

Teaming with wildlife
*Guardians of the Bay of
Islands Inc. Annual Report*

Ngā Kaiawhi o Ngā Kaitiaki o Ipipiri

For the year ended 30 June 2022

2050 Whāinga 2050 Goal

The ancient dawn chorus is restored

Mihi

Te Maunga ko Rākaumangamanga o te whare tapu o Ngāpuhi

Te Moana ko Ipipiri o Tokerau

Te Hapū ko Ngāti Kuta me Patukeha

Te Iwi ko Ngāpuhi

Te marae ko Te Rāwhiti

*The sacred mountain is Rākaumangamanga of the
sacred house of Ngāpuhi*

The ocean is Ipipiri o Tokerau

The sub tribes are Ngāti Kuta and Patukeha

The tribe is Ngāpuhi

The marae is Te Rāwhiti

Tō mātou moemoeā Our vision

The islands of Ipipiri are an archipelago of sanctuaries, alive with the dawn chorus, where both people and New Zealand's unique wildlife prosper in harmony.

*On the cover Tīeke/North Island saddleback,
reintroduced to the islands in 2015.
Above Tūturiwhatu/New Zealand dotterel on Urupukapuka.*



What we do:



Biosecurity

Protecting the wildlife safe haven by stopping non-native predators and weeds from getting to the pest-free islands.



Revegetation

Restoring native habitat so that the islands flourish.



Weeding

Removing non-native plants.



Native species reintroductions

Returning vulnerable native wildlife.



Education

Providing future generations of kiwis with inspiring learning.



Wildlife tours

Experiencing New Zealand's unique wildlife, wild as nature intended.



Ruru/Morepork on Moturua.

Pānui mai i ngā Heamana

Message from the Co-Chairs

Tēnā koutou katoa,

Once again, the 2021/2022 financial year was a challenging one. Managing the Project through Covid-19 tested us all, with additional lockdowns nationwide, Northland being cut off from the rest of New Zealand and Covid-19 in our community.

However, we were still able to achieve many of our strategic goals. The operational team demonstrated their resilience in meeting the challenges of an on-going global pandemic. Thank you Richard, Laura, Shelley and Shane.

We have seen growth in fundraising and engagement through volunteering and education; intensive monitoring of recently re-introduced species; improvement in biodiversity and habitat restoration through targeting the management of planting, weeding and pest control; consolidation of relationships with key stakeholders; and acknowledgement of Project Island Song as a reliable operation.

We have also seen a changing of the guard. Three people who have been involved since the very beginning of Project Island Song have decided that it is time to step back and hand over their responsibilities to new kaitiaki.

Thank you to Blandy Witehira for your support as part of the hapu at Rāwhiti. We wish you well Blandy in your endeavours with the Ministry for the Environment team.

Our sincere thanks go out to Rod Brown who resigned from the committee this year. Since 2003 Rod has managed the habitat restoration programme for Project Island Song. What a legacy Rod has left in the Bay of Islands. Thank you, Rod.

Our co-chair Fleur Corbett also stepped back this year. Fleur – it is not until someone leaves or takes a step back, that it becomes clear how much they have been doing. Thank you for your guiding light.

Ria Bright, our education facilitator for the past four years, also moved on this year but left our programmes in such a way that succession planning was easily achieved. Thank you, Ria.

Fortunately, we continue to have a great band of volunteers. Thank you to the weeders, the marshals at fundraising events, the calendar sellers, the Kerikeri Men's Shed and of course the many members, sponsors, donors and funders of the Project.

There are exciting times ahead for the Guardians of the Bay.

We look forward to sharing our Annual Report with you.

Noho ora mai,

Barb Elboz (Co-chair) and William Fuller (Acting Co-chair)
Guardians of the Bay of Islands Inc.

Tō mātou tau ki muri

Our year in review

Tēnā koutou katoa,

It is with pride that I introduce the Guardians of the Bay of Islands Inc. annual report for the year ending 30 June 2022. The last 12 months have produced significant outcomes even as we have adapted to major changes and to living with Covid-19 in the community. In a year of immense uncertainty, we have emerged stronger. Whilst dealing with and adapting to Covid-19 the power and resilience in our communities and their ability to drive community-led solutions in the face of the pandemic has resonated.

Although Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions have impacted and delayed some of our operational delivery, our critical pest management, ecological restoration, volunteer and education programmes have all been retained.

However, other changes meant that some tough strategic decisions had to be made, including postponement of the Northland green gecko reintroduction to 2023.

