



Aotea Great Barrier Local Board: Update – February 2019

Kia ora Izzy, Sue, Luke, Shirley and Jeff,

Following our first planning meeting for 2019 on 2 February, please find below an update and request for action on 2 key issues, Dog control and marine protection.

First though, a *big congratulations* to Auckland Council and DOC staff for the response to the stoat sighting at Medlands. It was fast and professional and just what is needed to make sure a stoat invasion never occurs. Radio New Zealand called us for comment on 21 Jan and Emma Waterhouse provided it. She noted it would be an ecological disaster for the island – especially for pateke, kaka, kereru, petrels, banded rails, kakariki and all our skinks and geckos. Thanks again for the urgent response.

- 1. Dog control and compliance:** as the board will be aware there were a large number of incidents involving dogs off lease on beaches over the holiday period. These involved the deaths of dotterel chicks, and oystercatcher chicks and adults, and possibly also pateke and little blue penguins. This is particularly upsetting given the growing community vigilance and awareness of this issue right around the island. People do not always feel they have the back up of Auckland Council and DOC to act and sometimes the situation is intimidating. There are a number of options the Local Board could explore. *We ask that you work with the community while the issue is still fresh to set new measures up for 2019/20 breeding season and visitor arrivals. Given the biodiversity value of the island there is a case for specific dog and cat control measures, including non-resident, non-bird trained dog control, increased signage and communications at high risk areas and local enforcement.*
- 2. Aotea State of Environment report update:** trustees George Perry (University of Auckland) and Emma Waterhouse Environmental Consultant) will commence work on this early in 2019. *They are planning a series of workshops with mana whenua, stakeholders and specialists and will be in touch directly about your contribution as required.* Thank you again to you for your support of this important project.
- 3. Marine protection:** We have been contacted over summer by marine biologist Roger Grace and a number of community members about progressing marine protection around the island. Roger is open to supporting the process the board has been working on in any way he can, as is the trust. There was such a high response to the voluntary code survey and wide recognition that with the resource under so much pressure, something needs to be done.

It's not just the fish impacts, marine reserves underpin the health of terrestrial ecology. This happens through the restoration of nutrients to our soils and forests by seabirds. Aotea sits in a world hotspot for this and our forests need healthy seas around them. *Is the Local Board planning to progress the marine protection action and conversation further in 2019? What support do you need to do so and would you be open to a visit from Roger Grace?*

4. **Pateke protection:** many islanders remain concerned about the long term population decline of pateke on the island. With rabbit shooting about to occur in the Whangapoua basin again, we thank the board for this investment. *We urge you to encourage DOC to continue their measures, specifically year-round feral cat control to ensure cats don't switch to pateke when rabbits are down, and also to continue pukeko control.* It is possible these 3 activities in tandem have led last year's first small increase in pateke counts in years. We will have to wait for further counts to assess whether this is the case.

5. **Okiwi Kakariki project:** this research has been on hold due to the availability of the researcher busy with kakariki on Norfolk. It is being done in close collaboration with the Okiwi Community pest project and Okiwi School. Emma Waterhouse is working with researcher Serena Simmonds and Jo O'Reilly on a kakariki count. Further nest tree protection was added at the beginning of this breeding season.

6. **Community events and trap library:** the trust had stalls at the picnic and Fitzroy event again and trap boxes and enquiries were significantly up on previous years. We are mapping the landowners with predator control in place island wide and can share this with the board when complete. Alison Walker will continue to distribute these and will reapply for further PFNZ grant funds through the same PFNZ DOC Auckland administered fund.

Finally, as we indicated we would in 2018, I wrote to the Minister of Conservation in December asking for a step change in DOC's investment in protecting the national treasure that is Aotea, and the Hauraki Gulf. I was informed her office had passed it to her directly and we await a response.

Warm wishes for your first meeting of the year. Please provide any feedback directly to me, or to June Brookes, who will attend the meeting on behalf of the trustees.

Nga mihi,

Kate Waterhouse

Chair, Great Barrier Island Environmental Trust

5 February, 2019