

Chatham Islands Conservation Board

Te Pou Atawhai O Wharekauri Rekohu



Annual Report

to the New Zealand Conservation Authority

1 July 2011 - 30 June 2012

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Serviced by the Department of Conservation
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&
Wellington Conservancy
PO Box 5086, Wellington

Front Cover Photos:

Top: South East coastline of Thomas Mohi Tuuta Scenic Reserve

Photographer: Jim Clarkson

Bottom: Chatham Island tree daisy (*Olearia chathamica*) Keketerehere

Photographer: Celine Gregory Hunt

1 INTRODUCTION

Writing this report I rather incredulously reflect over eight years of involvement with the Chatham Island Conservation Board.

There have been many changes and overall good progress with increased awareness and skills to steward a threatened environment. Resources are limited and with a change in Government there has been a change in policy and direction. Personally I think this is a good thing. It creates a collaborative attitude and fosters community ownership, partnership and initiatives.

Over the past 12 months there have been some positive developments. The Ecosystem Optimisation Programme operating within DOC promises a better funding edge for programmes undertaken on the Chathams. The local position created by the Chatham Islands Council to control pests and weeds is proving to be extremely effective. Hokotehi Moriori Trust have carried out archaeological work at Taia Farm in conjunction with the Otago University. Investigation of cat movement and subsequent control has started on Pitt Island. The Area has further developed volunteer programmes for locals.

Community involvement in general has increased. Chatham Heritage and Restoration Trust has done a wonderful job propagating and planting natives for the Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Haumia Pa Reserve in Waitangi. The Biodiversity Funds continue to provide valuable financial support for new initiatives. Of concern has been the extremely rapid deterioration of the Moriori tree carvings at Taia, the discovery of the invasive seaweed Undaria and the continuing challenges of Marine Biosecurity in general.

Whilst attending the Conservation Board Chairpersons Conference in May, two particular issues drew my attention. The first stems from an address given by Marine Biologist and Otago Board Chair, Abby Smith, concerning the rapidly depleting condition of the sea environment. She drew our attention to the fact that the seas are the lungs of the earth and with increased acidity and decreased oxygenation, these lungs are really gasping. Her description of the scenario is 'terrifying'.

The second issue is the question of Crown land and post treaty settlements. DOC and Iwi will be the management body for Crown land handed over with all historical Treaty claim settlements due to be finalised shortly. This is not really an issue on the Chatham Islands but does trigger thoughts on what a post Treaty environment may look like and the challenges and issues that it will pose here as well as in mainland New Zealand.

Jo Tuuta (formally Tuanui)
Chairperson
Chatham Island Conservation Board

2 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

The Board membership and meeting attendance during the report period was as follows.

Board Member	Meetings attended
Joanne (Jo)Tuuta Chatham Island (Chairperson)	3 out of 4
Eileen Cameron, Chatham Island	3 out of 4
Lois Croon, Chatham Island	3 out of 4
Dinee, Fleming, Chatham Island	3 out of 3
Celine Gregory-Hunt, Pitt Island (Deputy Chair)	2 out of 4
Vaughan Hill, Chatham Island	2 out of 4
Shirley King, Chatham Island	3 out of 4
Judith Lanauze, Pitt Island	1 out of 1
Charles (Chuck) Landis, Dunedin	1 out of 4

Jo Tuanui was appointed to the Board in 2004. For many years Jo has been a strong advocate for conservation activities and programmes. Jo has an interest in historical issues and owns both farm and conservation covenanted land. She has held the position of deputy chairperson since November 2008, and was appointed as Chairperson of the Board in November 2009.

Eileen Cameron was appointed to the Board in 2006. She is a fifth generation Chatham Islander who combines beekeeping, horticulture and conservation activities with the family farming operation. Eileen strongly advocates for local solutions to conservation challenges, and brings practical experience to conservation discussions with the Board.

