



Hauraki Gulf Forum
Tikapa Moana
Te Moananui a Toi

Weaving the Strands

Promoting and facilitating integrated management around the Hauraki Gulf – Tikapa Moana, Te Moananui a Toi.

A glass half full

Releases of native wildlife on our Hauraki Gulf islands have featured prominently in the past 25 issues of Weaving the Strands.

It's one of the great success stories of the marine park – hard working community groups, a committed Department of Conservation, engaged councils and supportive iwi.

When we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the marine park in 2010, the Hauraki Gulf Forum published the "Spreading Wings" map appended showing translocations to predator-free sanctuaries.

More species and islands have been added since: A snowball effect breathing life back into the park.

Of the 93 Gulf islands larger than five hectares, at least 43 are free of introduced mammalian pests. Rakitu (328 ha) and Great Mercury (1860 ha) will join the list shortly.

The return of native wildlife to these sanctuaries is often the 'icing on the cake' after years of hard work and investment by volunteers and agencies in re-vegetation and pest control. The release of kiwi, takahe, saddlebacks, tuatara and other endangered species, or reappearance of self-introducing bellbirds, gannets and brown teal, become wonderful vehicles for education and celebration.

How much potential is there to extend this mission, to create the protected, enhanced Hauraki Gulf anticipated by the marine park act?



Apart from Tiritiri Matangi, which is close to capacity, almost all the pest free islands of the Gulf could support further reintroductions of land birds.

Around 50 islands and adjacent mainland sanctuaries, like Tawharanui and Shakespear, have capacity to accommodate 10 or more species. Hundreds of smaller islands could provide habitat for one of more species.

Otata Island, a 15 ha forest-cloaked island in the Noises group, is a good example. It has been free of mammalian pests for over 12 years but has not yet received a single reintroduction. Red-crowned kakariki, diving petrel or pycrofts petrel, tuatara, Pacific gecko, Duvaucel's gecko, shore skink, wetapunga, flax weevil, and milk-tree are all likely to thrive in this environment.



Mayor John Tregidga,
Chair, Hauraki Gulf Forum

While transfers of land bird have become common, efforts to re-establish bats, seabirds, reptiles, invertebrates and plants are rare. These taxonomic groups provide important ecosystem functions.

A goal to increase species translocation events several fold over the next 10 years is not unrealistic. A strategic plan to make it happen, a timely move.

The conservation story emerging from Gulf islands like Tiritiri Matangi has already inspired the world. Let's take the glass half full and make it runneth over.



Whitehead and saddleback release on Rotoroa.



Okahu Stream to see daylight?



Te Arai settlement reached.

New tourism product

Explore Group has announced it will be running new tourist based ferry services to Rangitoto, Motutapu and Waiheke from July, with further island destinations to be added in the future.

The company, which until recently operated Auckland Whale and Dolphin Safari, and runs sailing adventurers and charters in the Gulf as well as Bay of Islands and Australia, will relocate its flagship Discovery 5 power catamaran from the Bay of Islands for the service.

Explore Group Managing Director William Goodfellow said "this new product has huge potential for development. Working alongside the Department of Conservation, iwi interests and environmental groups, we can ensure it will be a strong and innovative tourism product and great asset for Auckland's visitor economy."

The Auckland Whale and Dolphin Safari will continue to operate under new management.

www.exploregroup.co.nz

Marine reserve effects

The new study led by scientists from Massey University has estimated the effects of three Hauraki Gulf marine reserves. There are between eight to 20 times more large snapper (above the legal limit) in reserves than in nearby areas where fishing occurs.

Fish were counted using "baited underwater video" where a camera is aimed at a box of bait for a fixed length of time.

"Novel statistical methods allowed us to produce the most accurate estimates of NZ marine reserve effects to date," says Massey lecturer and PhD candidate Adam Smith.

<http://phys.org/news/2014-04-marine-reserves-havens-large-snapper.html>

Milestones on Rotoroa

Thirty tieke (saddleback) and 30 pōpokotea (whitehead) were released on Rotoroa Island in May, an important milestone in the development of the island from a Salvation Army alcohol rehabilitation retreat to a conservation, arts and educational park.

The translocations from Hauturu/ Little Barrier follow extensive planting, monitoring and pest eradication. They mark the start of an ambitious 25-year plan by Auckland Zoo and the Rotoroa Island Trust that includes introducing up to 20 new species by 2018. Kiwi, Duvaucel's gecko and moko skink are expected later this year.

Jonathan Wilcken, Auckland Zoo director said school students and island visitors would have opportunities to contribute to the ongoing health and management of the island. Nest and roost boxes for the new arrivals were built by Long Bay College students.

