

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF



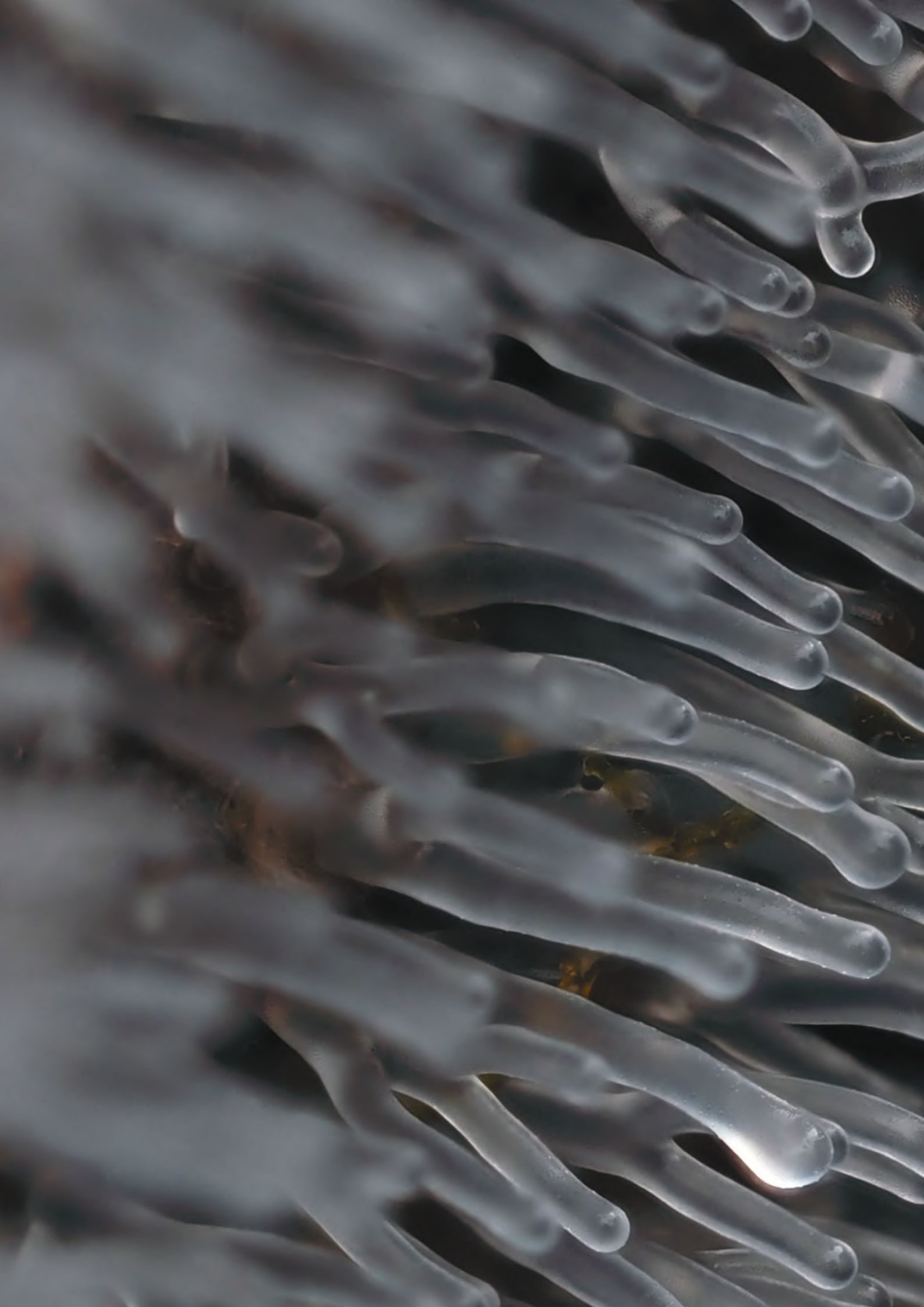
WILD FOR TARANAKI

Tō Tātou Taiāo – Maranga Papatūānuku



2024/25

ANNUAL REPORT



"Over an area of about 270,000 hectares within this ecological district we have every ecosystem or habitat known in the whole of Aotearoa, New Zealand compressed into one space. Here in Taranaki, we have the ability to foster, nurture and enable restoration at an extent unlike anywhere else due to the state of our ecology, and communities who are dedicated to restoring and upholding these ecosystems."

Professor Bruce Clarkson,

Ecologist, Waikato University

Excerpt from the W4T Regional Storytelling Video

WHO WE ARE

Wild for Taranaki represents a collective of individuals, groups and organisations striving to protect native plants, animals and habitats in the Taranaki region.

OUR KAUPAPA:

- **Connect groups for enhancing efficiency in the sector**
- **Support the work already being done by members**
- **Encourage investment and secure funding for the sector**
- **Promote success stories, encouraging individuals and groups to get involved**
- **Foster collaboration and build partnerships**
- **Develop new projects**
- **Raise awareness and engage the general public about the biodiversity sector**



WILD FOR TARANAKI

Tō Tātou Taiao – Maranga Papatūānuku

PO Box 226, New Plymouth 4340
www.wildfortaranaki.nz

Cover photo: Īnanga, *Galaxias maculatus*. Making up between 70% to 100% of fish in a whitebait fritter, Īnanga have a threat status of 'at risk, declining'. **Photo credit:** Te Kāhui o Taranaki. **Inside cover photo:** Common Coral Slime, *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa*. Slime moulds can make decisions and anticipate change, redefining what we understand as intelligent behavior. **Photo credit:** Emily Roberts.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Tēnā koutou katoa,

It is a great pleasure to present the 2024/2025 Wild for Taranaki Annual Report.

This year, we welcomed Andrew Castle to the Board. Andrew brings extensive governance experience—through his roles with the Taranaki Kiwi Trust Board and as Chair of the Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board—as well as a strong commitment to biodiversity. His perspective is a valuable addition to our governance table, and we are fortunate to have him join us at this exciting stage in our journey.

We were also delighted to welcome back Amanda Clinton-Gohdes, who was re-elected to the Board. Amanda's continued presence brings valuable continuity and clarity, and we look forward to her ongoing contribution to our governance and strategic direction.

At the same time, we farewelled Jan Hania, whose contribution over the past three years has been deeply appreciated. Jan's future-focused leadership and thoughtful insight have helped shape the direction of Wild for Taranaki. We thank him sincerely for his service and dedication.

This year has been one of strategic consolidation and renewed focus for Wild for Taranaki. We undertook a comprehensive review of our Deed, ensuring that our governance foundation remains robust and fit for purpose as the organisation continues to grow.