Until now, the Department of Conservation has funded vital island biosecurity. This will end in June 2023. All Project Island Song's work relies on a solid foundation of island pest surveillance. Therefore, building the capacity within the Guardians to scale up for this essential biosecurity role has been our top priority this year. Most significant has been the need to secure reliable transport with the commissioning of a Kingfisher Powercat 620 workboat in June 2022. Thank you to the donors who have stepped forward to finance the purchase and ongoing maintenance. Whilst operating a workboat will be complex, it also offers huge opportunities to adapt and enhance our other work.

I salute the courage of the committee in pledging the resources of the Guardians to meet this gap in government support. It is not without risk. In saying that, it is worth asking – was there ever a choice? What else could the Guardians do? Walk away and wait for stoats, rats, and mice to reintroduce themselves? Not on my watch.

Enduring the pandemic has often made us reflect. This is certainly true as we enter a new era for Project Island Song. The Guardians of the Bay of Islands registered as an

Incorporated Society in 2006 and filed their first set of annual accounts in 2007, reporting an income of just over \$5,000 and expenses just under \$4,000. That income was split in almost even thirds between grants, member subscriptions and donations. The society was entirely volunteer run and depended on substantial logistical and financial support from the Department of Conservation.

Fifteen years later, that support is decreasing while costs always increase. In the 21-22 financial year, 72% of the income to support delivery came from grants, 25% from donations and member subscriptions contributed only 1.6%. Expenses were almost \$240,000. The organisation looks very different now from those early days, requiring a different range of expertise both in the committee and contracted workers, but our purpose remains the same now, as it was then.

The primary objective of the Society is still, "To promote, support and encourage the conservation, protection and enhancement of native biodiversity of the Bay of Islands" and secondly, "To promote, support and encourage education, research and public awareness and enjoyment of New Zealand's native biodiversity". In 2009 those objectives took a giant stride forward when the islands of Ipipiri were pronounced pest-mammal free. Despite occasional pest-incursions that have been managed, that status has been maintained for nearly thirteen years.

In that time, we have reintroduced eight threatened native species and enhanced the habitat they rely on for food and shelter by extensive planting of native vegetation, regular weed control and consistent biosecurity. But there is much more work to do. It's not yet time to sit back and congratulate ourselves – yes, the job has been well done so far, but it's far from over.

Thank you to all our contractors, mana whenua, Guardians committee, volunteers, landowners, property managers, partners, members, funders, donors and to everyone we have engaged with, and worked together with, through this exciting but challenging year.

Richard Robbins,
General Manager, Project Island Song

20

weeding days

354

volunteers

3063

volunteer
hours gifted

11

species monitoring
field trips

12

pest-free
years

13

corporate
members



Monitoring of the reintroduced wētāpunga indicates that they are breeding, the first time in the Bay of Islands in over 100 years.



Wētāpunga footprints detected during a monitoring trip to Motuarohia.

Ā tātou pūtea Our finances

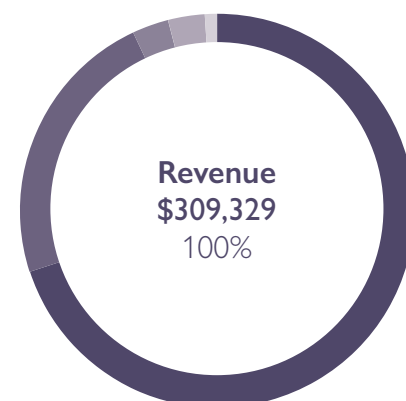
The Guardians successfully achieved FY 21/22's fundraising goal of \$305,000. A significant increase in received donations offset a reduction in grant funding. Donations were boosted by distributions from event organisers as well as donations from private individuals. Foundation North and Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust continued their grant support for our operational and educational programme delivery. Grants from NZ Lottery Grants Board, Northland Regional Council and Department of Conservation (DoC) supported further investment in our kaimahi empowerment, volunteer operations, weeding and pest control programmes. Smaller grants were received to support drought resilience investigations, to acquire materials to support revegetation and to update office equipment.

We spent 61% of the \$253,764 grant funding brought forward from FY 20/21. The remainder will meet activities that were delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions. A total of \$247,025 will be carried over into FY 22/23 to spend on those educational, volunteering and translocation programmes.