Lois Croon was also appointed to the Board in 2006 and is a Chatham Island resident of 39 years. As Chairperson for the Chatham Island Heritage and Restoration Trust (CHART), Lois is leading a number of new community conservation and historic restoration initiatives, and her role on the Board strengthens the important partnership between the Board and CHART.

Dinee Fleming had her first meeting with the Board in November 2011. Dinee is a Chatham Islander of Maori and Moriori descent with a long family history in farming and fishing on the islands. Dinee has a deep appreciation of changing coastal environments with loss of habitat through stock and erosion and is active in restoration of wetlands on her own farm property.

Celine Gregory-Hunt is secretary for the Pitt Island Conservation Purposes Charitable Trust, a member of the Pitt Island Reserves Committee and brings a dedicated understanding of conservation, tourism and biosecurity issues on Pitt Island to the Board. Celine moved to the mainland NZ in April 2012 and continues her role on the Board.

Shirley King began her term on the Board in September 2006. She has a strong affiliation with Moriori and is the current Chairperson of the Hokotehi Moriori Trust. Shirley has a sound grounding for the social and indigenous culture of the Chatham Islands, and maintains a strong link with the Imi of the island.

Judy Lanauze was appointed in 2005 and had her last meeting on the Board in August 2011. Judy has lived on Pitt Island for 27 years and for most of that time was the district nurse for the community. Judy and her family have been actively involved in many of the Pitt Island conservation initiatives building on the long family history of conservation on Pitt Island.

Charles (Chuck) Landis is our only mainland member, appointed in 2008. Chuck is a retired professor of geology and is also interested in island biology. He has a long standing interest in

conservation matters and brings extensive scientific experience to the board table. Chuck was unable to travel to the Chathams for the February and May meetings due to health concerns.

Vaughan Hill was appointed to the Board in 2009. Vaughan, as a founding member of CHART brings that active interest and involvement in island conservation projects, and is a strong advocate for conservation education for local youth. Vaughan has worked in the local fishing industry and brings an understanding and interest in marine conservation.

3 BOARD MEETINGS AND INSPECTIONS

Three formal Board Meetings were held on main Chatham during the reporting period.
One informal half day discussion was held due to insufficient members present for a quorum.
31 August 2011, Whakamaharatanga Marae, Te One, Chatham Island
7 December 2011, Whakamaharatanga Marae, Te One, Chatham Island
29 February 2012, Whakamaharatanga Marae, Te One, Chatham Island
16 May 2011, Henga Lodge, Henga, Chatham Island

All Board meetings were attended by the Area Manager, Jim Clarkson.

The Board secretary, Alex McKillop was unable to attend the May meeting and DOC staff undertook the task of minute taking for her.

Auckland based Technical Support Officer for the Chatham Islands, Dave Houston, joined the Board for the February and May meetings. Wellington Conservator Alan McKenzie was able to attend the meeting in February and the acting Conservator Ben Reddiex joined the informal meeting in May 2012.

The Environment Canterbury Biosecurity Officer, Alison Turner and then her successor Jenna Gregory-Hunt were invited and attended part of each meeting of the Board this reporting period.

Other guests welcomed to meetings were Owen Pickles, General Manager Chatham Islands Council, Mayor Alfred Preece and Sylvia Eyles, Manager of the Moriori Ethnobotanical Gardens and Nursery.

Field Inspection to Thomas Mohi Tuuta Scenic Reserve

Reported by Chuck Landis

On December the 8th the Board, accompanied by DOC staff and invited family of Board members, visited the Thomas Mohi Tuuta (Rangaika) Scenic Reserve. The drive from Owenga up to the car park is itself spectacular and provides a good opportunity to see the new wind generators, thick Pleistocene peat deposits and some interbedded Taupo ash.

The Reserve itself is a real gem. The walk to the reserve boundary along the 200m high southern cliffs reveal a thick series of basalt lava flows; these volcanics originated about 75 million years ago while Zealandia was breaking up and drifting away from the Australian remnant of the Gondwanaland mega continent. The Pitt Straight area has since been down faulted. Great blocks of basalt have been undermined by wave erosion and rotated down and outward into the sea, giving an interesting stepped coastline with towering pinnacles and detached rock slabs.