A new organisational strategy was also approved by the Board. This strategic direction reflects both the evolution of our role and our long-term commitment to supporting biodiversity outcomes across the region. It provides a strong framework for operational decision-making and future planning.

As part of our commitment to strengthening governance, we held a dedicated governance event aimed at deepening the Board's understanding of our membership—who they are, the challenges they face, and how we can best support them.

I would like to extend our sincere thanks to our key funders: Toi Foundation, Taranaki Regional Council, and Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust. Their support enables the Wild for Taranaki team to continue delivering high-impact work that benefits biodiversity across the rohe.

The operational team launched several new initiatives this year from their small port-side office. A key highlight has been securing the Wai Connection project and witnessing its positive ripple effects on our freshwater ecosystems. Through this initiative, we've built new relationships and networks, delivered education programmes for rangatahi, and enabled vital field-based monitoring and upskilling. With another 12 months of work confirmed, we look forward to the continued rollout of Wai Connection.



Te Whānau Toroa, our seabird and shorebird project, has worked with bird protection communities all along the coast. We're seeing encouraging outcomes for ōi and tūturiwhatu populations, with education and nesting protection wins standing out as particular highlights this year.

In the wake of Jobs for Nature—and under the oversight of the He Hononga Taiao alliance—Wild for Taranaki implemented the Resilience and Sustainability Project, along with other initiatives aimed at creating new opportunities for the sector.

The Wild for Taranaki team continues to demonstrate passion, professionalism, and a deep commitment to the sector—creating opportunities and providing consistent support. This Annual Report is a testament to another incredibly busy and impactful year for the organisation.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge our incredible membership and the extraordinary work taking place across the maunga. The restoration efforts in Taranaki are driven by a passionate and dedicated community, working out in the taiao year-round—

often in the face of limited funding, unpredictable weather, and other challenges. Our committed kaimahi rarely receive the recognition they deserve. Wild for Taranaki and the Board of Trustees deeply appreciate this incredible network.

Ngā mihi nui,
Bev Gibson
Chair, Wild for Taranaki

Photo: Moturoa sunrise. **Photo credit:** Dr Emily Roberts

GENERAL MANAGER REPORT

Kia ora koutou,

Wild for Taranaki entered its tenth year in 2025, marking the milestone with the delivery of several new and exciting workstreams and initiatives, and the first full year under our renewed strategy (page 10).

This work is not always easy to quantify. Our metrics, while important, don't always capture the depth of commitment or the agility with which our team approaches complex, shifting challenges. We operate in a space of constant problem-solving—continually asking how we can provide tailored, high-value support to as many member groups as possible. There is no one-size-fits-all solution in this work, and we're fortunate to collaborate with funders who recognise and back our kaupapa to serve our membership in ways that are both targeted and meaningful.

As our number of workstreams continues to grow, our strategy serves as a critical sense check. Each new opportunity is weighed against our ability to connect stakeholders, enable capacity, and advocate for biodiversity outcomes. We apply checks and balances to stay focused, avoid duplication, and ensure our work delivers meaningful, lasting impact for biodiversity. We engage intentionally—only where our involvement adds real value and strengthens collective outcomes.

The success of Wai Connection and the ongoing development of Te Whānau Toroa have been particularly heartening — enabling our members both through in-kind support and direct resourcing and both grounded in authentic partnership with community and hapū.

Working alongside Mountains to Sea on Wai Connection has been a privilege. The project has fostered strong relationships—both for our

members and within our own team. Feedback from field teams has been overwhelmingly positive, with particular praise for regional coordinator Lisa Berndt, whose support has allowed teams to focus on what they do best: mahi in the field (page 21).

In tandem with my transition into the General Manager role, we welcomed Dr Emily Roberts as the new lead for Te Whānau Toroa. Her work with coastal bird experts has been a valuable continuation of this kaupapa, yielding strong results and building further credibility for the project (page 27).

The sector landscape shifted significantly in late 2024 with the conclusion of Jobs for Nature, and the lack of immediate clarity around continued environmental investment. Through He Hononga

Taiao (alongside Department of Conservation, Ngā Iwi o Taranaki, and Taranaki Regional Council), we worked to secure transitional funding to build resilience within Jobs for Nature funded projects. This collaboration resulted in a broad set of opportunities for Jobs for Nature projects across the region (page 35).

Uncertainty around future funding also prompted us to explore new funding pathways, with a focus on sustainable support for our members. Locally, we launched a visibility campaign in collaboration with Done by Nine and MAD Media, including Google Ads and a month-long billboard campaign aimed at engaging local businesses and individuals (page 17).

At the heart of our work lies a fundamental truth: relationships are everything. Whether through speaker events, quarterly catch-ups, or our Biodiversity Forum, we create the spaces where connection and collaboration can thrive. One-on-one hui, site visits, and behind-the-scenes administrative support may not always be headline-grabbing, but they are the glue that holds this movement together (see page 14).

Our commitment to the sector is grounded in care, curiosity, and a firm belief in the power of connection. In this, my first year as General Manager, I'm incredibly proud of the foundation we've strengthened together, and the direction we're heading.

Wild for Taranaki is here to connect, enable and advocate — always in service of the kaupapa, and the people who carry it forward.

Ngā mihi nui,
Danielle Gibas
General Manager – Wild for Taranaki

Photo: *Crassula manaia*, a nationally vulnerable, minute coastal herb confined to the south Taranaki coast. **Photo credit:** Dr Emily Roberts



Photo: Swimming mayfly, *Nesameletus*. An indicator of good stream health, found in fast flowing awa in Taranaki. **Photo credit:** Emily Roberts



WHO WE ARE

OUR BOARD



Bev Gibson
Trust Chair



Simon Cayley
Deputy Chair



Michael Joyce



Lauren Wallace



Amanda Clinton-Gohdes



Andrew Castle



Sean Zieltjes



Tāne Houston

OUR MEMBERS

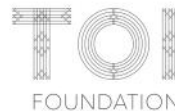
Wild for Taranaki strives to tautoko and connect our biodiversity restoration network around the maunga. Facilitating productive, long-term solutions and successful environmental outcomes. Our diverse membership, which ranges from volunteer restoration groups to larger organisations, engage in works such as replanting, trapping, and the reintroduction and monitoring of a range of plant and animal species. All our members are committed to helping enable thriving biodiversity throughout Taranaki.

OUR SUPPORTERS

Without your financial and in-kind contributions we wouldn't be able to work towards achieving our vision of thriving biodiversity in Taranaki. Thank you!



