see if we can make a difference. At Cooks Beach the loss of eggs to predators was dramatically less than previous years. However, we couldn't prevent a visiting cat eating two chicks that had hatched just that morning (cats leave distinctive prints in firm sand). "My cat wouldn't do that" – wrong. Cats are hunters and this small moggy did not go down to the beach during the night to go for a swim.

Other reasons for such a small ratio of eggs laid to fledged chicks, however, are varied and complex. For example, there were two eggs lost to a very hormonal oyster catcher taking over the dotterel nest. This was never going to work. Fortunately, Mrs OC finally laid her own two eggs and the one surviving chick is now able to fly. The dottie set about and laid another two eggs. (These are the ones which were eaten – ya can't win!)

Without science behind me, I firmly believe that the major problem is the constant disturbance of the nesting birds. Dotties are hard-wired to know that dogs are a threat whether or not they are on a lead or well controlled. Birds flee from the nest the moment a dog appears to lure the perceived threat away from the nest. This will happen over and over again leaving newly laid eggs vulnerable to dramatic changes in temperature at a critical stage of development. It also means the parents are expending additional energy, which in turn results in them spending more time foraging rather than protecting their nests. The high success rate of birds hatching and fledging on beaches where dogs are prohibited for the breeding season is an important comparison and is a story to be discussed. Is it such an imposition to ask that pooch betaken for walks on the beach where birds are not nesting? After all, there are less than 2,500 NZ dotterels remaining compared with some 70,000 kiwi (combining the species).

The plight of our tuturiwhatu is not all doom and gloom. Their numbers are gradually increasing along some of our eastern beaches. But their survival is in our hands as without our care and attention and determined pest control they will have a tough time ahead. Alison Henryln



Taia te Taiao - Maungatautari to Pirongia Ecological Corridor Project Update

Taia te Taiao Maungatautari to Pirongia Ecological Corridor Project continues to thrive under NZ Landcare Trust's lead working collaboratively with 10 partners and a community of supporters and landowners. We had our second year anniversary in November last year. We're grateful for the constant growth in engagement across the landscape of the project and beyond. We've had national news coverage on [Stuff.co.nz](https://www.stuff.co.nz) and [RNZ](https://www.rnz.co.nz) and attended local events with a regional audience including a successful [Landscape Scale Restoration Event](#) with Waikato Biodiversity Forum.

200,000+ plants have been added to the corridor since the project launched. Alongside planting, there has been fencing, weed control, retirement of pastoral land, predator control and, most importantly, engagement and encouragement with the community including mana whenua, landowners, schools and organisations.

An example of our exciting work has been the predator control at Mātakitaki pā site and other work to restore this waahi tapu. Several organisations have come together to create a plan to enhance the area and help control the erosion and flooding. An amazing group of volunteers has trapped dozens of possums, rats and mustelids in just a couple of months!

This summer is about events! Taiea te Taiao is co-hosting a series of field days on the last Tuesday of every month looking at planting projects, challenges and opportunities. We are also co-hosting a monthly predator control workshop series, which started in February. Read below and register to join! You can also stay in the loop on Facebook. Taiea te Taiao events coming up..

- **March 26th** - Taiea te Taiao Field Day at Storey family dairy farm on Woodstock Road. More details and [register here](#) for our March Field Day.
- **April 22nd** - Predator Control Workshop on AT220's with NZ Autotraps, 7pm - at Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari (Tari Road), with Bush to Burbs, Taiea te Taiao and Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari. Learn about Autotraps, followed by questions, conversation and refreshments, Register by emailing bexie.towle@landcare.org.nz
- **April 30th** - Taiea te Taiao Field Day at Steve Monks with Koroneiki Developments. More details and [register here](#).
- **May-** Final Predator Control Workshop on toxin use (TBC)