A solar-powered sound system, broadcasting gannet calls, was also switched on. It is hoped birds will create a new breeding colony among carefully constructed decoys and bare nesting space.

www.rotoroa.org.nz

Daylighting potential

Ngati Whatua o Orakei is investigating the potential of daylighting Okahu Stream that once flowed through its papakainga.

The tidal creek was covered over in 1936 and the marae forcibly removed in 1954.

The stream now runs through a culvert underneath Okahu reserve and into the Waitemata Harbour.

Richelle Kahui-McConnell, manager of the Okahu Catchment Ecological Restoration Plan for Ngati Whatua o Orakei says "The reinstatement of the creek looks to increase the mauri of the hapu and the environment whilst addressing the injustices of the past. An ability to implement ahi ka and whakawhanaungatanga are essential ingredients in the development and design principles are based on providing habitat by looking through inanga and tamariki eyes."

Further planning is needed and it is expected to be two years before Okahu Stream flows in the open again.

www.morphum.com/files/CLARKE_C_2014%20SW%20CONFERENCE_Final.pdf

Seabirds in spotlight

The Hauraki Gulf features significantly in a new report published by Forest & Bird.

New Zealand Seabirds: Important Bird Areas and Conservation – the result of a two-year review – forms part of an international project to document places of international significance to seabirds.



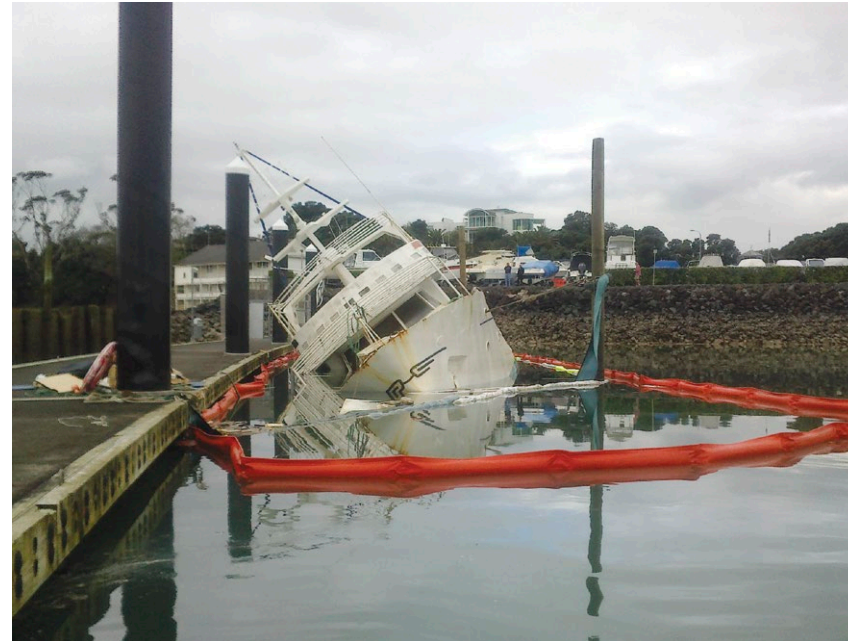
Gannets encouraged back.



Discovery 5 ferry to provide tourist services.



Rhamnus threat to coastal forest.



Oil spill from vessel at Bayswater.



Sports fishing potential untapped?



Stormwater links to curriculum.

Project coordinator Chris Gaskin says sites are identified that are critical for survival of each of our seabird species. “Some areas warrant immediate protection from a range of threats, both on land and at sea, including coastal and river development, predation, vandalism (wilful or otherwise), marine pollutants, fisheries impacts, and large scale offshore oil, gas and mineral extraction”.

Ngati Manuhiri kaumatua Mook Hohnneck and Hauraki Gulf Forum Chairman John Tregidga welcomed the report and said it provided important guidance for management agencies and community groups.

www.forestandbird.org.nz/important-bird-areas/

Rhamnus targeted

One of New Zealand’s most invasive pest plant species, Rhamnus (also known as Evergreen Buckthorn), is taking over pohutukawa forests in the inner Hauraki Gulf.

This has prompted Auckland Council and the Department of Conservation to investigate an integrated pest plant management plan for the Gulf.

Rhamnus quickly overtakes stream, forest and coastal areas, changing the structure of native ecosystems by forming thick strands and interfering with native plant regeneration.

Auckland Council biosecurity officers have surveyed the Musick Point and Bucklands Beach area to investigate how the pest plant is spreading. They will follow up with advice to property owners on eradication techniques.