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai





Te Whenua Tōmuri Trust

NOWELL'S LAKES WALKWAY CHARITABLE TRUST



OUR STRATEGY MAHERE RAUTAKI

OUR VISION TŌ TĀTOU MATAKITE

Thriving Taranaki biodiversity.

Skilled, energised and connected communities leading impactful regional scale restoration.

OUR VALUES TŌ TĀTOU UARA

LEADERSHIP

We lead with authenticity and humility, celebrating the success of our members and others.

PROFESSIONALISM

We are exacting of ourselves, aiming for continuous improvement and operating in a reliable and accountable manner.

PARTNERSHIP

We celebrate tangata whenua as kaitiaki of Taranaki's biodiversity.

HOPE

We approach challenges with positivity and drive, aiming to build resilience within our team, our membership, our sector and te taiao.

AWE

We seek opportunities to connect with the region's biodiversity and share that connection with others.

OUR PURPOSE TŌ TĀTOU KAUPAPA

CONNECT

OPPORTUNITY

We intentionally invest in relationship building with and among our members, funders, stakeholders and wider sector.



ACHIEVED

4 Quarterly Catch-ups

10 Newsletters

1 Biodiversity Forum
120 Attendees
35 Member groups

ENABLE

OPPORTUNITY

We are proactive in amplifying our members' and wider sector's collective impact through capability building, in-kind support and increased funding.



ACHIEVED

1	Governance event
6	Professional Development Courses
34	Attendees
8	Member groups
8	Wānanga
105	Attendees
3	Webinars
8	Member Videos
1	Regional Video
\$530k	Directed to member groups

ADVOCATE

OPPORTUNITY

We champion our Taranaki Sector and members. Positively advocating for public engagement and lasting protection of biodiversity.



ACHIEVED

9	Digital fundraising billboards
3	Weeks
+57.1%	Increased social media engagement
4	Speaker's evenings
152	Attendees
2	Film Screenings
216	Attendees
7	Public presentations
13	Engagement events
5196	Google ad views
2	Radio appearances
2	Press articles





CONNECT

We strategically cultivate and strengthen relationships with our members, funders, stakeholders, and the wider sector to enhance collective impact and long-term collaboration.



BIODIVERSITY FORUM

Our yearly Biodiversity Forum is a daylong event which brings groups from across our membership under one roof to share, learn, exchange ideas and enjoy manaakitanga. The 2024 forum was attended by a record 120 people. Presentations from the Taranaki Mounga Project, Puna Wano-Bryant and Josephine Sullivan from Paraninihi ki Waitotara, workshops about Wai Connection and iNaturalist were highlights of the day.

QUARTERLY CATCH UPS

Our quarterly catch-ups are two-hour, informal face-to-face meetings held exclusively for our members. These gatherings provide a valuable opportunity to connect in person and hear directly from members about how their work is progressing throughout the year. They create space for open discussion, where successes can be shared, challenges raised, and insights exchanged. These conversations not only help us understand current needs and priorities but also guide how we direct resources and support. Importantly, they also spark new ideas and collaborations for ongoing and future projects across the region.

Photo opposite page: Purple Rock Crab, *Leptograpsus variegatus*. **Photo credit:** Dr Emily Roberts. **Photo above:** Wild for Taranaki members at the 2024 Biodiversity Forum.

IN-KIND SUPPORT

At Wild for Taranaki, much of the impact we have cannot be measured through statistics or conventional metrics. Our work goes far beyond the numbers — it lives in the countless hours spent nurturing relationships through one-on-one catch-ups, phone calls and site visits. These often-invisible efforts are vital to the way we operate and are central to how we support and connect with our member organisations.

At the heart of Wild for Taranaki is a community connected by more than just shared goals — it is bound by trust, care, and time spent together. Whether during a site visit, or in casual kōrero, these moments allow for shared experiences to grow into meaningful, often reciprocal relationships. This is how we measure our success: through the strength of the relationships we build and the collective resilience they create.

Fostering partnerships and ongoing relationships between members and bigger organisations is key to success in our sector.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

In celebration of the incredible work done by our members, we present this short summary of the work done by ...

East Taranaki Environment Collective, Taranaki Kiwi Trust, Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust.



PROTECTING TARANAKI KIWI –

A COLLABORATIVE SUCCESS STORY

In the lush, rugged landscapes of Taranaki, a passionate network of organisations and individuals are working together to turn the tide on declining kiwi numbers. At the centre of this effort are three key conservation groups: the East Taranaki Environment Collective (ETEC), the Taranaki Kiwi Trust (TKT), and the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust (RSRT).

Together, they're proving that collaboration, community, and commitment can restore ecosystems — and bring the call of the kiwi back to our forests.

The western brown kiwi, like all kiwi species, is under serious threat. Despite its cultural significance as New Zealand's national bird, unmanaged kiwi populations are declining at an alarming rate of 2% per year. If this trend continues, kiwi could disappear from the wild within two generations.

In response to this crisis, the Taranaki Kiwi Trust was founded in 2001. This charitable trust is dedicated to protecting and preserving the Western Brown Kiwi population throughout Taranaki. Motivated by a deep connection to the region's natural heritage, the Trust works tirelessly to ensure that future generations will still be able to hear and see wild kiwi in Taranaki's forests and mountains.

The support of the community is essential. Donations and volunteer efforts directly fund kiwi monitoring, predator control, education programmes, and habitat restoration.

Further inland, the East Taranaki Environment Collective, administered by the East Taranaki Environment Trust, is leading an ambitious landscape-scale restoration project over 18,000 hectares of bush and farmland stretching from Whangamōmona to Purangi.

ETEC's primary focus is on pest control — the key to giving kiwi and other native wildlife a fighting chance. Their extensive predator network includes over 1,300 DOC 200 and 600 DOC 250 traps targeting mustelids like stoats and weasels, and more than 1,200 self-resetting A12 and A24 traps to control rats and possums. Goat control and occasional toxin operations complement this work, making the area increasingly hospitable for threatened species.



Check out the website
www.taranakikiwi.org.nz



Check out the website
www.etec.org.nz



Check out the website
www.rotokare.org.nz



Thanks to this effort, ETEC's landscape now supports around one pair of kiwi per 12.5–15 hectares — a strong result in the face of nationwide population decline. Long-term protection in this area is also helping other vulnerable native species such as the North Island kōkako and the long-tailed bat.

In 2012, the Taranaki Kiwi Trust partnered with the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust to establish the Taranaki Kōhanga Kiwi at Rotokare (TKKR) — a groundbreaking kiwi breeding programme designed to repopulate Taranaki and the wider western North Island.

Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust is a 230-hectare, predator-free reserve just east of Eltham. The sanctuary's fully fenced environment, which includes native forest, wetland, and a natural lake, provides a safe haven where kiwi can breed and thrive. Over the years 40 founder kiwi have been introduced to the site, most through Operation Nest Egg, which involves hatching and raising chicks in protected conditions before releasing them into the sanctuary.

More than a decade later, the Rotokare kōhanga is now home to a flourishing population of over 300 kiwi — a thriving nursery that's already delivering on its mission. Since 2020, the project has successfully translocated over 200 kiwi to other protected areas, including the Totara Block, Kaitake Ranges,

Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari in Waikato, Taranaki Maunga, the Capital Kiwi Project and the Omoana area.

TKKR's success is driven by a dedicated team of over 20 staff and volunteers, including 12 accredited kiwi handlers. Together, they conduct monitoring, manage habitat, and continuously improve conservation practices.

TKKR has become a national model for kiwi recovery, demonstrating how community-based conservation and strategic partnerships can lead to measurable results. A permanent, public-facing breeding population is now established at Rotokare, kiwi calls are now regularly heard at night in the sanctuary, and guided night tours often give visitors a rare chance to hear and glimpse these shy, nocturnal birds in their natural habitat.

Photos, left to right: Taranaki Kiwi Trust and Rotokare Scenic Reserve staff and volunteers relocating kiwi. Jess Fancy, Taranaki Kiwi Trust, introduces kiwi to onlookers at Te Papa. Fiona Gordon, Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust and Sue Hardwick-Smith, Taranaki Kiwi Trust with the manu.



ADVOCATE

We actively champion the Taranaki Biodiversity Sector and our members by driving public engagement and advocating for the enduring protection of biodiversity



GIVING ARCHITECTS A SEARCH FOR LEGACY DONORS

Wild for Taranaki engaged philanthropic specialists, Giving Architects, to produce a prospectus aimed at attracting legacy donors for our membership.

The prospectus is designed to be presented to organisations and individuals, generating interest from philanthropic entities to provide ongoing funding for members and to support in-house workstreams like Wai Connection.

The prospectus outlines the wide range of restoration efforts happening across the region and highlights the exceptional work being carried out in Taranaki. The primary goal of this work is to secure funding beyond central and local government sources. With the first phase now complete, we will begin approaching potential investors in the second quarter of the next fiscal year.

REGIONAL STORYTELLING

To help convey our message to potential investors, a visual storytelling project has been completed in collaboration by local videographers, Nowadays. Featuring kōrero from Bruce Clarkson, Puna Wano-Bryant, and Tāne Houston, the video serves as a heartfelt tribute to the region. Its aim is to share the story of Taranaki's exceptional biodiversity in a compelling and engaging way.

This workstream is generously supported by Jobs for Nature funding and the Ministry for the Environment.



WITT WILD FOR TARANAKI STUDENT OF THE YEAR

This year we awarded WITT's conservation class of 2024 with the 'Wild for Taranaki student of the year'.

Winner Oisín Ammundsen.



SPEAKERS' EVENINGS

The Wild for Taranaki speakers' evening programme has gathered a reliable audience over the last two years. Our intention being to build a bridge between the community and our member network to inform the community about the important work being done in the restoration sector. Across the four evenings we hosted up to 220 people between Puke Ariki foyer and Te Whare Hononga. Marine, freshwater, and birds of Taranaki were the themes of our speakers' evenings in 24/25. Thank you to those who gave your time to present at these events. Representatives from Ngāmotu Marine Reserve Society, Taranaki Regional Council, Taranaki Catchment Communities, Taranaki Kiwi Trust, Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust, Project Reef South Taranaki, Te Ihowai Ltd, Te Kāhui o Taranaki, Te Kaahui o Rauru, Biosecurity Taranaki and Highlands Intermediate presented through the year.

We hosted two screenings of *Ko au te Awa, ko te Awa ko au / I Am the River, The River is Me* as part of the Wai Connection programme. Events in North and South Taranaki with a combined audience of 216 people. The Stratford event doubled as a fundraiser for Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust. Ned Tapa, Whanganui awa kaitiaki and the film's protagonist, led inspiring community kōrero with our members about the process of reclaiming personhood status to the awa.

Photo top left: Ned Tapa answers questions after the screening of *Ko au te Awa, ko te Awa ko au*. **Above:** Birds of Taranaki speakers' evening at Te Whare Hononga.

FUNDRAISING

This year, we focused on establishing new avenues for fundraising and generating increased investment in the sector. Our targets included legacy donors, one-off contributions, philanthropic organisations, and individual donors. We ran a series of Google Ads and MAD Media billboards directing potential donors to our website, where they can contribute directly to specific projects or to the Community Fund.

ACTION HUB THANKS ZEST IT!

The Action Hub is a purpose-built online platform with an extensive range of multi-purpose digital tools used for managing planting, pest plant and predator control and volunteers. We've continued to make improvements to the Action Hub through 24/25.

A donate button has been added to each project page encouraging direct contributions to members.



ENABLE

We aim to proactively amplify the sector's collective impact through capability building, targeted support, and increased investment.

The ENABLE pou revolves around strategically curating opportunities and workstreams that broaden access to funding, tools, and capability across the largest possible segment of our membership. Our approach is intentional—we design initiatives that align with our core values, anchored in support for the membership and our commitment to mana whenua. Wai Connection, Te Whānau Toroa, the Community Fund and the Resilience Sustainability project are all workstreams which fall under this pou. At the heart of these workstreams lies the intent to amplify the collective impact of the membership and our sector at large.

By fostering inclusive engagement and removing barriers to participation, we enable the widest range possible of members to benefit from the opportunities we create. This includes ensuring that resources—be they financial, technical, or relational—are distributed in ways that uphold equity, build capability, and amplify community-led outcomes.

Beyond these formal workstreams, Wild for Taranaki provides in-kind peer support to members in a variety of ways. This support may include acting as a fund holder, providing administrative assistance to smaller voluntary member groups and organisations, or sharing expertise across the collective.



