

Chatham Islands Conservation Board

Te Pou Atawhai O Rekohu Wharekauri



Annual Report

to the New Zealand Conservation Authority

1 July 2014 - 30 June 2015

Chatham Islands Conservation Board

Tē Pou Atawhai O Rekohu Wharekauri

Annual Report 1 July 2014- 30 June 2015

Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority
Pursuant to section 6(0) of the Conservation Act 1987

Serviced by the Department of Conservation
Chatham Island Office
PO Box 114, Waitangi, Chatham Islands
&
Wellington/Pōneke District Office
PO Box 5086, Wellington

Front Cover Photo: Community Tree Planting Day Henga Reserve
Photographer: Anna Frances Pearson

1 INTRODUCTION

We welcomed Dinee Fleming into the Chairperson's role at the start of the year, along with new board members Mana Cracknell and Susan Thorpe. Chuck Landis and Dianne Gregory-Hunt continued in their role, providing valuable experience for our Board of five members.

After the most recent restructure of DOC, the Board have had some continuity from the local DOC office over the last twelve months with Connie Norgate moving into the role of Conservation Services Manager. Alison Turner has returned to the Chathams and DOC, and has been providing secretarial support to the Board.

Following the 2013 review of the role of Conservation Boards, the CICB this year responded to the Associate Minister of Conservation's letter of expectation, with a programme of CMS topic reviews, and a commitment to maintaining the board's already strong local conservation advocacy role.

Chairperson Dinee Fleming attended the annual Chairperson's conference in Wellington, which confirmed that our board were well placed to meet their statutory CMS role, with their strong understanding of the conservation and community priorities for the Chatham Islands.

Meetings of the CICB are open to the public, and in addition invitations to members of other conservation groups and DOC staff ensured a varied and interesting attendance at our meetings.

Over the year meetings were held at a number of venues on main Chathams, including one meeting at Kaingaroa. All Board members were looking forward to the planned June meeting and field trip on Pitt Island which unfortunately had to be postponed due to a combination of ill health, a broken down plane and dubious weather.

Only one field trip was held this year. In conjunction with the Board's meeting at Kaingaroa Board members visited the J.M. Barker National Historic Reserve (Hāpūpū) along with Hokotehi Moriori Trust ranger Steve Cronin, to view remedial work being undertaken on the rākau momori.

Reflecting on the past year Chairperson Dinee Fleming has seen a strength of the CICB as offering a forum for "good learning and listening" between the board and DOC. Susan Thorpe commended the board for the "open and honest forum...that has led to a good strong community partnership". Mana Cracknell continues to support his "lifelong interest in conservation education" and acknowledged the willingness of the board to travel even the "bumpy roads" of conservation challenges for the Chathams. Dianne Gregory-Hunt continues to enjoy the board forums and especially the "respectful and friendly atmosphere of meetings which encourages greater understanding". Dianne challenges the board and DOC to improve its communication through the wider community. Chuck Landis, in his final term continued to provide considered and thoughtful advice to the board, and after nearly seven years with the board he will remain connected to the islands and the friendships he has made here.

2 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

The Board membership and meeting attendance during from 2014- 2015 was as follows:

Board Member	Meetings attended
Dinee Fleming (Chairperson)	5/5
Mana Cracknell	4/5
Dianne Gregory-Hunt, Pitt Island	4/5
Susan Thorpe	4/5
Chuck Landis (Dunedin)	3/5

Diane (Dinee) Fleming of Owenga, Chatham Islands *1 July 2014 to 30 June 2017*

Dianne Fleming (Dinee) was welcomed into the role of Board Chairperson at the start of the year. Dinee is a farmer and a landowner, active in wetland restoration. With her wide understanding of the history, culture and economy of the Chathams Dinee brings strong balanced local knowledge to her Chairperson's role. She is of Hokotehi Moriori and Ngati Mutunga o Wharekauri descent.

