



NEW ZEALAND  
**FAIRY TERN**  
CHARITABLE TRUST

TARA-ITI

Dear Members and supporters,

**In this issue: Fairy tern news; Advocacy and Education; Shared path opening; AGM report.**

**First welcome to new members: Lutz and Uta Schmechta of Germany, Julien Deamer of Auckland, Jo Ewing of Christchurch, Kevin Matthews of Kaitaia.**

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## Fairy Tern News

It's been a slow start to the fairy tern breeding season, but the first eggs have now been laid. On 16<sup>th</sup> November a one egg nest was laid at Papakanui and on the same day a two egg nest was laid at Mangawhai. Both nests were in precarious positions, exposed to high tides, so the eggs were removed and taken to the Zoo for incubation. All have been confirmed as fertile and the nests have been abandoned. Since then, there have been further nests established.



**Waipu:** There are no nests yet, but Ranger, Kallan Mehrstens and the Waipu volunteers have been busy watching K-M and WM-KW who've been seen copulating. There is potentially another pair at Waipu – young birds who might bond and nest.

**K-M (Black- metal)**  
*Photo: Darren Markin*

**K-M's partner at Waipu,  
WM-KW**

*Photo: Darren Markin*

**Mangawhai:** The pair R-pGM and WM-RW whose first nest was abandoned have now re-nested at the safer dredge site, where there are now three other new nests, making a total of four in total confirmed, with possibly more to come. Ranger Shannan Courtenay has returned for her third season at Mangawhai and has been joined by new Ranger Harry Haywood. Both have been busy with nest monitoring and putting up additional fencing.

On one of his visits to the Mangawhai Estuary, Darren Markin noticed WM-RM looking large and low to the ground. He suspected that she was ready to lay. Sure enough, soon after this picture was taken, she laid the first Mangawhai nest. Her partner, R-pGM has the foraging territory from the Black Swamp bridge up to the tavern.



**R-pGM feeding WM-RM**

*Photo: Darren Markin*



**Pakiri:** Ranger, Lucile Guion had hoped for two pairs this season, but the female RM-K, unsettled by a storm left and paired up at Mangawhai with Nil-pGM and laid one of the nests there.

The remaining pair, RB-YM and RM-RW have been making the most of having the site to themselves and RB-YM looks ready to lay any minute.



### **The Pakiri pair**

*Photo: Lucile Guion*

**Papakanui:** Returning Ranger, John Nielsen has been joined by new Ranger Kat Siegers. Papakanui's early birds, (W)M-W and (B)-RM have also re-nested, choosing a nest site created in 2019 from 25 tonnes of oyster shell.



**The Papakanui pair** *Photo: John Nielsen*



**The egg among oyster shell** *Photo: Kat Siegers*

**Aviary:** This year for the first time DOC have appointed a Ranger whose sole responsibility is the aviary. Dayna McKenzie and the team have been busy finishing off the pools and setting up fish storage tanks. The aviary site is now almost ready to go.

Ilse Corkery [icorkery@doc.govt.nz](mailto:icorkery@doc.govt.nz) is organising volunteers to help with monitoring juveniles once they are released from the aviary. Dawn to dusk shifts will be needed.

## Advocacy and Education

**Waipu:** *Susan Steedman, who has been busy visiting schools to talk about tara iti/ fairy tern, reports on a recent field trip she and Kallan, the DOC Ranger helped with. Susan also did the in class follow up:*

This term we have had a site visit by a class from One Tree Point School. They learnt about the Waipu Wildlife Refuge and the way the habitat varies and is used by different bird species. Their teacher, Whaea Jess, had taught them about habitat used by Bittern so during the site visit they were able to get a good look at the wetland / saltmarsh area used by the Waipu male that booms inside the refuge at night. Ranger, Kallan joined the group for the first part of their visit, and later he installed a camera in the habitat used by **Matuku-hūrepo** and has provided the photo below. The teacher, Jess, followed this up with a nighttime listening for the bittern at Papich Road. Their results were sent to Alex Flavell who coordinated the listening sessions and the results for the local area (Mangawhai, Waipu, Ruakaka).



**Bittern habitat**

*Photo: Kallan Mehrtens*

The next stop was down to the beach (using the walkway on the northern edge of the campground). Here we stopped to check where the high tide had come up to and looked at the debris that could provide camouflage for oystercatchers and dotterel. There was a good patch of shell so the students looked at this to decide what shells would provide the best camouflage for Tara Iti. They collected shells to use later in the visit. They returned to the track on the west side of the dunes to find out about the trapping the Ranger does. Kallan spoke to them about the nodes on the traps and about the various baits / lures he uses. The class has their own trap line inside the school grounds and some of them are involved in a combined school trapping effort.

The highlight of a visit to Waipu Wildlife Refuge is the opportunity to see Tara Iti. One of Shaun Lee's models was placed on a mound inside South Crater and a larger egg was placed near it. The challenge was for the students to get up to the edge of the crater without causing the Tara Iti to come up and investigate their entry. They got themselves into position to search for the bird with a great deal of stealth. Because this was not an actual bird they were allowed to creep forward until they could see the bird. It was only then that they realized the bird was in fact a dummy. They deposited the shells they had collected earlier on the mound.

