

Chatham Islands Conservation Board
Te Pou Atawhai O Rekohu Wharekauri



Annual Report
to the New Zealand Conservation Authority

1 July 2013 - 30 June 2014

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Front Cover Photo: Te Whanga Lagoon
Photographer: Sarah Owen

1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the Board's uncertainty concerning the review of the role of Conservation Boards, and the restructure of the Department of Conservation, members exercised their roles in community liaison and maintained interest and involvement in the Department's activities in the Chatham Islands.

A report on the review of the role of Conservation Boards was released by the Minister for Conservation in December 2013. This was the first review since Conservation Boards were established in 1987, intended to complement the Department's restructure and new partnership approach. The review made recommendations which required that Conservation Boards be more representative of the communities they serve, with a greater focus on recreation, and that DOC and Conservation Boards interact more effectively.

The membership of the Chatham Island Conservation Board has changed significantly in 2014, with the role of Chairperson from outgoing Board Member Lois Croon, to reappointed member Dinee Flemming.

DOC's New Structure

A new operational structure for DOC took effect on 2 Sept 2013. The purpose of the restructure was to make DOC more streamlined and outward facing, and to help the department build new conservation partnerships with others, while continuing with priority work in the field. The changes streamline the department's current 11 Conservancy districts into six new conservation delivery regions, and created two delivery groups across the country; Conservation Services and Conservation Partnerships. The Chatham Island area is now part of DOC's internal administrative Lower North Island region, and is supported by the Wellington/Pōneke District office.

Conservation Services Group is the new group responsible for delivering DOC's recreation, historic and biodiversity field work. The group is organised into six Regions, each led by a Conservation Director. Damian Coutts is the Conservation Services Director for the Lower North Island, based in Palmerston North. Jim Clarkson moved on from Conservation Services Manager, Area Manager in the previous structure, and Connie Norgate has recently been appointed Conservation Services Manager, based in the Chathams Island Office.

Conservation Partnerships Group is the new group responsible for growing conservation in partnership with iwi partners, with local business, community groups, local authorities, schools, landowners and others. Partnerships managers and Rangers work closely alongside the Conservation Services teams to engage new groups of people in conservation and work with them to achieve conservation gains. The Partnerships Group is also organised into six regions. Reg Kemper is the Lower North Island The Partnership Director, located in Wellington.

Significant changes have occurred to the Chatham Island Conservation Board, and the Department of Conservation over the reporting period. The Board thanks and acknowledges the significant contribution made by outgoing Board Members, and DOC staff who have moved on to different roles in the community, and the wider conservation network.

2 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

The Board membership and meeting attendance during from 2013 - 2014 was as follows:

Board Member	Meetings attended
Lois Croon, Chatham Island (Chairperson)	Two of three
Eileen Cameron, Chatham Island	All
Dinee Fleming, Chatham Island	All
Dianne Gregory-Hunt, Pitt Island (co-opted)	One of three
Shirley King, Chatham Island	Two of three
Charles (Chuck) Landis, Dunedin	One of three

Lois Croon, a Chatham Island resident for over 40 years was appointed to the Board in 2006. As Chairperson for the Chatham Island Heritage and Restoration Trust (CHART), Lois leads a number of new community conservation and historic restoration initiatives, and her role on the Board has strengthened the important partnership between the Board and CHART. As the outgoing Chair of the Conservation Board, Lois has made a significant contribution in leading the Board through the most significant organisational change the Department and Conservation Boards have undergone since 1987.

Eileen Cameron 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. appointed to the Board in 2006.

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.

Following the review of conservation boards, the following appointments to the Chatham Islands Conservation Board were made by the Minister for Conservation, and advertised in the NZ Gazette of 24 April 2014.

Reappointment of Diane Flemming, Chatham Island (Chairperson)
1 July 2014 to 30 June 2017

Mrs Flemming is a farmer and land owner, active in wetland restoration. She was also a tour guide for the Chathams Hotel and is knowledgeable about the Chathams economy. Her outdoor recreation interests are caring for seabirds and training dogs. She is of Hokotehi Moriori and Ngati Mutunga o Wharekauri descent.

Reappointment of Dr Chuck Landis, Waikouaiti
1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015

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. It is customary to have one mainland-based scientist on the Chathams Board. His outdoor recreation interests are tramping, bird watching and gardening.