Diane (Di) Gregory Hunt, Pitt Island *1 May 2014 to 30 June 2016*

Mrs Gregory Hunt is a farmer. She is a member of the Pitt Island Reserves Committee and has been a member of the Pitt Island Reserves and Conservation Purposes Trust. Dianne has been active in many of the conservation projects on Pitt, including monitoring of nesting albatross and Chatham Island snipe. Di and her family have land protected under Conservation Covenants and are active in habitat restoration projects.

Dr Chuck Landis, Waikouaiti *1 July 2008 to 30 June 2015*

Dr Chuck's Landis' term on the CICB finished this year. First appointed in 2008, Dr Landis is a geologist with a long standing interest in conservation matters, with a special interest in the broader aspects of the flora, fauna and landscape of the Chatham Islands. Chuck's contribution to the Board has been well appreciated: his thoughtful consideration of a wide range of conservation issues from both a scientific and local perspective have been valued.

Mana Cracknell, of Kaingaroa, Chatham Islands *1 July 2014 to 30 June 2017*

Mana is a retired university academic. He has been involved in many environmental research projects in the Chatham Islands looking at biodiversity and beekeeping strategies. His outdoor recreation interests are gardening, fishing, bee-keeping and tree planting. Mana is of Rongomaiwahine, Ngati Kahungungu, Rangitane and Rongomaiwhenua-Moriori Iwi.

Susan Thorpe, of Owenga, Chatham Islands *1 May 2014 to 30 June 2016*

Susan is a director of a heritage consultancy company. She has research experience in archaeology, cultural heritage, and the environment, and enjoys being involved in ecological restoration projects. Her outdoor recreation interests are water sports, sailing, fishing, tree planting and gardening.

3 BOARD MEETINGS AND INSPECTIONS

Five formal Board Meetings were held on main Chatham during the reporting period.

August 21st 2014	Norman Kirk Memorial Reserve Lounge
October 15th 2014	Kaingaroa Club
December 9th 2014	Kopinga Marae
February 17th 2015	Norman Kirk Memorial Reserve Lounge
April 21st 2015	DOC Office Te One

The Board welcomed a number of other visitors to our Board meetings. Robin Seymour and Kerri Moir from ECAN continue to provide helpful updates around biosecurity and animal and plant pest control work. Michelle Cracknell joined us for part of a number of our meetings over the year. Dave Houston, Jane Dobson, Tansy Bliss and Duncan Toogood from DOC all contributed to meetings. Mike Bell from the Taiko Trust gave the CICB an update on the Trust's projects for this last season.

4 THE BOARD'S DISTRICT

The Chatham Islands lie 860 km east of Christchurch, at 44° south in the path of the Roaring Forties and consist of eight islands of appreciable size. The total land area is 97,000 hectares of which main Chatham Island (90,000 ha) and Pitt Island (6,190 ha) are the largest. The Chathams straddle the international dateline: local time is 45 minutes ahead of the rest of New Zealand.

The Chatham Islands are an amazing collection of islands consisting of contrasts and extremes: beautiful still sunny days with magical blue skies through to raging 45 knot storms that in their own way are awe-inspiring. For much of the year the climate is temperate – temperatures in the low twenties in midsummer but can drop close to 0 degrees in the winter with scattered hail and sleet and occasional snow.

Generally main Chatham Island is low-lying and comprises flat to rolling topography. The highest point on the island is only 299m. There are many swampy valley floors and extensive peatlands. The catchments are generally small and shallow but there are a few incised streams in the south. Here the land is at a higher altitude forming a tableland of deep peat covering basalt with a fertile coastal clay region which ends abruptly at impressive basalt bluffs. In the north there are scattered volcanic peaks and long stretches of sandy beach while the island has a large central lagoon of 20,000 ha and there are many moderate sized lakes.

Both the natural vegetation and fauna are highly modified and are reduced to remnants as a result of human occupation. Low forest once covered most of the islands. Approximately 10 % of the forest cover remains – most in the south of the main island.