We learnt something new about the refuge. The site we call South Crater was once a Pa site for Patuharakeke. It was used as a lookout and for warrior training.

The group went no further than South Crater and returned on the same track for a break and a journey to check Johnson Point to check to for Tara Iti and for Godwits.

The follow up for this visit was a classroom session where students were able to play a board game about Tara Iti and the risks they face when they have a nest. They were also able to watch videos to show them what life was like when there was a nest. The students asked a myriad of questions, all on topic and indicative of the great teaching Whaea Jess had done with them.

The purpose of all of this is to help them understand that a refuge protects many endemic, endangered and declining populations of many species. The next step is for the students to create their own flock to educate others about the birds they see on and around our beaches this summer. (Mangawhai Beach School had their flock out to coincide with the increase in flock size when the long haul migrants arrived. You can see these beautiful creations outside the school gates.)

**Mangawhai:** In a new initiative this year, Jane Vaughan, Debbie Stone and other volunteers will set up an information table, a telescope and binoculars along the estuary shores during the busy summer months.

**Jane and Debbie with a visitor, looking towards the Spit** *Photo: Heather Rogan*



The idea is to engage the interest of the many holiday makers who come to Mangawhai during the fairy tern breeding season. This was trialed last season but abandoned because of the appalling weather. Already this season, Jane and Debbie have talked to several interested beach goers.

Also at Mangawhai, the Trust has a display at the Tavern market on the third Saturday of every month during the breeding season. The display includes several of our taxidermied predators, all of which were caught on the Mangawhai Sandspit by our trapper, Reg Whale. People are surprised at what predators are out there and many are not aware of the dangers posed by hedgehogs and cats.

Bennetts Chocolate Factory have the Fairy Tern noticeboard up and running again, with weekly updates of fairy tern breeding news, thanks to Jane and Debbie.

Visitors to Mangawhai should be well informed about our bird!

## Shared path

The first part of Mangawhai's shared path for pedestrians and cyclists connecting the Village with the Heads was opened on a very cold early morning in August. The Trust was represented by committee members, Jane Vaughan and Diane Piesse.

**Jane and Diane at the path opening**

*Photo: Paulette Whitford*



We have since been in consultation with the local Council about signage on the path. Where the path crosses the estuary the signs will focus on the birds that may be seen there, including information about fairy tern feeding areas. This is also an area where juvenile fairy terns can be seen learning how to fish for themselves.

## AGM Report

There was a good turnout of about 40 people at our Annual General Meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> September.

**Reports:** The Convenor's report was presented by Heather Rogan and the Financial Report by Jenny Price.

**Special Resolution:** A proposed change to the Constitution, allowing for review rather than audit of the finances, and the explanation submitted by Trustee Roger Ashford was read to the meeting by Jane Vaughan. Details had previously been circulated and all at the meeting were in agreement.

**Appointment of Reviewer:** Jenny explained that this will enable us to take advantage of the reduction of costs afforded to Charitable Trusts by the Charities Commission change to the rules. Jenny moved that we appoint a Reviewer from the firm "My Two Cents Accounting Services" to continue to review our accounts pro bono. This was agreed and a vote of thanks to My Two Cents was passed.

Heather spoke of Margaret Hicks, a long-time ardent supporter of the Trust who has died this year at the age of 90. She wrote many letters on behalf of wildlife which she was passionate about.

**Election of Officers and Committee:** The 8 nominations for the Committee were accepted by the meeting. They are Jane Vaughan, Debbie Stone, Diane Piesse, Melanie Scott plus Heather Rogan (Convenor), Jenny Price (Treasurer), Guy Folster (Membership Secretary) and Glenys Mather (Secretary) as elected officers.

### General Business:

- The issue of vehicles at low tide driving on the Mangawhai estuary flats was raised. NRC, in its new regional plan, no longer permits this, but education and enforcement will still be needed.
- Trustee, Bryan Clark circulated a paper (with a supporting map of the area) on planned subdivisions near the Spit entitled "Anticipating Future Threats to Mangawhai Wildlife Refuge" There was discussion about the education of the public that is required to get compliance on cat and dog ownership and associated responsibilities. Developers may need to take on the issue at the time of sub-division, incorporating no-cat and no-dog rules. It was agreed the Trust should consider working with Bryan, DOC, KDC and perhaps developers.

**Guest speaker, Nikki Hartley** (DOC Whangarei) spoke about her previous work with animals over several seasons in Borneo. Her numerous, beautiful photos showed animals that came for care and rehabilitation to the refuge where she was stationed. Although her responsibility was first to train staff and volunteers, she also had a "hands on" caring role.

Afternoon tea and a good gossip was enjoyed by all at the conclusion of the AGM.

**The annual report is attached for your information.**

*Best wishes for a very Happy Christmas and New Year,*

*Heather Rogan and the Trust committee*