Appointment of Mana Cracknell, Waitangi
1 July 2014 to 30 June 2017

Mr Cracknell 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, beekeeping and tree planting. He is of Rongomaiwahine, Ngati Kahungungu, Rangitane and Rongomaiwhanui-Moriori iwi.

Appointment of Dianne 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 Conservation Purposes Charitable Trust. She has undertaken a lot of conservation volunteer work on the Island, helping with translocations and research of the Chatham Island Snipe and assisting with nature reserve open days. She of Pitt Island iwi

Appointment of Susan Thorpe, Chatham Island

1 May 2014 to 30 June 2016

Ms Thorpe 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

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

18 September 2013, The Beach House Te One, Chatham Island
4 February 2014, , Henga Lodge, Henga, Chatham Island
9 April 2014, Henga Lodge, Henga, Chatham Island

All Board meetings were attended by Conservation Services Manager, Jim Clarkson, and Conservation Partnerships Manager, Sarah Owen. Conservation Partnerships Director, Reg Kemper attended the September and April meetings, and Conservation Services Director, Damian Coutts attended the February meeting.

Dave Houston, Recovery Group, and Carl Baker, Pou Tairangahau for the Lower North Island attended the February meeting. Rangers Tansy Bliss and Jane Bowden-Dobson attended the April meeting. Other guests who were attended the meetings were Kerri Moir, ECAN, and Hilary Butterick and Mana Cracknell.

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 14 permanent staff, and one permanent staff member based 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. The commencement date for the revision of the document is 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

Rākau Momori Dendroglyphs

Moriori rākau momori are memorial trees, which have been carved as memorials into living kōpi trees. The Board noted that Hāpūpu is a nationally significant reserve and should have some priority in terms of seeking solutions to halt the decline of tree health. DOC has been working with Hokotehi Moriori Trust and the University of Otago to trial remedial actions, and more effort will be focused on a joint strategy between Hokotehi Moriori Trust and DOC in the 2014/2015 financial year.

Abalone Farm

A consent application for a commercial abalone operation has been granted in consultation with Ngati Mutunga. The Board agreed this consent with the condition that the species used in the farming operation must be species which naturally occur and are sourced from Chatham Island populations.

Requests for provision of dead Chatham Island bird specimens, bones

On the request of the Board, DOC has provided an inventory of the bird specimens which are currently held in the DOC freezer on the island. There can be many uses for these specimens and the Board has requested that DOC recommend a draft a protocol and suggested a committee of iwi and board members to consider the condition of the specimen, best use, and who will benefit from the specimen.

Carl Baker is planning the distribution of two sets of whale bones to be given to Moriori and Ngati Mutunga and will be working towards a celebration of their return.

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

Research Proposals

Two research proposals were considered by the Board during this reporting period. In both cases where the Board has considered the 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 proposals.

Glasgow Research, Broadbill Priors

Based on the continuation of a research proposal that came to the board a year ago on Broadbill Priors, Graham Taylor is requesting to collect feathers and further work to capture all of the tagged birds. Working in conjunction with Glasgow Research the feathers are destroyed as part of the process so they will go to Scotland and not be returned. The Board accepted the proposal.

University of Otago, Stewart Island shag

The Board supported research on the Stewart Island shag indicates that it should perhaps be treated as two species. More genetic samples are required from the sister species, the Chatham shag. This work may show that shags originated in the Chatham's rather than the mainland. Nic Rawlence of Otago University also wanted to explore the relationship between the spotted and Pitt Island shags and has asked DOC to retain samples of any specimens of either species it encounters.

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

A report on the review of the role of Conservation Boards was released by the Minister for Conservation in December 2013. A letter was received from the Minister regarding the review of the Conservation Boards and the extension of terms until April 2014. Members accepted this request, noting they would have liked more information around the process.

It was decided not to align the existing 13 Conservation Boards to the six new larger departmental regions, on the basis this would have lost the strength of community connections. There are now 14 Conservation Boards, with one additional Board to take into account the Far North Treaty of Waitangi settlements and new Te Hiku Conservation Board.

The review recommended that Conservation Boards be more representative of the communities they serve, with a greater focus on recreation, and that DOC and the Conservation Boards interact more effectively. There is also a role for Conservation Boards in respect to the grants made from the Community Conservation Partnerships Fund.