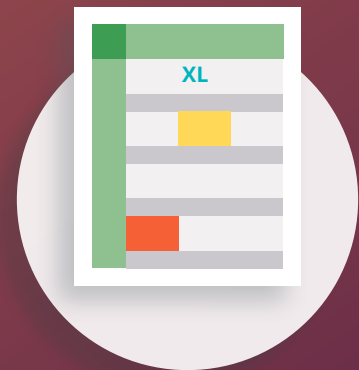
**TE WHĀNAU
TOROA**



WAI CONNECTION



**COMMUNITY
FUND**



**RESILIENCE AND
SUSTAINABILITY**



TARANAKI WAI CONNECTION REGIONAL IMPACT IN NUMBERS

From July 2024 – June 2025 Taranaki Wai Connection delivered **303 activities** for 22 catchment groups and 26 school catchments groups across the region:



27
freshwater training opportunities for more than **335** people

87
community engagement events reaching **1,995** members of the public

WAI CONNECTION ENABLING LOCAL LEADERSHIP FOR HEALTHY WATERWAYS

The Wai Connection 2024/25 programme demonstrated Wild for Taranaki’s ability to deliver targeted workstreams in collaboration with national and regional agencies, resulting in outcomes that benefit the entire membership.

Wild for Taranaki was proud to serve as the Taranaki Service Provider for Wai Connection 2024–2025, a national initiative led by Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust (MTSCT). It was an absolute pleasure to represent our region in this collaborative effort to grow community-led action and connection with freshwater.

Wild for Taranaki was selected as a Partner Organisation to the MTSCT due to its interest in using existing biodiversity opportunities to improve freshwater quality through a catchment-based

approach. Since many stakeholders are active in both the biodiversity and freshwater spaces, this partnership offered a chance to strengthen relationships and coordinate efforts on the ground—benefiting both ecosystems.

Embedding the Wai Connection Regional Coordinator within Wild for Taranaki was a key element of the Taranaki Wai Connection set-up, designed to create lasting impact by ensuring the project is aligned with our members’ needs and regional priorities, building and strengthening relationships, and ensuring a tailored local delivery.

Wai Connection’s focus on collaboration, capability-building, member support, and community engagement, were well aligned with our Wild for Taranaki’s purpose.

Te Kāhui o Taranaki, Te Kaahui o Rauru, and one of our newest members, Te Ihowai Ltd, along with the Taranaki Regional Council, were supported with staff to strengthen the work they are doing in the freshwater space. Taranaki Catchment Communities



78
restoration
and monitoring
activities involving
753
people

131
education
programmes
reaching
4,950
students

Over
3,500
native trees
planted

**Congratulations to
the member groups and
organisations who contributed to
the success of Wai Connection in
2024/25.**

provided a single point of contact for farmer-led catchment groups across the region, while Wai Connection further empowered their catchment coordinators through capability building and networking opportunities.

In addition to resourcing roles, the Wai Connection programme offered a number of opportunities to the wider Wild for Taranaki membership.

Strengthening capability and knowledge within and across the region with four targeted regional wānanga featuring īnanga spawning, SHMAK monitoring, fish passage, and catchment group facilitation.

Members participated in two national Mountains to Sea wānanga (Waimarama & Akaroa) learning hands-on skills while building cross-regional connections. There has been a team exchange between Taranaki and Wellington, and for the wider Wild for Taranaki member network Wai Connection held a workshop at the 2024 Biodiversity Forum.

Investing in skills development, providing tools and expert support was a strategic move to ensure the Wai Connection initiative leaves a legacy beyond the one-year funding period. By equipping our members with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to continue their work independently, we build long-term capacity within the region. This approach not only strengthens community ownership and resilience but also ensures that the positive environmental and social outcomes of the project are sustained well into the future.

Photos: Wai Connection training. **Photo credit:** Te Kāhui o Taranaki. **Left and right side photo credit:** Lorna Doogan.

WAI CONNECTION IN THE WORDS OF OUR MEMBERS



“Wai Connection has provided an amazing opportunity for Te Kaahui o Rauru to develop/form relationships with the community through hands-on training, storytelling, and support to improve, and bring greater awareness to the pressures our waterways are facing. Being able to meld stories of place/whakapapa and western science has helped embed our connection to wai and the importance of protecting it as it has intrinsic value. Highlights include the many training and educational sessions, with schools, rangatahi and whaanau groups, learning about wai monitoring, taonga species, wetlands and ecosystem protection.

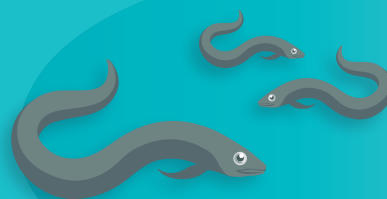
Through the delivery of our educational sessions a diverse range of people have been able to develop a greater understanding of the importance of wai maaori and how to monitor and protect our waterways and the species that live within them. All schools we worked with were able to deliver community based monitoring independently by the end of our sessions, and learned how to identify different taonga species, like our two freshwater tuna species, whitebait species, and macroinvertebrates.”

- **Timara Wallace**, Te Kaahui o Rauru

“For us, Wai Connection has facilitated collaborations and opportunities to engage with hapū, government agencies (DOC, TRC, NPDC, Fish & Game), local schools and education organisations (TOPEC), landowners, community volunteers, industry and other environmental groups like Taranaki Mounga Project. Through these partnerships we have been able to share knowledge, and support action towards improving freshwater health.

Our year has seen a significant increase in both the scale and variety of restoration and monitoring activities. Highlights include the planting of over 3,500 native rākau across several key riparian and restoration sites with different community roopu and entities.”

- **Tami Cave**, Te Ihowai Ltd



“As a team, one of our main achievements has been designing and implementing an īnanga spawning programme. We have learnt lots about īnanga spawning within the Taranaki Iwi rohe as a result of training acquired through the Wai Connection programme. [...] Following training with Nic Naysmith (Īnanga Spawning Programme National Coordinator), we were able to adapt national protocols and undertake saltwater wedge surveys and habitat assessments. Results from these investigations enabled us to witness and capture multiple īnanga spawning events, identify spawning areas and carry out successful egg checks with minimal disturbance to the taiao. We have now identified spawning areas within 11 different catchments/awa and all data has been recorded on ArcGIS.”

– Timoti King, Te Kāhui o Taranaki



“Being involved in Wai Connection has been quite formative for us, in the sense of the word connection. By being part of this process, we’ve been able to be in contact with so many different groups that are in the same kind of field that we are, and it’s helped us solidify our focus and our direction, where freshwater is the backbone of our communities.”

By collaborating with other groups that also had that interest and passion, we’re able to share resources, knowledge and information. And it really helped us create our Fish Barrier Project, which came out of conversations with the Wai Connection team. And that’s become our future direction, our future focus.”

