



Hauraki Gulf Forum  
Tikapa Moana  
Te Moananui a Toi

# Weaving the Strands

Promoting and facilitating integrated management around the Hauraki Gulf – Tikapa Moana

## Inspirational

A few weeks ago I was invited to spend the afternoon on Explore New Zealand's Whale and Dolphin Safari boat.

We departed Viaduct Basin, headed out of the harbour, through the Motuihe channel and along the northern coast of Waiheke.

It felt like looking for needles in a haystack.

But well into the Firth diving gannets signaled the presence of bait fish and a group of around 40 common dolphins working the edges of a boil up.

Their antics kept camera-clicking passengers enthralled for a half hour then, almost on cue, the distant spout of a whale drew us towards larger subjects.

We followed the behemoth as it headed north, a series of three shallow dives – a graceful arch of a long back and small dorsal fin of a Bryde's whale – then a steeper pitch and three to four minutes of anticipation waiting for a sharp breath to reveal its new location.

It felt like we were witnessing something rare and special, yet the boat delivers a whale encounter on 75 percent of its daily, year round trips and has a 90 percent success rate with dolphins.

I hope it stays that way. I was on the boat to talk with TV3's Campbell Live about the loss of an average of two Bryde's whales a year to ship strike in a resident population of just 50 animals.

The problem is Bryde's whales are shallow divers, spending 90 percent of their time in the top 10 metres of water, where they remain largely invisible to the more than



*We need determined action to safeguard the Gulf's unique resident marine mammals and seabirds.*

1400 large vessels, mainly container ships, which ply the inner Gulf each year.

Fortunately, there is a simple solution and that is to slow down. Current average large vessel speed is 14.2 knots and reducing that to 10 would change the odds of a strike being fatal from 80 percent to 20 percent.

The Hauraki Gulf Forum is working with industry and the Department of Conservation to make that happen with urgency, otherwise we face the prospect of a Gulf without Bryde's whales.

I was delighted this month to celebrate the success that comes when we do act to protect and enhance the Gulf. After years of detective work, Chris Gaskin and Matt Rayner led a team to locate



the nesting place of the New Zealand storm petrel, thought extinct for over a century before its rediscovery less than 10 years ago.

A tiny population of the sparrow-size bird has hung on to Little Barrier Island and when cats (in the 70s) and kiore rats (in 2004) were removed they have been able to bounce back.

What great things we can do when we have the courage. Let's continue that way and act decisively for the sake of our whales.



*Mayor John Tregidga,  
Chair, Hauraki Gulf Forum*



*Lonely Planet ranks the Gulf NZ's top attraction.*

## Marine Park No 1.

Lonely Planet travel guide rated Auckland Harbour and the Hauraki Gulf at the top of its list of the country's 20 best experiences in its latest edition, released late last year.

To encourage visitors to stay and explore longer in the region, Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development and the Department of Conservation recently combined resources to produce a new, free visitor guide to the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park and its islands.

The brochure lists activities around the Gulf and includes Treasure Islands campaign messages to help protect the islands from unwanted pests.

[www.aucklandnz.com](http://www.aucklandnz.com)

## Storm petrel success

The New Zealand storm petrel, thought extinct until 2003, has been confirmed breeding on Little Barrier Island/ Hauturu.

Teams of researchers camped out over the summer on the Poor Knights Islands, Mokohinau Islands and Little Barrier Island and used radio receivers to zero in on the breeding site.

"It's an amazing result for our enthusiastic and dedicated team," said Chris Gaskin who led the expedition with Dr. Matt Rayner from the University of Auckland.

Three specimens of the tiny seabirds were collected off New Zealand in the 1800s and are held by museums

overseas. Since its rediscovery, there has been speculation as to where this seabird breeds.

The New Zealand storm petrel is listed as critically endangered by the International Union of the Conservation of Nature and finding the breeding site is vital for their conservation.

The discovery coincides with the publication of a Hauraki Gulf seabird management strategy and research plan by the Hauraki Gulf Forum.

## Government releases freshwater proposals

The Government has released a document outlining a proposed plan of action for improving water quality and the way freshwater is managed.