LIAISON

A Department

Conservation Management Strategy

The Board noted development of the new Conservation Management Strategies 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. The Board was also concerned about the impact of the review and restructure on the capability and capacity of DOC staff on the Chatham Islands. DOC acknowledged the lack of support the Board has had over the 2013-2014 year and committed to ensuring adequate Board support, clear information, advice and information. Future reporting will focus more on progress against the objectives of the Conservation Management Strategy.

Conservation Board Review

There were no geographic changes for the Chatham Islands Conservation Board as a result of the review. The conclusion of the review was that DOC will need to support and work with Conservation Boards more effectively, to ensure they provide a key advisory role to senior management of DOC.

Operational Review

The Board acknowledged the Departments capability and capacity restraints on the island. Throughout the course of the reporting period the staff was reduced to 7 out of 14 permanent appointments. At the end of the 2013/2014 reporting period, recruitment was undertaken to fill vacancies. Additional management and support staff provided support during this process to ensure the Chatham Islands District was able to meet perform core conservation functions.

B COMMUNITY

Taiko Trust

The first year of establishing a second breeding colony of Chatham Island albatross near Point Gap, Tuku Farm, using a chick translocation program is complete. Chicks were moved from offshore island The Pyramid, to Point Gap on the mainland, and all chicks successfully fledged, and are expected to return within 4-7 years. The programme has been a huge success, with much support from volunteers and the community.

Over the breeding season, two Taiko chicks hatched in the Sweetwater Reserve, and nine other burrows were being actively visited.

Chatham Heritage and Restoration Trust (CHART)

The Board continued a close relationship with the Trust and with Conservation Board member and founding Chairperson of the Trust, Lois Croon. Some Board members participated in projects such as dune planting days with the ongoing restoration plan for the Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Haumia Pa dune reserve in Waitangi, and with the Catcher trapping programme. A long term vision for the trust is to translocate black robin back to Henga Reserve.

A documentary film project run by CHART in partnership with DOC has been filmed over the 2013 Summer. This focused on telling community stories through interviewing locals about conservation initiatives. The film may be sold to be broadcast, and will be distributed though

DOC youtube channels and by other partners. Possibility that this could be screened locally for visitors.

Chatham Islands' Conservation Award 2013

Phillip Graydon was the deserved recipient of the Chatham Island Conservation Award in 2013.

Started in 2004, the annual award was presented to Philip Graydon, the Principal of Pitt Island School, by Annette King at the Te One School on 27th November 2013. The award recognised his achievements in the propagation and restoration of native vegetation at the school, and his commitment to conservation education.

Environment Canterbury Biosecurity Officer

The Board has an active working relationship with the Environment Canterbury (ECAN) biosecurity officer, Kerri Moir. Kerry Moir was appointed to the role in 2014 and replaced Jenna Gregory-Hunt. Attendance at Board meetings provides a critical forum to discuss island biosecurity, and weed and animal pest control.



Annette King hands Phillip the Chatham Islands' Conservation Award

C Pitt Island

There have been no meetings of the Pitt Island Reserves Committee during the 2013/2014 year.

Approximately 400 metres of work has been completed on the predator fence, with associated fencing tasks including electrics, clearing and mowing. Biosecurity measures at the Wharf are up to date.

All Chatham Petrel burrows were checked, with the last chicks banded on 17 June 2014. By the end of July, all eight chicks were assumed to have fledged. New nesting boxes are currently being built to replace the old wooden boxes which are starting to rot.

D General

Board members acknowledged that the 2013-2014 year has seen a significant amount of change in both Department of Conservation staff, and Board membership. The Conservation Board acknowledges the significant contributions made by outgoing Board members, and Department of Conservation staff who have left the Chatham Islands Office.

In particular, the Board would like to acknowledge and thank the following people. Thanks to Lois Croon, outgoing Board Chair, for service to conservation and the wider Chatham Islands community through her role on the Board. Thanks to Eileen Cameron for her term on the board and support for community conservation initiatives, and thanks to Shirley King for her service to the wider community, and advocating for the interests of Moriori imi members.

The Board also acknowledges the effort and time Jim Clarkson invested in Chatham Island conservation. After many years on the Island, Jim left the role of Chatham Islands Conservation Service Manager for another role within DOC, based in Taranaki.

Thanks to all outgoing Board members and staff for their hard work on the ground, in the community, and in supporting the Board.

FINANCIAL YEAR 2014/2015

The Board annual of budget of \$15,000 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.