Five main forest types are present featuring broad-leaved species and tarahinau (*Dracophyllum arboreum*). Much of the area has converted to bracken and shrubland and to a lesser extent pasture. There are extensive areas of restiad, sedge and heath wetlands.

The Chathams have the highest level of endemism of any New Zealand biogeographic region. Forty one of the Chatham Islands 465 native plants, 18 of the 73 native birds, 8.5% of New Zealand's threatened freshwater fish. About 20% of the 800 insect species are endemic to the Chathams. One reptile is also endemic to these islands. The New Zealand Geo-preservation Inventory lists 31 sites of nationally important geological interest. 700 archaeological sites are recorded and many more unrecorded.

The Department of Conservation has an Office at Te One on main Chatham with 12 permanent staff, with one staff member largely based on Pitt Island. Volunteers, staff and researchers are present on Rangatira (South East Island) and Mangere Island for periods during the year, undertaking species monitoring work during the breeding season of endangered bird species, and continuing with the habitat restoration programme.

There is a small amount of protected land (Crown and private covenants) in the Chathams - about 8% of Chatham, 30% of Pitt and three nature reserves - (Mangere (113ha) and South-East (208ha) Islands and Tuku NR (1238ha). A significant number of important habitats have been protected and a significant amount of land has been protected through the covenanting of private land. A key focus of the Department's work in the Chathams is threatened flora and fauna programmes. The vast expanse of ocean surrounding these islands is rich in marine life and supports internationally significant populations of sea birds and nationally significant populations of whales, dolphins, seals and sharks.

The Chatham Islands Conservation Board represents a total island population of approximately 600 people (Chatham plus Pitt Island) and has particularly close contact with the community. Chatham Islanders have very strong ties to their land and resources, reflected by their livelihoods of fishing, farming, and tourism.

The Board also consults and works with the Imi/Iwi on the Chatham Islands along with the other conservation groups such as Taiko Trust and CHART, as well as the Chatham Islands Council, Chatham Islands Enterprise Trust, Federated Farmers and the Chatham Islands Visitor Industry group.

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS UNDER THE CONSERVATION ACT

6M(1)(c) To advise the Conservation Authority and the Director-General on the implementation of conservation management strategies and conservation management plans for areas within the jurisdiction of the Board

Conservation Management Strategies (CMS)

The Board were kept up to date with likely timeframes for the revision of the CMS. The commencement date for the revision of the document is still to be confirmed.

As part of the board's response to the Associate Minister of Conservation's annual letter of expectation, the board identified four CMS topics for review during the year. These were:

1. Biosecurity
2. Pitt Island
3. Coastal Management of Te Whānga
4. Cultural and Historic Heritage

For each of these topics the department prepared a report on progress in working towards the CMS topic objectives for the Board to consider. The Board then led a response to each report. A strength of this process over the last year is that the chosen topics are all priority areas where DOC is seeking to make conservation progress. In addition the Board's thinking and advice around these topics will inform the new Chatham's CMS, scheduled to start in 2016.

Three of the topics were covered during the year. Due to our planned Pitt Island meeting being postponed, the Pitt Island CMS review has also been postponed (until December 2015). CICB member Dianne Gregory-Hunt has conducted a survey of the Pitt Island community and their views on Pitt Island conservation priorities, which will add depth to this topic review later in the year.

6M(1) (d) (ii) To advise the Department on any other conservation matter relating to any area within the jurisdiction of the Board

