



Weaving the Strands

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

Going, going, gone?

New research on the Hauraki Gulf's resident population of Bryde's whales shows we are in danger losing them.

This summer two dead whales were found floating in the Gulf and then towed to land for necropsies (the whale equivalent of an autopsy). The messy and smelly job of flensing the whales revealed broken bones and massive bruising caused by collision with large ships.

University of Auckland research Dr Rochelle Constantine says we've lost 41 whales in the last 16 years. Of the 18 that have been examined 15 have died because of ship-strike.

At this rate we are losing about two whales a year out of a Gulf population estimated at only 50.

During summer Dr Constantine and her colleagues were also able to fit depth recording tags to several whales and found they spend 90 percent of their time within 12 metres of the surface, where they are vulnerable to ships.

Internationally the creation of traffic separation lanes, seasonal whale sanctuaries and speed restrictions on large vessels has proven successful at reducing ship strike.

Studies and experience elsewhere show that a 10 knot limit is a safe, navigable speed and increases the chance of a whale surviving a strike by 75 percent.

Dr Constantine says the scattered distribution and shallow diving behaviour of Bryde's whales suggests



The latest Bryde's whale to be struck by a large vessel.

slowing ship speed is the best option for protecting them in the Gulf.

An initial meeting to discuss the research findings was held in March involving representatives of shipping and port interests. It is hoped that shipping interests will voluntarily put speed restrictions in place with urgency.

An officials group has also been established to investigate how regulations administered by the Ministry of Transport, Department of Conservation and Auckland Council can be put in place.

I will be working closely with all parties to ensure the Bryde's whale remains a vital part of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.



*Mayor John Tregidga,
Chair, Hauraki Gulf Forum*



NZ storm petrel shows signs of breeding locally.



Jim Holdaway at the marine park 10th anniversary.

Petrel detective work

A team of researchers have collected the best evidence yet that the New Zealand storm petrel, which was thought extinct until 2003, is breeding in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

Before dawn on Wednesday, 1 February Chris Gaskin, Dr Matt Rayner (University of Auckland), Shane McInnes (DoC) and boat skipper Brett Rathe headed out into the Hauraki Gulf to capture New Zealand storm petrels and identify signs of breeding in the birds. This is no mean feat given NZ storm petrels are small, highly mobile and maneuverable seabirds living on a big ocean.

The team captured five birds with specially designed net guns. Four of them showed signs of breeding with bare "brood patches" on their belly that are used to incubate eggs. The project team, including DoC seabird expert Graeme Taylor, believe this strongly suggests the birds are breeding locally, with islands within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park the most likely sites.

Once additional funding is secured they hope to track birds to their island breeding location using radio tracking devices. Watch this space.

A man of vision

Many years ago Ann Holdaway kept a newspaper photo of her late husband Jim, gazing out over the Hauraki Gulf. Its caption read "Man of Vision".

Future events in Jim's life have borne out the accuracy of these words. His love of nature came from his upbringing on a

beautiful Northland farm with sparkling streams and native bush from which he drew inspiration. Because of the depression he left school early to help with the farm. Jim was a remarkable leader from the start.

Decorated twice for bravery, determination and courage as a pathfinder during World War II he returned to New Zealand to build his vision. His ability to accept responsibility carried on into civilian life. Settling on 30 acres in Northcote and farming cash crops led to Jim representing a group of frontier farmers on the local council. Later he initiated New Zealand's first underground power supply and the first municipally owned shopping area. He held many public offices during which time he spearheaded the purchase of 5000 acres of regional parkland.

Of his passing in January Kit Brown of Motuora Trust says "The world needs more people like Jim. There are not too many with Jim's vision, personality and persistence. We and many others will remember with gratitude how much he contributed to conservation, the Hauraki Gulf Islands and the wonderful Regional Park network over many many years."

Tributes also from Chris Fletcher on behalf of the Motutapu Restoration Trust "Jim was a wise and gentle leader for New Zealand conservation, a passionate advocate for the Hauraki Gulf and an outstanding guardian for land and people. His vision for our environment, selfless endeavours and talent for forging strong relationships amongst people and across organisations has left a wonderful legacy for all Aucklanders and he will be sadly missed."

In a further moving tribute Councillor Mike Lee writes "Jim Holdaway will always be remembered as the father of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park."

www.mikelee.co.nz/2012/01/tribute-to-jim-holdaway-last-of-the-greatest-generation

Managing fish farm risks

Waikato Regional Council will use consenting and tender processes to manage and monitor the effects of fish farming on the environment.