The Reserve facilities are excellent. We had lunch at the newly established DOC picnic area, complete with a sturdy table and handy toilet. The track system within the reserve is extensive and well maintained with good views and a real feel for the bush. Vegetation is healthy, vigorous and diverse, with limited evidence of animal pests or noxious weeds. The Reserve is a great place to see tarahinau forest (*Drachophyllum arboretum*), the Chatham Island astelia and asters (*Olearia chathamica* and *semidentata*), Barker's koromiko (the tree hebe) and also a variety of shrubs, ferns, orchids and other herbaceous plants. I particularly enjoyed seeing the swamp matipo (*Myrsine coxii*), kidney ferns and great areas of Chatham Island flax flowing in the wind.

We were fortunate to have Visitor Asset ranger, Paul Humm lead us. He and DOC colleagues have done a great job with creating and maintaining the tracks, fences and visitor facilities.

In terms of a diverse and healthy flora, good facilities, plus spectacular scenery, this must be the most striking reserve in the Chatham Islands. It deserves to have more visitors and it is the Board's understanding that there are plans to develop more tracks and a longer walking access to the Reserve so that the bush can be enjoyed by more people.



The bridge that DOC Visitor Asset staff erected one month later to replace the pellets and drums pictured in photo on the left



navigating a private



4 Arrival at the eastern entrance to the Reserve complete with newly established picnic tables and toilet



A young specimen of tarahinau (*Dracophyllum arboretum*), an endemic species commonly found in the Reserve

The Chatham Island area is one of the five areas that are part of the Wellington Hawke's Bay Conservancy.

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 Area Office at Te One on main Chatham with 15 staff as well as a permanent staff member on Pitt Island. Volunteers and staff are present on Rangatira (South East Island) and Mangere Island for short periods during the year, undertaking species protection work during the breeding season of endangered bird species and an extensive revegetation 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 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 enjoys good working relationships with these people. The Board also consults and works with the Imi/Iwi on the Chatham Islands along with 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 regards to developments in the preparation for the revision of the CMS. At the time of writing the report the commencement date for the revision of the document was still to be confirmed.

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

Concession 'trigger points'

The Board requested that the list of 'triggers' that prompt DOC to notify the Board of concession applications be amended to include the Board being advised of any application received that involves cruise ships visiting the Chatham Island. This arose from the one-off guiding concession that the Department issued to a visiting cruise ship in November 2011.

Request from Te Papa O Tongarewa for dead prion samples

In July 2011 tens of thousands of prions perished on the shores of mainland New Zealand after a major storm. The board supported a request by Te Papa for broad-billed prion specimens from the Chatham Islands to be collected in an effort to determine from which populations the wrecked prions came.

Request for provision of dead Chatham Island bird specimens

The Department received a request from Te Papa O Tongarewa for the skin and bone from a range of Chatham Islands bird species so they can be held for research and future reference that may benefit Chatham Island species in the future.

The Board supported sending the specimens out to Te Papa but noted that they would like the specimens to remain in the ownership of the islands where they came from.

The Board discussed the history that they had with Te Papa with regards to 'ownership' of Chatham Islands bird specimens and the resulting invitation that was offered for the late CEO, Seddon Bennington to come to the Chatham Islands to talk through the Boards concerns. The Board agreed that this was now a good opportunity to re-engage with Te Papa to discuss.

The Board also endorsed the request for culled parakeet hybrids from Mangere Nature Reserve to be sent to Te Papa O Tongarewa for research.

The Board was consulted or gave advice to the Department on the following research proposals and species translocations:

Research Proposals

Two high impact research proposals were considered by the Board during this reporting period. In both cases where the Board has considered proposals, Imi/Iwi and community perspectives have been carefully considered and reference made to the document '*Procedure for Community and Iwi Involvement in Managing Biota, Taonga & Cultural Materials*'.