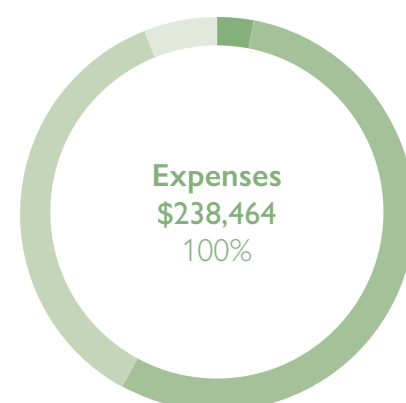
The current year surplus of \$70,865 is the combined result of the recognition of targeted donations received in FY 21/22 that will fund FY 22/23 operating costs and capital costs, and the continued impact of Covid-19 restrictions and the detection of plague skink eggs at the eco-sourced plant nursery delaying delivery and reducing costs. The cash recognition of donations revenue has inflated the financial result by \$35,000. While delays and disruptions have created challenges for both members and the operational team, the financial result is an indicator of the resilience and commitment of our Project Island Song community.

Meanwhile, continued promotion of the Guardians work is evidenced in growing corporate interest in volunteering and in-kind donations of materials. This is seen as a positive return on the investment in both the operations team and volunteer and membership management tools.

A significant development for the Guardians during FY 21/22 was the decision to accept the transitioning of DoC's biosecurity activities commencing FY 22/23. This decision is supported by the commissioning of a workboat for which donation fundraising is underway. An offer for a sponsored tow vehicle is also in progress and it is expected the vessel will be operational in early 2023. In support of this commitment a fundraiser has been engaged to grow the Guardians fundraising base to meet the expected increased operational costs. Our goal is to raise \$400,000 in FY 22/23 to fund our operational budgets.



Grants	\$220,888	71.5%
Other donations and fundraising	\$76,543	24.7%
Fees and subscriptions from members	\$5,010	1.6%
From providing goods and services	\$5,353	1.7%
Interest income	\$1,534	0.5%



Related to public fundraising	\$7,618	3.2%
Volunteer and employee/mission delivery costs	\$132,038	55.3%
Costs of providing goods & services	\$85,675	36%
Other expenses	\$13,132	5.5%

Surplus **\$70,865**

Assets **\$405,673**

Bank accounts and cash \$173,238

Other current assets \$204,761

Property, plant & equipment \$18,711

Other non-current assets \$8,963

Liabilities **\$264,715**

Unused tagged grants and donations \$247,025

Other liabilities \$17,690

Net Assets **\$140,958**

Haere rā Farewell

The last couple of years have seen changing circumstances and many of us re-evaluating our lives. Sadly, this year, two of our founding members stepped down from the Guardians committee after many years of valuable contribution, Richard (Blandy) Witehira and Rod Brown. We also farewelled our Floating Classrooms Educator Ria Bright.

We'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Blandy, Rod and Ria for their exceptional contribution over the years to the Guardians of the Bay of Islands and Project Island Song.



Blandy Witehira

Blandy grew up near Hamilton and returned to his ancestral home at Rāwhiti following a career in the military. He was involved in the construction of the Cape Brett Track and then in its maintenance and management as a shareholder of Cape Brett Walkways.

As a trustee on the Rāwhiti 3B2 Ahu Whenua Trust he was instrumental with other landowners of Rākaumangamanga/Cape Brett peninsula in securing a 25-year kawenata (covenant) with Ngā Whenua Rāhui for the sustained protection of the land that encompasses Rākaumangamanga (one of the pillars of Polynesian migration) – for which 3B2 Trust won a national biosecurity award in 2020.

Blandy has for many years been a strong and committed advocate for predator control, species protection and research. He has travelled widely across the country, and internationally, to share his story with other indigenous peoples.

In 2020 Blandy became a cultural advisor to MPI which involved a move to Wellington. While Blandy, one of our longest standing committee members, has resigned, he will keep his ties with the Guardians in the role of kaiāwhina (counsel and advocate).



Rod Brown

Rod moved to the Bay of Islands in the early 2000s following a career in the navy and project management for the construction of Starship Hospital. On his move north, Rod was initially involved in tourism with high end B&B accommodation in Kerikeri, but he quickly became immersed in conservation work – initiating the Kerikeri Shade House volunteers, a successful social enterprise that has grown several hundred thousand plants for projects across Northland.

Rod managed the process of propagating locally sourced seeds through to planting them in the ground – including on several offshore islands which can have complicated logistics attached. Rod has made a significant contribution to habitat restoration on the islands of Ipipiri, a legacy that will endure many generations. Rod was awarded a Queen's Service Medal in 2019 for services to conservation.