– Paul Turner, Taranaki Catchment Communities



“Teachers and community group leaders now have renewed confidence to facilitate and continue water quality monitoring surveys with their students, in adjacent waterways, or even in waterways that are under significant pressure from human impacts. Some schools have taken steps to acquire their own resources and equipment to increase the scale and frequency of water quality monitoring, independent of external facilitators.

Collaborations with Iwi and hapū and taiao action groups in Taranaki have enabled wai monitoring surveys and wetland restoration projects to be implemented that will go a long way towards improving biodiversity in those freshwater habitats.”

– Nicky Toothill, Taranaki Regional Council



Photo: Inanga eggs close to hatching. **Photo credit:** Te Kāhui o Taranaki



"The Te Kāhui o Taranaki Taiao Team has done amazing mahi this past īnanga spawning season. Going from one confirmed spawning site to at least 11 in a single season is outstanding. And, having the opportunity to witness seven spawning events in one year is phenomenal and testament to their drive, passion, and deep understanding of īnanga ecology. Their enthusiasm and aroha for this kaupapa really shines through! They've done incredible work for īnanga conservation. I can't wait to see what they achieve next season. Go team!"

- Nic Naysmith

Northland īnanga Spawning Habitat Restoration
Project Manager & National īnanga Spawning
Programme National Coordinator



TE WHĀNAU TOROA

IDENTIFICATION COURSES & BOAT TRIPS

In Taranaki, we're incredibly fortunate to have rare and culturally significant species of shorebirds and seabirds attempting to nest around our coastline. These birds are here, but due to the vulnerability of their ground-based nests and burrows, they require whole community-based efforts to survive and thrive. The annual report provides a great opportunity to celebrate the success of Wild for Taranaki members and other community-based groups, iwi, hapū, schools and government organisations who have worked hard in this space to see the safe return of these birds.

This year marks the second implementation year of Te Whānau Toroa, a Wild for Taranaki project that supports members and the broader community to work in synergy to better protect these vulnerable coastal taonga. The project aims to connect and enable members to work together in a collaborative cohesive way across the region. This year, through Te Whānau Toroa, we have supported and worked collaboratively with 17 different Wild for Taranaki members.

A key aspect of the project involves providing customised training and education, enthusing more knowledgeable communities to advocate for the safeguarding of Taranaki shorebirds, seabirds and their habitats. This year, we ran identification courses in Ōpunake, Pātea and New Plymouth supported by Wildlife Management International Ltd, Te Kāhui o Taranaki and Forest and Bird Youth. At the end of March, we also ventured out on the boat identifying seabirds around Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands and beyond. Over three days, we ran at-sea identification trips and were fortunate to observe a diverse range of pelagic seabirds including toanui (flesh-footed shearwater), toroa (white-capped albatross) and rako (Buller's shearwater). We are grateful to Ngā Motu Department of Conservation for their invaluable support aboard the RV Orca. What a wonderful learning opportunity!

NGĀ MANU TAKUTAI - SHOREBIRDS

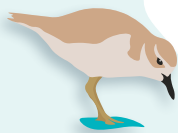
In December, we supported Taranaki Birds NZ to organise a visit by shorebird expert Adrian Riegen to band and flag tūturiwhatu (New Zealand dotterel), a first for Taranaki! As a result, we now know much more about the movements of Taranaki dotterels, including capturing records of long distance west-coast flights. The revelation of these west coast connections sparked a keynote speaker invite to the Auckland Dotterel Forum and we were also invited to contribute to the Pūkoro Miranda Shorebird Centre's Dotterel Management Course, placing Taranaki tūturiwhatu firmly on the national map! During June, we supported Taranaki Birds NZ with a Winter Shorebird Census. Over a couple of weekends, we counted just under 4000 birds, enabling greater understanding of winter resident and migrant shorebird populations. Taranaki baseline records have now been added to the national Birds NZ shorebird database, another first for Taranaki.

Improved understanding of Taranaki shorebirds has enabled greater advocacy, education and protection of the birds through working collaboratively with Te Ara Taiao in schools and implementing better protection (predator control, dog control, signage and fencing) with support from a broad range of members including Ngāti Tara Oaonui Sandy Bay Society, Te Kāhui o Taranaki, New Plymouth District Council, Department of Conservation and Taranaki Regional Council.

Photos left to right: Forest and Bird Youth stoked to see dolphins and seabirds on the Te Whānau Toroa boat trips. Volunteers post dotterel banding at Te Tuahu, Sandy Bay. **Photo credit:** Dr Emily Roberts.

NGĀ MANU TAKUTAI

SHOREBIRDS



Flagged & Banded Tūturiwhatu

4 chicks banded with support from national expert & member volunteers:

- JPA, JPB, JPC, JPD
- Monitored movements of flagged juveniles
- Monitored movements of other flagged dotterels: JAM
- Long distance flights revealed: JPB & JAM

GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Supported by



Shorebird census

~4000 birds counted:

- 58 tūturiwhatu
- 101 pohowera
- 5 black-fronted dotterel
- 121 tōrea pango
- 97 tōrea
- Movements between high and low tide roosts
- Winter resident & migrant populations
- Taranaki data added to Birds NZ national database

JPB
>200km

EDUCATION

Through collaboration



 FITZROY SCHOOL



- Education programme developed
- Fieldtrips
- Artwork for signage
- Advocacy videos

ADVOCACY



National:

- Auckland Dotterel Forum keynote
- Input Pūkorokoro Dotterel Management Course

Regional:

- Presentations

PROTECTION

Through collaboration



Ngāti Tara Oaonui
Sandy Bay Society



Te Kōwhiriwhiri-ā-Pōheke o Ngāmotu
New Plymouth District Council

Taranaki Iwi
Te ōhanga Kaitiaki

- Predator control
- Dog control
- Signage
- Fencing

JPA
10km

JPC
36km

JAM
>300km

JPD
5km

Movements of banded tūturiwhatu

"The Northern New Zealand Dotterel is no longer classified as threatened thanks largely to community groups, supported by councils and DOC, protecting nests on northern North Island beaches. Their efforts, including fencing, signage, and predator control, have led to breeding success, though nesting space is limited. As a result, dotterels are re-establishing further south, including coastal Taranaki.

In December 2024, I met with Taranaki community groups, including Taranaki Birds NZ and Ngāti Tara Oaonui Sandy Bay Society, working with Wild for Taranaki to protect these new arrivals. To track their impact, we've begun fitting juveniles with engraved leg flags, allowing monitoring of breeding success and enabling understanding of where these young birds establish as adults. Identifying individual birds boosts engagement and increases knowledge of dotterel movements, which all helps ensure Northern New Zealand Dotterel continue to flourish."