On both occasions the Board has requested reports on research findings.

Following is a brief account on the Board's consideration and decision on the two proposals.

Continuing research on black robins - University of Canterbury

The Board were presented with a high impact research proposal for ongoing research on the genetic consequences of population bottlenecks on the long term survival of black robins and tomtits. The Board were happy to support the ongoing research subject to the conditions proposed by the Department to reduce any adverse effects from the research.

Application for archaeology research - University of Otago

The Board considered an application to undertake archaeology research at Taia Bush and Kairae Bush; two historical sites on the Chatham Islands. The proposed research was a continuation of excavation work done earlier in 2011 and was being carried out in partnership with the Hokotehi Moriori Trust. The Board were happy to support the application on the condition that there were opportunities for the wider community to view and appreciate the project during the excavation.

Species translocation proposal

High Impact Translocation Proposal for Chatham Island skink

The Board were presented with a proposal from the Chatham Island Taiko Trust to translocate Chatham Island skink from Rangatira to main Chatham. There were varying opinions on the conservation benefits of such a translocation and a vote was taken. One Board member abstained from the Board's resolution to support the application.

POWERS OF CONSERVATION BOARDS

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

Chatham Islands Wildlife Notice 1977

The Board reported in their 2010/2011 Annual Report that they were happy with the draft edition of the Wildlife Notice that they had been presented with. The Board was asked to comment on a further draft of the notice with additional changes in May 2012. The Board sought clarification on several items in the notice and noted their concern that only black swan eggs should be allowed to be exported off the island, not grey and mallard duck eggs as well. At the time of writing the report no further correspondence had been received from the DOC National Office.

LIAISON

A Department

Department Staff interviews

Board members are often asked to participate in the interview process for new appointments to the Area. This involvement is valuable from a community perspective in helping assess the suitability for isolated island living. Board members Vaughan Hill and Celine Gregory-Hunt were on the interview panel for the Pitt Island Ranger and Programme Manager Biodiversity positions.

Future of rakau momori (dendroglyphs) at the JM Barker (Hapupu) National Historic Reserve

In last year's report, the Board had urged that the Department act promptly with regards to seeking advice on the dead and dying trees at Hapupu. The Board discussed the issue at every Board meeting during the year, seeking updates on work being achieved. Board member Chuck Landis took an active interest and assisted the Area Manager in seeking advice from Landcare Research and follow up on the assessment of the soil samples taken from the area.

Marine Biosecurity Partnership

At each meeting of the Board, members discussed their concerns about the biosecurity risks that visiting ships coming from ports in NZ pose to the Chatham Islands. Currently there is nothing in place to check what boats are bringing in terms of unwanted marine pests.

The Board wrote letters to key organisations on the Chatham Islands including the newly established Chatham Islands Marine Biosecurity Partnership, noting their concern about marine biosecurity on the Chatham Islands and suggested that a mechanism be developed to monitor vessel movement and minimise marine biosecurity risk. An invitation was also extended to the Chatham Island Council, General Manager and Mayor to discuss the issue at the Board's November meeting.

The Board further resolved to suggest that the island partners of the Biosecurity Partnership forum, take a lead to hold a meeting on the Chatham Islands to allow for a wider input from local stakeholders to help support the initiatives of the partnership. It was unfortunate that this has not happened to date largely due to the restructure of MAF and MinFish, key members of the Marine Biosecurity Partnership.

Chairperson's Conference May 2012

The Conservation Chairpersons' Conference held in May 2012 was a valuable forum to get updated information on the issues and direction of conservation nation-wide. The Chairs represented a broad spectrum of knowledge and expertise and everyone valued the ability to share ideas and challenges experienced in the range of conservancies.