The proposals build on the work of the Land and Water Forum, which undertook a stakeholder-led collaborative process with primary industry representatives, environmental and recreational NGOs, iwi and other organisations with an interest in freshwater and land management.

*Freshwater reform 2013 and beyond* proposes a series of reforms to support communities to make better decisions, plan, set objectives and limits for their water bodies, and then manage land and water use within those limits.

Comments on the proposed reforms are being sought by 8 April 2013.

[www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/water/freshwater/freshwater-reform-2013/](http://www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/water/freshwater/freshwater-reform-2013/)



*Plan to improve water quality.*



*Pycroft's petrels return to Motuora.*

## Zoo and island trust team up

Auckland Zoo and Rotoroa Island have partnered up to establish a wildlife conservation sanctuary on the Gulf's Rotoroa Island.

Closed to the public for nearly 100 years, Rotoroa Island was a place of sanctuary for people recovering from addiction. However, it re-opened in 2011 as an arts, heritage and conservation estate. "This partnership will ensure that the island's legacy of recovery, salvation and renewal will continue into the future," said Rotoroa Island trustee John Gow.

Auckland Zoo director Jonathan Wilcken said the zoo was working more and more to save species in the wild. "We'll also be establishing a unique schools programme to encourage students to get directly involved with the work of ecological restoration and hope to see a generation of kids grow up with a sense of ownership in the renewal of Rotoroa Island."

The Hutton Wilson Charitable Trust is funding this partnership through an investment of \$4m over the next five years.

[www.rotoroa.org.nz](http://www.rotoroa.org.nz)

## Gannets and petrels on Motuora

Gannets have hatched on Motuora Island nearly three years after a fake gannet colony was set up on the island by the Motuora Restoration Society.





Tall ships expected.



Restoration around Pigeon Mountain.



Blue flag raised at Okahu Bay.

Sixteen fibreglass decoys were placed in the fake colony and a sound system used to broadcast gannet calls to attract birds. Nesting first took place in late 2012 and the first chick hatched in early January this year, an important milestone for the community restoration group.

Meanwhile, this month 70 Pycroft's petrels were translocated from Red Mercury Island to Motuora. They were placed into artificial burrows where they will be fed for up to 4 weeks until fledging.

[www.doc.govt.nz/about-doc/news/media-releases/fake-gannets-entice-real-gannets-to-hatch-chick-on-motuora-island/](http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-doc/news/media-releases/fake-gannets-entice-real-gannets-to-hatch-chick-on-motuora-island/)

## Waiheke marine reserve promoted

A campaign for a marine reserve on the northern side of Waiheke Island, between Oneroa Bay and Thompsons Point, has been launched on Facebook.

Friends of the Hauraki Gulf group spokesperson Alex Stone believes there is majority support on the island for a northern reserve.

A scientific assessment has been initiated, with funding from the Hauraki Gulf Conservation Trust and the Hauraki Gulf Islands branch of Forest & Bird, to look at potential boundaries, environmental and community benefits, review existing information on local and regional marine ecosystems and outline the steps required for submitting a formal proposal.

[www.facebook.com/groups/waiheke.northern.marine.reserve/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/waiheke.northern.marine.reserve/)  
[http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=1f5741dd51&id=868775bdb0&e=\[UNIQID\]](http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=1f5741dd51&id=868775bdb0&e=[UNIQID])

## Volcano to sea

The New Zealand Landcare Trust has launched its first urban restoration project in Howick's Pigeon Mountain/O Huairangi catchment.

Volcano to Sea Project Coordinator Trudy Rankin said the project would link communities, remnant natural features and the sea.

"We plan to capture the imagination of schools and community members, harnessing their enthusiasm to make positive changes in their local environment."

[www.landcare.org.nz](http://www.landcare.org.nz)

## Blue Flag raised

The Landing at Okahu Bay was awarded the Blue Flag eco-label at a ceremony attended by MP Nikki Kaye and Waterfront Auckland directors in December.

The Landing consists of boat storage and service facilities and 13 separate marine-related user groups, including the Royal Akarana Yacht Club and the Auckland Sailing Club.