Predator Free Hauraki Coromandel - Protecting Matuku | Australasian Bittern

The Matuku (Australasian Bittern) is a nationally critical wetland bird with the same threat category as the kākāpō. Matuku face numerous threats to their survival, including habitat loss, wetland degradation and predation by introduced mammals. In 2023 Predator Free Hauraki Coromandel initiated an inaugural region-wide matuku survey with the objectives of determining population distribution, identifying potential breeding sites, and raising awareness about the species. Following on from this, the Trust recently hosted a workshop in Matarangi dedicated to Matuku conservation. With a national population estimated to be below 800 birds; an imbalance of males:females and the challenge of getting chicks to survive into adulthood, there was a real sense of urgency to the conversation. The workshop resulted in a programme of initiatives that will unfold over the coming weeks and months. The afternoon field visit to the Otama Reserves Group led by Paul Kington was an opportunity to see an inspiring community restoration project in action. A summary of the discussion and key actions from the day can be found [here](#).



EcoNet - What is EcoNet?

EcoNet is an Aotearoa New Zealand charitable trust dedicated to improving the IT available to community conservation groups. Founding trustees, Richard Hursthouse, Keith Salmon and Annalily van den Broeke have worked at a high level in community led conservation for many years. When we started to get serious about what we were measuring and recording, we found that current systems were sparse, disjointed and varied hugely by group. The lack of coordinated, shared recording systems resulted in wasted time and resources. Read more about our trustees and advisory board on our website [EcoNet.nz](https://econet.nz).

EcoNet was formed and a lot of hard work went into developing business requirements for a conservation activity management system (CAMS). With a great deal of input from IT experts we settled on Microsoft CRM and ArcGIS Hub Premium as the preferred tools. Thousands of hours later we have a configured CRM for conservation (see below) and a road map for ArcGIS implementation. We currently have more than 300 community GIS members.

Please check the PDFs on our [website](https://econet.nz) and if you would like to know more or arrange a call, please contact us at office@econet.nz.



Richard, Keith and Annalily

Ōwhango Alive - More Native Orchids At Ohinetonga

As I bent down to pull privet seedlings during a working bee in mid-September, I spotted the leaves of some spider orchids. These are tiny ground-dwelling plants, less than 5cm tall. Each has a single leaf about 1.5cm across. Unfortunately, the flower photo doesn't show the shape well, but it has 2 rounded lobes and a tiny triangular tip. The flowers vary in colour depending on where they grow in NZ. Currently it is called *Corybas trilobus* but further research may mean that the species is split into many. (This is typical of botanists; one splits a species into several, another comes along and lumps them back into one. The magnificent "New Zealand's native trees" by John Dawson and Rob Lucas has a striking example of this habit. Kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*) was divided into 9 different species. I recently learned that they have now been lumped back into one!).

Getting back to *Corybas*, there are a number of species growing throughout NZ, usually in damp soil on the forest floor or on the banks of streams. They are commonly known as spider orchids and generally have 2 long filament sepals which stick up above the leaf. The name comes from the Greek word *korybas* one of a group of priests known for their mad frenzy. Goodness knows why their discoverer thought to give such tiny plants that name! More recently (early November), I found 2 more orchids, one growing on the edges of the track to the Boat Hole and another slightly further in the bush.

These are commonly known as green helmet orchids or *Pterostylis*. The larger of the two is *P. banksii* which is usually about 30cm tall with long narrow leaves and a single flower. The smaller one is *P. venosa* which doesn't grow much above 10cm with fewer leaves and a smaller flower with less pronounced "feelers". *Earina mucronata*, which I described in an earlier article, is in flower now with sprays of small yellowish flowers. It hangs from the branches of various of our native trees. Rosemary Steele