The conversations were lively and practical. Both the Director-General, Al Morrison and the Minister of Conservation, Hon. Kate Wilkinson addressed the meeting and gave an overview of the new more pragmatic approach to the policies of the Conservation Department. The emphasis is on using more business and community partnerships to develop and take advantage of the 'clean green' image of New Zealand. This is a huge change in departmental thinking.

Development of the new Conservation Management Strategies are taking some time and are overdue. This creates a vacuum for Boards as one of their statutory functions is to monitor the Departments performance in each Conservancy against their own CMS. There was general concern that Conservation Boards would not be required under the new regime. This was allayed by the DG having 'no appetite' for the process of dismantling them.

There was a desire to have the Conference held on a regular basis, preferably yearly. For the Chatham Island Board, I feel it is even more important to have such a forum every year.

B COMMUNITY

Community Open Days on Rangatira Nature Reserve

The Conservation Board have initiated community open days on Rangatira Nature Reserve for many years. The lack of local participation in attending the days over recent years led the Board and Department to discuss other opportunities for community engagement, such as volunteer and educational programmes. The Board thought that offshore sponsorship to assist with funding the boat transport to and from the island would make it more affordable for locals.

Chatham Heritage and Restoration Trust (CHART)

The Board has continued a close relationship with the Trust and has been privileged to receive first hand information from Conservation Board member and founding Chairperson of the Trust, Lois Croon. Some Board members have participated in projects undertaken in the past year such as the planting days with the ongoing restoration plan for the Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Haumia Pa dune reserve in Waitangi. The Board commends Lois and the other Trust members on her vision and hard work for conservation projects.



Chatham Islands' Conservation Award 2011

This was the eighth year running for the Boards' Conservation award and Bruce and Liz Tuanui were the deserved recipients in 2011.

Bruce and Liz Tuanui have voluntarily contributed to many projects over many years that have enhanced conservation on the Chatham Islands and this year they are acknowledged for their sustained voluntary effort with the tui transfers from Rangatira to South Chatham in 2009 and 2010 which has resulted in locals now enjoying seeing tui return to their gardens after an absence of over 50 years.

Photo: Liz Tuanui holding the 2011 hand crafted Conservation Award

Environment Canterbury Biosecurity Officer

The Board has continued to enjoy an active working relationship with the Environment Canterbury (ECAN) biosecurity officers, Alison Turner who was then succeeded by Jenna Gregory-Hunt in February. Their attendance at each meeting to discuss island biosecurity, weed and animal pest control has been valuable.

The Board were pleased that their suggestion in early 2011 to explore options for subsidising the de-sexing of domestic cats came to fruition.

C Pitt Island

Although the Pitt Island Reserves Committee was only able to meet once prior to the Conservation Board meetings, the committee is kept up to date with the business of the Board, especially any issues that are of particular relevance to Pitt Island. Pitt Island Conservation Board member, Celine Gregory-Hunt moved to the mainland for her son's schooling and was unable to travel back from the mainland for the May meeting.

D General

Board Minutes and Agendas

Board minutes and agendas continue to be distributed to key organisations on the Chatham Islands. This is an important way of communicating with people and organisations that have a shared interest in conservation values.

Chatham Rise Phosphate Project

The Board continued to take an interest in exploration work on the Chatham Rise to mine for phosphate deposits due to its concerns for potential secondary effects such as seabird feeding, fisheries and biosecurity. The prospecting project has recently attracted overseas interest and has clear potential, with a recent estimate of 25 million tonnes of phosphatic nodules present on the seafloor or slightly buried by loose sediment. The main area of interest lies about 300 km west of Chatham Island. It is probably valid to assume that any future mining operation would require a large vessel and access to a deep-water port and also that an environmental impact assessment would be prepared before mining proceeded. Board member Chuck Landis kept informed on progress via emails from Widespread Energy Ltd.

FINANCIAL YEAR 2011/2012

The Board annual of budget of \$17,000 enabled the Board to carry out all its functions.

Travel costs are a significant portion of the budget with members flying in from the mainland and travel form Pitt Island to main Chatham.