Expressions of interest for fish farming space in two zones totalling about 390 ha in the Firth of Thames will soon be sought.

The council has considered 10 potential environmental effects of fish farming and outlined possible management options and controls. They are categorised into feed supply, the release of drugs and chemicals, waves and currents, wild fish, diseases and parasites, biofouling and invasive species, the seafloor, water quality, marine mammals and birds.

Chair of the Policy and Strategy Committee Councillor Paula Southgate said "we have good information and through the Resource Management Act consent process and tendering criteria we have the tools to manage the environmental effects and take swift action if necessary."

Before consent applications can be lodged, fish farming companies will need to demonstrate their track record on environmental systems and management as part of a competitive tender process for 80 per cent of the



Rare shorebird back on Motutapu.



Tieke song to be heard on mainland.



Kawau icon restored.

space within the two zones. The first 20 per cent of the area must be allocated to the Māori Trustee.

Planning principles

A marine spatial plan for the Hauraki Gulf is a step closer after the Auckland Council gave support in principle to preparation of the plan at its Auckland Future Vision Committee meeting in February.

This follows similar endorsement and indicative funding from Waikato Regional Council last year. Central government agencies are also planning to contribute.

Though yet to be endorsed by a governance group of sponsoring agencies and iwi, project documents have flagged a collaborative approach enabling users and sector groups to play a major part in shaping the plan.

The State of our Gulf report, published by the Forum last year, highlighted the need to address land use, fisheries and protected area issues together to ensure environmental health and long term benefits from the Gulf.

Watch out for seabirds

The Southern Seabird Solutions Trust is urging recreational fishers to watch out for seabirds. It recently presented awards for innovations that reduce the risk of hooking up with birds. These included using a super soaker to distract birds when setting bait, water stains, the use of soft baits and rod handling techniques.

Nationwide, the impact of recreational fishing on seabirds is not well understood although a study carried out during the summer of 2007/08 estimated that recreational fishers may capture 11,500 seabirds per year in the north eastern region of New Zealand.

www.southernseabirds.org

Tieke make it back

Tieke (saddlebacks) – some nurtured on the islands of the Gulf – are being welcomed back to the Auckland mainland for the first time in more than 150 years.

Ninety of these rare and endangered birds are being released into the open sanctuary at Tawharanui Regional Park during the next month. They will join re-introduced kiwi, pateke, robins and whiteheads, as well as bellbirds and kaka which have returned to the park of their own accord. Tieke disappeared from the mainland in the mid to late 1800s, as a result of predators— especially rats. Auckland Councillor Sandra Coney, Chair of the Parks, Recreation and Heritage Forum, says the return of this extremely vulnerable species will test the success of Tawharanui as a pest free open sanctuary.

The tieke were sourced from populations on Lady Alice Island in the Hen and Chicken group, Red Mercury Island and Mokoia Island in Lake Rotorua to combine genetic backgrounds.

Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Society Inc (TOSSI) Chair Steve Palmer says the release is a great way to mark TOSSI's tenth anniversary. "It is special occasions like this that reminds us what all the hard work has been about."

Island successes

Tuturuatu (shore plover) are the latest native bird to be released on Motutapu and Rangitoto.

Thirty-two of the critically endangered shorebirds, raised in captivity at Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre and Peacock Springs in Christchurch, were introduced to the recently-declared pest-free islands. There are only about 200 tuturuatu in the wild and Islington Bay is ideal habitat for them to feed and breed. It is hoped they will also establish breeding populations on nearby Motuihe, Rakino and Mutukorea islands.