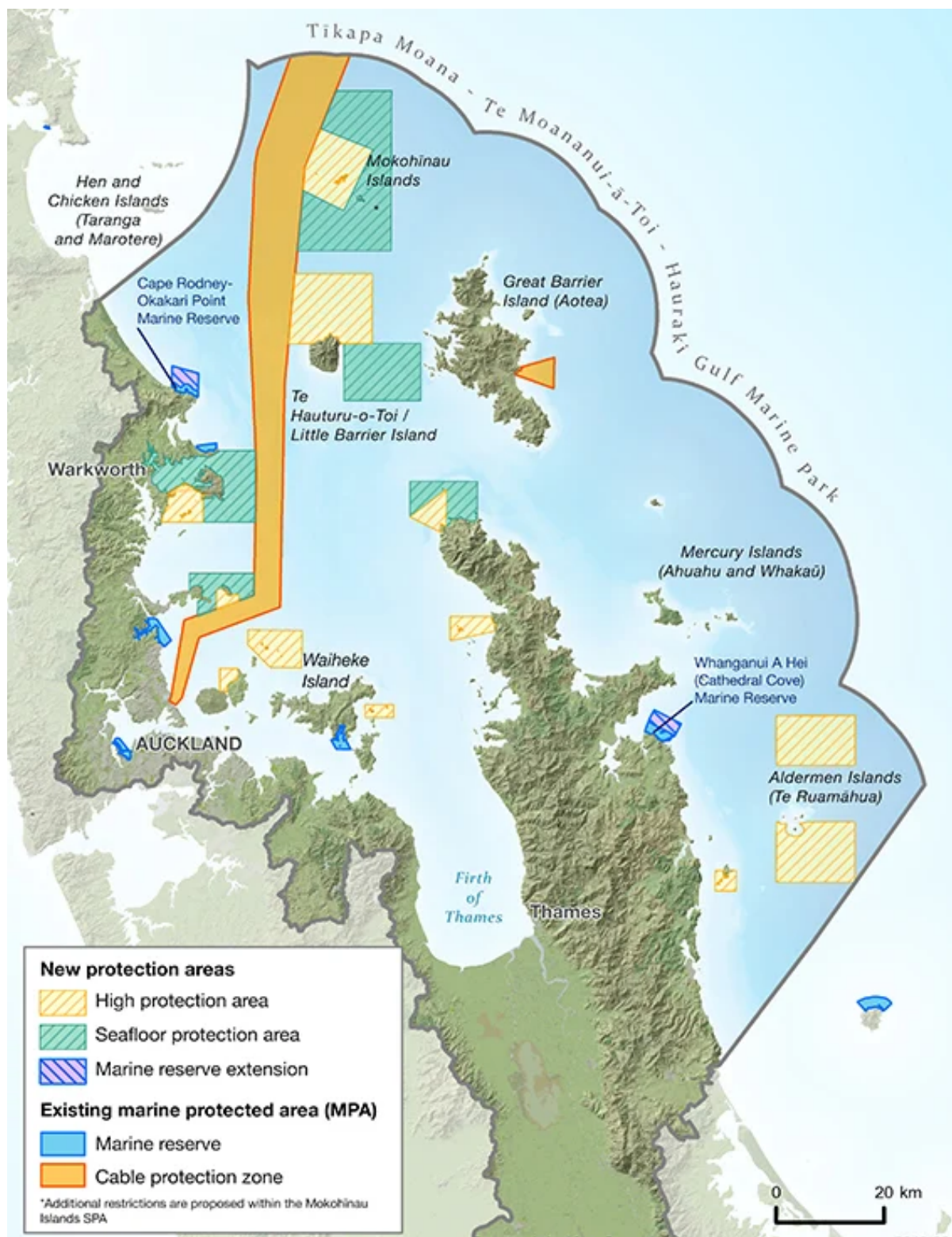


The Waikato Conservation Board – Who we are

The Waikato Conservation Board is made up of community people with a passion for conservation. We're appointed by the Minister of Conservation following a nomination process for an initial 3-year term and we're trying to raise our profile as not many people know about us or what we do.

Our key focus areas this year will be the progress of the Hauraki Gulf Protection Bill under the coalition Government, the review of Te Ture Whaimana o te Awa o Waikato/Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River, and a watching brief on bio-security challenges and significant resource management applications across the Waikato region. Let us know if you think we should be across other issues.

Find out more about us on [Facebook](#) or [here](#) via the DOC website. You're also welcome to come along to the public forum, 2.30pm at our next Board Meeting: Friday 15 March at DOC Hamilton Office. For further details please email: waikatoconservationboard@doc.govt.nz



Hauraki Gulf Proposed Marine Protection Areas (Image provided courtesy of DOC)