The Blue Flag programme provides a mechanism to adapt and champion environmental best practices and programmes, said The Landing Manager, Scott Fickling. "The Landing team is now working with both Ngāti Whātua and the Council storm water team to eliminate all storm water discharges into the greater Okahu Bay area."

Westhaven Marina is also accredited under the international scheme.

## Tall ships on their way

Tall ships will line Auckland's waterfront next Labour Weekend in a festival hosted by the Voyager New Zealand Maritime Museum.

More than a dozen ships and over 1000 sailors, participating in tall ships festivals in Melbourne and Sydney, will cross the Tasman for three days in October 2013.

Ports of Auckland have agreed to provide berthing facilities, Waterfront Auckland the use of The Cloud, and Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development has contributed funding.

## Fonterra and DoC partnership

Fonterra and the Department of Conservation will work together to improve the natural habitats of some important waterways around New Zealand over the next ten years.

The Firth of Thames is one of five areas targeted in the \$20 million community investment.

The work will include planting trees alongside streams and rivers to improve water quality, managing pests and weeds and making sure that the right habitats are in place around farms to enhance biodiversity and provide homes for native fish and birds.

<http://fonterralivingwater.com>



Firth of Thames to benefit from Fonterra-DoC partnership.

## Mansion House restored

The Department of Conservation has completed repair and restoration work on Kawau Island's Mansion House and the building has re-opened to the public.

Over \$1m has been invested into reconstructing parts of the roof and chimneys, re-roofing the whole building, and re-painting it.

Kawau Island was purchased by Sir George Grey in 1862. Between 1862 and 1888 he spent a fortune on his island home, planting hundreds of different plant species and introducing many exotic and native animals, some of which remain today. He also enlarged and remodelled the former residence of the mine superintendent and made it his home.

Mansion House has been in public ownership since 1967 and was restored to its former appearance in 1977-80 after many years of neglect. It has also been furnished with a collection of antique furnishings donated or loaned to DoC.

The department is currently considering how to manage and present the building and the historic reserve as part of an improved visitor experience.

[www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-visit/auckland/hauraki-gulf-islands/kawau-island-historic-reserve/](http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-visit/auckland/hauraki-gulf-islands/kawau-island-historic-reserve/)

## Miranda plains protected

The Nature Heritage Fund has purchased 5ha of land on the Miranda coast which will protect a relatively untouched example of the area's unique chenier plains, plus wetlands which provide habitat for the rare plant Māori musk (Mimulus repens).

In addition, the land owner has agreed to covenant a further 14ha to protect more of the chenier plain geological formation.

[www.doc.govt.nz/about-doc/news/media-releases/2012/minister-welcomes-purchase-of-rare-wetlands/](http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-doc/news/media-releases/2012/minister-welcomes-purchase-of-rare-wetlands/)



Mansion house reopens.



Chenier plains protected.

## Clean streams snapshot

The Dairying and Clean Streams Accord Snapshot of Progress for 2011/2012 was released in February.

The annual report shows that the sector is underperforming on many of its environmental targets with just 56% of farms having nutrient management plans and 11% of farms still in serious breach of their consent conditions.

The report shows compliance with regional council dairy effluent rules and consent conditions improved over the previous year in Auckland (58 percent to 73 percent) and Waikato (66 percent to 72 percent).

<http://mpi.govt.nz/news-resources/publications.aspx?title=Dairying%20and%20Clean%20Streams%20Accord>

## Under consultation

Auckland Unitary Plan	Auckland Council	<a href="http://www.shapeauckland.co.nz">www.shapeauckland.co.nz</a>
Freshwater reform	MfE, MPI	<a href="http://www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/water/freshwater/freshwater-reform-2013/">www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/water/freshwater/freshwater-reform-2013/</a>

*The Hauraki Gulf Forum is a statutory body charged with the promotion and facilitation of integrated management and the protection and enhancement of the Hauraki Gulf. The Forum has representation on behalf of the Ministers of Conservation, Fisheries and Māori Affairs, elected representatives from Auckland Council (including the Great Barrier and Waiheke local boards), Waikato Regional Council, and the Waikato, Hauraki, Thames Coromandel and Matamata Piako district councils, plus six representatives of the tangata whenua of the Hauraki Gulf and its islands.*

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