- Adrian Riegen - New Zealand Wader Study Group

Photo: Tūturiwhatu, New Zealand dotterel, in breeding plumage. In 2011, only 8 tūturiwhatu were recorded in Taranaki. In 2025, there are around 50. **Photo credit:** Dr Emily Roberts.





NGĀ MANU MOANA – SEABIRDS

Working closely with experts from the Taranaki Regional Council Biodiversity Team, during April and May, we observed surprisingly high numbers of prospecting ōi (grey-faced petrels) south of New Plymouth. After some initial reces, we hosted several viewings with iwi, hapū and other keen locals. It was especially exciting to witness so many ōi displaying and calling to each other off cliffs around Ōākura, Ōkato, and Ōpūnake, marking a promising southern range extension for this species.

It quickly became apparent that more advocacy, education and protection was required to aid their safe return. We've been working collaboratively

with Ngā Mahanga a Tāiri, Te Kāhui o Taranaki, schools, Te Ara Taiao, New Plymouth District Council, Taranaki Regional Council, the Department of Conservation and other enthusiastic locals to raise community awareness and provide greater protection through improved signage, increased predator control, media articles, social media posts and community-based events.

In the year ahead, we're excited to keep building relationships and, with targeted support, grow resilient seabird and shorebird populations across Taranaki through community-led action. Follow the Te Whānau Toroa Facebook page for project updates.

Photos left to right: New Plymouth District Council, Te Kāhui o Taranaki and Wild for Taranaki working together to increase predator control around Tataraimaka Pā. Ōmata School out on a field trip to Tapuae Marine Reserve with Te Ara Taiao and Wild for Taranaki. **Photo credit:** Dr Emily Roberts

NGĀ MANU MOANA SEABIRDS

MONITORING

Working with



- Iwi & hapū
- Land owners
- Conservation groups

Ōi monitoring

- Acoustic recorders
- Burrow monitoring
- Banding

COMMUNITY AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING

Through collaboration



Te Kaurihera-i-Rohe o Ngāimotu
New Plymouth District Council

- Ōi viewing evenings with hapū, iwi & other locals
- Ōi awareness wānanga
 - AGM Presentations
 - Media & social media

PROTECTION

Through collaboration



Ngā Mahanga a Tāiri



Te Kaurihera-i-Rohe o Ngāimotu
New Plymouth District Council



- Predator control
- Dog control
- Signage
- Fencing

EDUCATION

Through collaboration



OAKURA SCHOOL
Learning to Think, Learning to Live



Te Kaurihera-i-Rohe o Ngāimotu
New Plymouth District Council



- Education programme developed
- Fieldtrips • Artwork for signage
- Advocacy videos

KEY

Established colonies

Recent range extension

RAPANUI RESERVE
PREDATOR
PROOF FENCE



“Seabirds used to occupy all the coastal areas of Aotearoa New Zealand and many petrel species flew back into the mountains to breed. Over time the pressures of human activities and the introduction of pest species gradually wiped out these coastal and inland colonies. Today we are seeing a resurgence in numbers as community groups have started to clear the introduced pests from coastal areas. This has provided some safe habitats for seabirds to begin to recolonise. It’s fantastic to hear that the grey-faced petrel or ōi have begun to expand southwards onto the coastal headlands in southern Taranaki. This species nests in burrows right next to the sea. While they are bit clumsy on land, they are magnificent and highly skilled navigators of the open oceans. The birds feed in the central and southern Tasman Sea hundreds of kilometres from land. They hunt for floating prey by day (mainly squid) and then catch bioluminescent fish and krill at the surface at night. Once they have a full belly of food they rapidly return to their colony, flying directly back to their nest with the tail winds allowing them to soar in great arcs and to travel at speeds up to 100 km per hour. This is a special taonga seabird that only breeds around the upper North Island and it needs our help.”

- Graeme Taylor, Principle Science Advisor
at the Department of Conservation

Photo: Ōi, grey-faced petrel, are increasing in numbers around the Taranaki coast. At Rapanui, in 2003, 8 burrows were found. Now, due to intensive predator control and a predator-proof fence, there are over 150 burrows. **Photo credit:** Dr Emily Roberts.





RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

He Hononga Taiao was established as a moderator to administer the Covid-19 response Jobs for Nature fund. It is an alliance between Ngā Iwi o Taranaki, the Department of Conservation (DOC), Taranaki Regional Council (TRC), and Wild for Taranaki.

The Resilience and Sustainability Project was devised by He Hononga Taiao and executed by the Wild for Taranaki operations team.

Guided by local decision-makers engaged in environmental adaptation work, the project was underpinned by the ethos of collaboration, not competition, reflecting a Taranaki-specific, cooperative approach.

Wild for Taranaki developed a suite of professional upskilling opportunities to help Jobs for Nature organisations and better future proof the gains made through Jobs for Nature.



COMMUNITY FUND

The Community Fund can be accessed by members annually, via application process which goes to the Board of Trustees for approval. Funding is used for restoration planting, pest plant control, fencing to protect native habitat and predator control.

This year's recipients were 800 Trust, East Taranaki Environment Collective, Te Rununga o Ngāti Mutunga, Nowell's Lake Walkway Trust, Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust, Sustainable Taranaki, Taranaki Kiwi Trust, WITT.

Photo top and bottom: *Hemiandrus jacinda*, a large, glossy red ground wētā first described in 2021 in honour of our previous prime minister. Hangatahua sunset.
Photo credit: Dr Emily Roberts



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

In celebration of the incredible work done by our members, we present this short summary of the work done by ...

NGĀ MOTU MARINE RESERVE SOCIETY



Check out the website
www.seasense.org.nz

Since 1997, the Ngā Motu Marine Reserve Society has been at the heart of marine conservation in Taranaki. Driven by community values, scientific curiosity, and a deep respect for the natural world, this volunteer-led group works to protect our local moana (ocean) and make marine science accessible to all.

Their projects range from marine biodiversity research to hands-on education. One of their standout collaborations—Kororā Kōrero—shines a light on the Little Blue Penguins (kororā) that nest quietly along New Plymouth's coastline. But the Society's vision extends far beyond a single species. It's about growing an ocean-literate community, empowered to care for and protect Taranaki's unique marine ecosystems.

The Ngā Motu Marine Reserve Society was instrumental in establishing the Tapuae Marine Reserve, south of New Plymouth, and continues to advocate for a network of marine reserves across the region. The Society's goals are grounded in both science and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and aims to protect marine biodiversity and habitats, encourage scientific study, foster public awareness and offer hands-on learning opportunities.