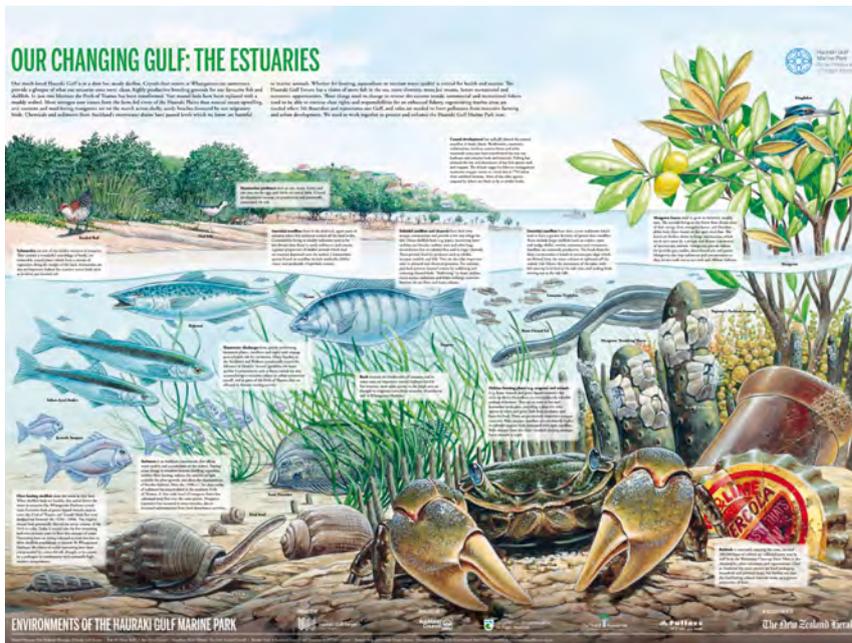
Meanwhile, the tieke (saddleback) released in September have already bred and hatched chicks on Rangitoto and Motutapu. The four takahe released at the same time have also settled in well and the two-year old pairs are expected to breed for the first time next year.

New Zealand's largest insect, the weta punga, has been introduced to Tiritiri Matangi Island. Predation restricted its population in the Gulf to Hauturu/ Little Barrier Island but a captive breeding programme at Auckland's Butterfly Creek has recently enabled their re-introduction to Motuora, and now Tiritiri Matangi.

March also saw the release of 60 northern tuatara into specially prepared burrows on pest-free Motuihe Island.

Kawau icon restored

The 157-year old Copper Mine Engine House on Kawau Island has been repaired and protected. Built from



Our Changing Gulf posters carry education message.



Raglan restoration champion reaps rewards.



Kawau fisher found guilty of dumping catch.

soft sandstone, the engine house chimney is an iconic image for boats on the island's south-west coast.

It was built to pump water from the first underground mining operation in New Zealand but had become badly eroded by sea, wind and rain. A barrier wall has been built and the eroded west wall and chimney entry have been rebuilt with matching sandstone.

50,000 people visit Kawau each year. The Department of Conservation is now planning a major restoration of the island's historic Mansion House.

Inspirational

The New Zealand Landcare Trust recently announced six Landcare Ambassadors to recognise their outstanding commitment to sustainable land management and local communities, and the ability to inspire others to get involved in action on the ground.

Among them was Fred Lichtwark of Whaingaroa HarbourCare who has overseen the growing and planting of 1 million native trees along 450km of streams and the edges of Raglan Harbour since 1995.

More than 40 farmers have been involved and the result is dramatically improved

water quality, less silt build-up in the harbour and greatly enhanced fishing.

Fred is eager to share his experience and will be top of the speaker list at the annual Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Seminar later this year. Date and venue details will be posted on www.haurakigulfforum.org.nz shortly.

Rate your own beach

The Hauraki Gulf Forum has produced a Discovery Challenge to build understanding of how the marine environment is changing.

The resource was published by the New Zealand Herald as part of its promotion of the Our Changing Gulf poster series.

The posters show how the reefs, estuaries and islands of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park are being impacted by development, fishing pressure and restoration efforts.

Illustrated by wildlife artist Dave Gunson the posters appeared in the New Zealand Herald in February, were a feature of Seaweed, and have been distributed through schools and education programmes. Further copies are available from the Hauraki Gulf Forum Manager.

Tough stance

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is pleased with the prosecution of a commercial fisherman for dumping snapper. Five tonnes of snapper was found in a discarded Danish seine net off Kawau in December 2010.

The court heard how on 13 Dec 2010 the fishing vessel Diana had been targeting John Dory. Kelly Scoles and one other crew member completed a Danish seine shot. When the net was pulled to the surface, it contained a very large catch of snapper. Mr Scoles then cut the cod end and mid section of the net and steamed away from the area.

Kelly Scoles of Northland was convicted this month of abandoning sea fish of legal size and subject to the quota management system in the ocean. He was fined \$25,000 and the fishing vessel was forfeited.

There have been other reports of fish-dumping throughout the North Island, including in the Hauraki Gulf, and off the Coromandel. MAF northern regional manager Greg Keys encouraged members of the public who see large quantities of fish floating on the sea surface to record the details and call 0800 4 POACHER immediately.

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: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Rochelle Constantine, Department of Conservation, Shane McInnes, Whaingaroa Harbour Care, Bridget Winstone, Martin Sanders, Mary Flaws.



Hauraki Gulf Forum
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