Ria Bright

After four years in the role, the 2021 Floating Classrooms were Ria's last as our Education Facilitator. Ria had been combining the Floating Classroom work with studying for a Doctorate in Education at University of Waikato.

Ria has decided to concentrate on her studies and research, which focuses on climate change education, specifically "what insights educators may gain from student engagement and motivation during the climate strikes."

Throughout her time with us Ria developed the Project Island Song Floating Classrooms programme into a not to be missed opportunity for local Bay of Islands schools. We'd like to thank and acknowledge Ria's expertise in conservation education and wish her well in her future endeavours.

Tō tātou ekenga ki mua hāi

Our future

The wētāpunga are showing signs of breeding

Following the translocation of just over 200 wētāpunga in December 2020 and June 2021, local mana whenua, Project Island Song volunteers, and a North Tec student have been monitoring the three release sites.

Shortly after the releases on Motuarohia, Moturua and Urupukapuka, 60 tracking tunnels were placed across the three islands at the release sites. These tunnels were set with inked tracking cards and baited with peanut butter, ready for monitoring to begin. They were checked and changed throughout the summer of 2021/2022.

Although it's well known that wētāpunga are cryptic, arboreal and can be difficult to detect, we're pleased to report that at least 14 tracking cards across the three islands showed wētāpunga tracks. Since wētāpunga only come down to the ground to breed, this is a positive sign that the island populations are persisting.

It doesn't end there – the wētāpunga reintroductions are part of a three-year programme with Auckland Zoo. More wētāpunga will be released on the islands over the next few years to increase genetic diversity in the populations.

The lead up to any reintroduction can take years of preparation, approvals, expert advice, and financial and non-financial support. And it doesn't stop once the species are reintroduced – ongoing post-release management can continue for years.

Challenges

This year, like so many other organisations, we have had our fair share of challenges. Due to Covid-19 lockdowns and poor weather, not only have we been unable to run as many weeding and volunteer days, we only managed to complete one of the 10 planned Floating Classrooms. The remainder will happen in the next financial year.

Planting biosecurity risks

This year we were also faced with having to cancel our annual planting days on the islands due to a potential biosecurity risk. This risk was the detection of plague skinks at the eco-sourced nursery we have used to supply plants for the islands. Plague skinks pose a threat to the islands native skink populations.

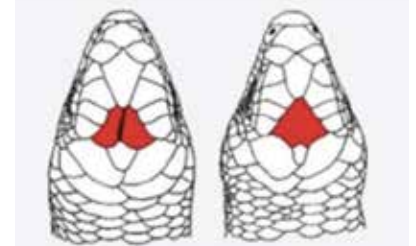
This detection highlights the ever present biosecurity risk when heading out to the islands and the importance of us all doing our part – checking our belongings and vessels before departure.

With vital biosecurity work transitioning away from the Department of Conservation to the Guardians we'll be under more pressure to ensure these islands are kept safe from pests.



Tracking tunnel

It's encouraging to see wētāpunga footprints on one of the tracking cards from Moturua, December 21.



Skinks

An adult plague skink (top) and the head scale pattern of a native skink (bottom left) and plague skink (bottom right), shown in red.

Preparing for future reintroductions

1.

Northland green gecko

We are working towards the reintroduction of the Northland green gecko in 2023.



2.

Titipounamu/Rifleman

Preliminary work is underway on a proposal for the reintroduction of the Titipounamu, New Zealand's smallest bird species.





Toutouwai/North Island robin
on Urupukapuka.

Ngā mihi ki ngā Kaitautoko

Thanks & acknowledgements

The Guardians of the Bay of Islands/Project Island Song would like to sincerely acknowledge and thank all those involved with the Project to ensure these beautiful pest-free islands are around and thriving for future generations. Acknowledging, in particular, Ngati Kuta and Patukeha, our dedicated volunteers and members; without your time and dedication this incredible wildlife sanctuary wouldn't exist.

We'd also like to acknowledge our 2021-2022 Corporate Members:



Donors, funders and in-kind supporters

Without the generous support of donors, funders and in-kind supporters we would not be able to continue the work we do.



If you've seen a pest on the islands, please call
0800 362 468 immediately, and also email us at
pest@projectislandsong.co.nz

Project Island Song is a unique partnership between community group the Guardians of the Bay of Islands and Te Rāwhiti hapū (Ngāti Kuta and Patukeha).

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To find out more about our work, volunteer with us, or be part of the project in another way, please visit our website:
projectislandsong.co.nz

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