Their strength lies in community collaboration—working alongside mana whenua, schools, scientists, and everyday locals who want to make a difference.

In partnership with Ngāti Te Whiti and Ngāti Mutunga, the Society runs Kororā Kōrero, a project dedicated to monitoring Little Blue Penguins (*Eudyptula minor*) along the Taranaki coast.

Though just 25–40 cm tall, kororā play a big role in helping us understand the health of our coastal environment. These penguins come ashore only at night, nesting in hidden crevices along walkways, rock walls, and under buildings.

By using GPS tracking and night-vision cameras, the project has uncovered vital data about kororā movement, roosting areas, and their seasonal breeding patterns. This research is shared through interactive online maps, videos, and community outreach, making it easy for locals to learn and take part.



Another cornerstone of the Society's education work is the Experiencing Marine Reserves (EMR) programme in Taranaki, run in partnership with the Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust.

Each year, EMR gives children and adults the chance to explore their local marine environment through snorkelling—an unforgettable way to build knowledge and appreciation for what lies beneath the surface.

Photo credits, top to bottom: Lorna Doogan, Elise Smith

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

In celebration of the incredible work done by our members, we present this short summary of the work done by ...

PROJECT REEF

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Knowing 'what is where, and how much', is a fundamental requirement for effective marine management. A community project - Project Reef South Taranaki (run through the South Taranaki Underwater Club) began in 2015 with MBIE Curious Minds funding, focussing on the offshore (sub-tidal) reefs of South Taranaki.

Since inception Project Reef South Taranaki has engaged with the scientific community, policy and decision makers, local community and Iwi, to share ecological knowledge and survey data, gathered from a rocky reef 11km offshore of Patea, 23m depth. The Taranaki Regional Council now includes the reef as an 'outstanding natural feature' in their Coastal Plan. Importantly, the informally named reef, Project Reef South Taranaki is only one of many sub-tidal reefs scattered amongst the wide shallow continental shelf offshore of South Taranaki. In 2020 an opportunity to have the Project Reef South Taranaki multibeam mapped arose, as part of an outreach collaboration with NIWA's MBIE funded 'Juvenile Fish Habitat Bottlenecks' program. The project team utilised the opportunity to have other reefs known by local fishers and divers included, which drove the spatial design of the survey route (250km - 61.5 km² of seafloor). In 2021 NIWA ecologically surveyed fourteen of those reefs - revealing a rich ecological assemblage of fish, invertebrates, macroalgae, sponge-rich clusters & nursery habitats for blue cod.

An Envirolink Grant was applied for by the Taranaki Regional Council which funded a 211 page NIWA report *Offshore subtidal rocky reef habitats on Pātea Bank, South Taranaki*, (Morrison et al. 2022), in order that the 2020-2021 survey data and ecological survey work could be put in context. The report states that *"The unusual distance of these reef systems from shore . . . makes them relatively unique in the NZ context . . . they are worthy of careful management"*.

One illustration of the importance of local knowledge gathering - In 2011 Trans-Tasman Resources in their Baseline data analysis, looked at national datasets

in OBIS and Te Papa. There was 1 sponge record for South Taranaki. Project Reef South Taranaki meanwhile have recorded 40 sponge species to date, having contributed range extensions and photographs for NIWA's Sponge Guide.

Project Reef South Taranaki are the only ones to date to have conducted diver-led benthic surveys, and Baited Underwater videos (BUV) in South Taranaki. Other work has involved plankton trawls, acoustic surveys, fishing surveys and environmental DNA sampling. A unique insight into life offshore has been the gathering of day and night video footage at the Project Reef South Taranaki with an in situ-camera set up secured at the reef. Fantastic insights into fish species and behaviour have been gathered. The Mark I version of this insitu camera is now in Puke Ariki's "Reef Alive" diorama - a highly popular exhibit.

The Project continues to use art as a means of celebrating the rich biodiversity to be found offshore - a mural, corten steel sculptures and more recently a stunning Marine Frame, with QR codes linking to videos, so the colourful animal life shown on the frame can be seen in action.

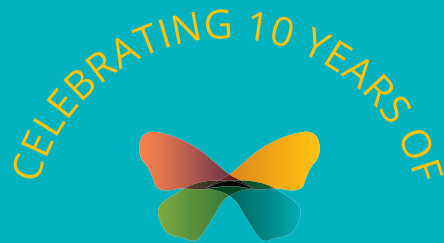
Outreach in the community continues to be a special highlight - learning from others, and always delighted when hearing gasps of wonder when footage is shown! All species observations (#199 to date) are logged in I-Naturalist, under 'Coastblitz Patea'.

Photo: Blue code, *Parapercis colias* photographed at Project Reef.



Check out the website
www.projectreefsouthtaranaki.org





WILD FOR TARANAKI

Tō Tātou Taiao – Maranga Papatūānuku

Wild for Taranaki's story began with the signing of the Biodiversity Accord in 2012. The signatories, a mix of visionary community leaders and biodiversity experts, set the scene for what was to emerge as a regional movement.

From the inception of the Taranaki Biodiversity Trust in 2015 to now, our journey has taken turns that no one expected. What has remained constant is the steadfast conviction of the combined strength of our membership and just how much can be achieved when we work together to the benefit of our Taranaki biodiversity.

To our board members, past and present, thank you for your stewardship, your skills and your time, generously shared. To all former Wild for Taranaki staff, your dedication and hard work have been instrumental in raising the organisation's profile and contributing to its ongoing success.

To our funders, particularly Taranaki Regional Council, a constant throughout the decade, we are immensely grateful for your support.

Thank-you to former Wild for Taranaki staff;

Andy Cronin
Nicole Boniface
Juliet Larkin
Kirstin Foley
Leigh Honnor
Samantha Mortensen
Esther Ward-Campbell

Thank-you to former Wild for Taranaki board members;

Allen Juffermans
Allen Stancliff
Cassandra Crowley
Damian Roper
Darren Ratana
David Speirs
Doug Hislop
Jake Goonan

Jan Hania
Kara Pranker
Karen Schumacher
Liam Dagg
Michael Weren (Chair)
Michelle Bird
Phill Muir
Puna Wano-Bryant
Roy Weaver (Chair)
Samantha Mortensen

Thank you to our members for the unwavering commitment and passion they bring to our shared kaupapa.



Photo: Taranaki Biodiversity Forum accord signatories, 27 July 2012.



Photo: Tapuae Marine Reserve. Photo credit: Dr Emily Roberts



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