The Department of Conservation has let a new 3 year contract for weed control on Rangitoto and Motutapu, with a focus on Rhamnus.

www.arc.govt.nz/environment/biosecurity/search-for-plants

Progress at Te Arai

Auckland Council hearings commissioners have approved a coastal development at Te Arai, immediately south of Mangawhai, after agreement was reached between the developers, Auckland Council, Department of Conservation and environmental groups.

Te Uri o Hau Settlement Trust chair Rawson Wright said “Te Uri o Hau purchased the 616 hectare Mangawhai North Forest in 2002 as part of the commercial redress package in our treaty settlement. After many years, we can now proceed with a development delivering an economic return to the hapu, which can be invested into services and jobs to support our 7,000 members, while also protecting the environment.”

The hapu plans to develop 46 houses, an associated golf course and replace pine forest with native vegetation.

Part of the overall development is an offer to gift 172 hectares of the forest to Auckland Council, adding to the existing 87 hectares of council owned land. It includes the entire beach front area and dunes, and the parts of the forest with the highest conservation values.

The next stage in the development process will be approval of a Comprehensive Site Management Plan,

which will include strict conditions to address conservation of threatened species such as the endangered fairy tern.

Auckland Council will then assess the applications for building and other land use consents. A process to create a regional park will run in parallel.

www.uriohau.com/news_and_events/news_entry/te_arai_development_given_the_go_ahead

Stormwater resources

Stormwater management has an important bearing on the quality of the Hauraki Gulf environment.

Now secondary school students can study the topic at NCEA level 2 and 3 through new online resources produced by Auckland Council.

Developed in partnership with schools and the community, the resources are easy to use, downloadable and customisable.

Co-author Bridget Glasgow says, “the resource will help connect students with their own communities, support taking action for waterways and harbours and provide an opportunity for students to gain credits for understanding stormwater science.”

Email: efs.administration@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Meanwhile, Auckland Council has commissioned an international benchmarking report of its stormwater practices, which suggests on the ground action currently lags behind aspirations to be a water sensitive city. See:

<http://media.nzherald.co.nz/webcontent/document/pdf/201419/stormwater.pdf>

Under sail

“Under full sail” is how Independent Stakeholder Working Group Chair Nick Main describes the Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari project to develop a marine spatial plan.

“The establishment phase is behind us and an intense amount of project activity is going on, all of it aimed at securing a healthy, productive and sustainable future for the Hauraki Gulf.”

The project has completed a series of “listening post” meetings around the region “to hear in people’s own words the way they use the Gulf, their activities on the Gulf, how they value the Gulf, what their aspirations for the Gulf might be.”

The Stakeholder Working Group has established six issues-based ‘Roundtables’ to break the work of Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari into manageable pieces.

www.seachange.org.nz

Climate risk

A global study warns climate change may threaten conservation gains on islands.

Up to 26 of 604 pest-free islands around the world are threatened by rising sea levels, while NZ sanctuaries will experience higher intensity and

more frequent storms, causing coastal flooding and erosion.

“Climate change means we will increasingly need to shift conservation efforts to larger islands such as Rakiura, Aotea and the mainland,” says co-author Dr James Russell of University of Auckland.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tree.2014.01.001>

Untapped potential?

Outdoors writer Geoff Thomas has suggested tourism revenue from catching kahawai, kingfish and broadbill swordfish could top our world famous trout fishery.

“We haven’t scratched the surface of the potential for kahawai on saltfly tackle.”

He cites the highly prized bonefish which attracts anglers to clear, shallow waters around the Pacific and in Florida has been estimated to generate \$70,000 in economic value per individual fish!

www.nzherald.co.nz/sport/news/article.cfm?c_id=4&objectid=11264113

Oil spill response review

Maritime New Zealand is currently reviewing the New Zealand Marine Oil Spill Response Strategy which establishes the framework for responding to marine oil spills.

A tiered response system currently operates, with responsibilities resting with site operators, regional councils and Maritime NZ depending on the scale of incident.

Maritime NZ says the updated strategy is intended to be active, forward looking and to anticipate new activities. The review will consider lessons learned from the Rena and recent overseas oil spill incidents.

www.maritimenz.govt.nz/Consultation/Response-strategy

Next big idea

A new \$100 million philanthropic foundation to support high impact environmental and education projects was launched in Auckland in March.

The NEXT Foundation is funded through the benefaction of Annette and Neal Plowman, who have already supported a number of significant projects, including the Rotorua Island Trust.

The Foundation will make investments of \$5–\$15 million each year.

Expressions of interest are being sought until 11 July and the first grants will be announced in December 2014.

www.nextfoundation.org.nz

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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Photo credits: Auckland Council, Auckland Zoo, Maritime NZ.