1. At the August board meeting, Reg Kemper (Partnerships Director) outlined the process of Outside In, which was reviewing how DOC managed legal consents and approvals for a range of activities needing legislative approval by DOC.
2. The permit process for concessions was also reviewed and the Board recommended that:
 - a) The CICB, along with Imi/Iwi be notified of all permit and concession applications for the Chatham Islands
 - b) The CICB develop advisory guidelines so that applications could be considered in terms of benefit to island conservation, benefit to the local community, consideration of technical advice, and ensuring all applications met the condition of doing no harm.
3. During the year the CICB considered and advised the Department on the following :
 - a) Temporary closure /rāhui for rākau momori at J.M Barker National Historic Reserve (Hāpūpū)
 - b) The formation and role of the Chatham Islands Natural Heritage Group
 - c) How to progress the agreements made at the 2015 hui facilitated by Hori Parata on the distribution of whale bone to Imi and Iwi.
 - d) The application for renewal of Hotel Chatham's guiding concession
 - e) The board considered (but made no formal comment) on the Chatham Rock Phosphate seabed mining proposal, and the Chatham Islands Council's Resource Management Plan review.
 - f) A permit application from Natural History New Zealand for filming skua breeding on Rangatira Island .
 - g) A number of current external research (black robin research on Rangatira) and translocation permits (CI albatross to PointGap) remain active and of interest to the Board. The Board offered support for the department to develop a more proactive set of criteria to assess new applications for research particularly on the offshore Nature Reserves.

- h) The criteria and timetable for this year's round of Community Conservation Partnership Fund (CCPF) applications.

POWERS OF CONSERVATION BOARDS

6N (2)(a) The Board may advocate its interest at any public forum or in any statutory planning process.

Review of Conservation Boards

Following the 2013 review of the role of Conservation Boards, the Chatham Islands Conservation Board was reduced to five members. The Board expressed their concern about the inability of such a small board to represent the island's interests. It was noted in particular that youth representation, wider tangata whenua representation and business sector involvement would strengthen the board. The Board wrote to the Minister of Conservation with these concerns and were pleased with the increase in CICB from five to seven members, effective 1st July 2015.

LIAISON

A Department

Working within the new DOC Services/Partnerships structure, the Board has been supported throughout the year by Connie Norgate (Conservation Services Manager for the Chatham Islands). Damien Coutts (Director Conservation Services, Lower North Island) and Reg Kemper (Director Partnerships, Lower North Island) each attended one of the board meetings during the year. Paul McArthur (Partnerships Manager Wellington), and Dave Carlton (Acting Conservation Services Manager Chatham Islands) attended meetings while Connie was away.

Local DOC staff joined the board for parts of their meeting, and often for lunch. The Board were kept informed of any new staff and staff changes through the District Office report presented at every meeting.

B COMMUNITY

Taiko Trust

The Taiko Trust continue to build on their conservation achievements, with a second successful season of albatross chick transfer and rearing at Point Gap. This year the Taiko Trust have worked on contract with DOC to undertake the taiko protection, monitoring and management work previously undertaken by the department. The Trust held well attended open days for locals to visit the albatross rearing site.

The Board were pleased to have Mike Bell from Taiko Trust attend their February 2015 meeting, and enjoyed being able to discuss the current and planned Taiko Trust projects.

Chatham Heritage and Restoration Trust (CHART)

CHART continues to lead conservation projects in the community, and in particular building on their Waitangi foreshore dune planting work.

Their longstanding project to fence and undertake restoration planting at Blind Jims continues to make progress.

Chatham Islands' Conservation Award

This award, started in 2004 was not awarded for the second consecutive year.

Environment Canterbury

The Board continues to encourage an active working relationship with the Environment Canterbury (ECAN). Robin Seymour and Kerri Moir who work as Biosecurity Officers with ECAN on the Chatham Islands have attended CICB meetings during the year to update the range of biosecurity, weed and animal pest control work being undertaken by ECAN on Chatham and Pitt Islands.

C Pitt Island

Dianne Gregory-Hunt has continued to be a strong advocate for all Pitt Island conservation issues on the board.

The Pitt Island Reserves Committee have met over the last 12 months, in part to move towards re-establishing the Pitt Island Reserves and Conservation Purposes Trust to a legitimate and operational body. Under the chairmanship of Phil Seymour the PIRCPT have met and made a recommendation on the management of the leasehold blocks on Pitt Island when the current leases expire in 2016.

FINANCIAL YEAR 2014/2015

The Board annual of budget of \$15,000 was largely committed meeting Board travel costs. The Board's submission for an increase in board numbers included a request for an increase in the board budget for the next financial year.