

Chatham Islands Conservation Board

Te Pou Atawhai O Wharekauri Rekohu



Annual Report

to the New Zealand Conservation Authority

1 July 2009 - 30 June 2010

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

Serviced by the Department of Conservation
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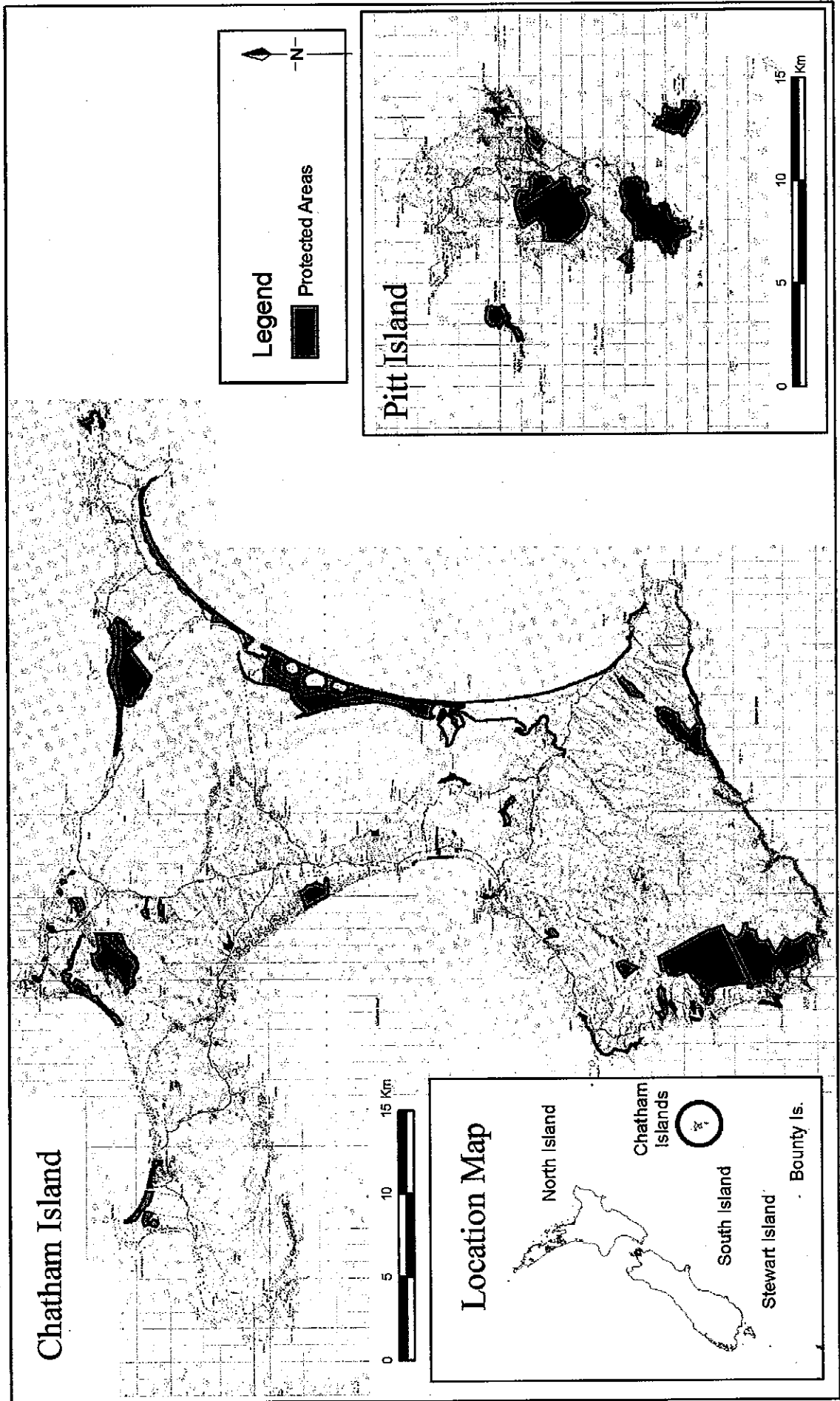
Front Cover Photo

Rangatira Island Nature Reserve

Photographer: Ken Hunt

Chatham and Pitt Islands

Edition 5
Date 11/08/2009



1 INTRODUCTION

Chairperson's Comments

It has been an exciting and challenging year for conservation on the Chatham's. This has been true for me, personally, having found myself privileged to be in the role of Chairperson after Debbie Goomes stepped down from office in 2009. Debbie facilitated a warm but robust meeting and I would like to take the opportunity to thank her for her commitment, support and style of leadership that always looked for solutions to benefit the whole community.

I would also like to thank the members of the board for their time, passion and commitment. I feel our role is to present to DOC the diversity of viewpoints, all valid, on conservation issues that effect this place we proudly call home. This does mean robust debate, derived from commitment and passion, it is what motivates and drives people to protect and enhance the environment they live in. I feel our board achieves this and is always working through issues with the community as a whole in mind.

The Board is the community voice but it is a non-sense without ears to fall on. It is the appreciation of this voice by Ken Hunt as the Area Manager and the hard work by DOC staff, especially Alex Mckillop our Board Support Officer, that has enabled the Board to fulfil its role. Thank you to the community for their valuable input also, Pitt Island and Eddie and Lynn Fraser for their roles as hosts.

One of the outstanding issues of concern has been biosecurity for all the islands of the Chatham group, both marine and terrestrial. The trigger points for this has been the increasing number of cruise ship visits, the discovery of recently imported weeds and a real rat scare for Pitt. Together with both the Chatham Island County Council and DOC I feel we have made some good headway on these issues.

Our meeting on Pitt Island would have to be the highlight for many on the board. Held in Caravan Bush and supervised by a tui, it gave real relevance to some of the issues facing the Pitt Is community. It was a long awaited visit and logistically difficult with several contingency plans. All credit goes to the organisers.

Another big success story would have to be the Tui transfer by the Taiko Trust. The positive impact and excitement within the community surrounding this transfer represents a changing direction of the conservation effort. It is encouraging for all land and covenant holders and perhaps highlights the new role of DOC towards increasing collaboration and partnership.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have attended the Conservation Board Chairpersons Conference in May 2010. Being new to the Chair I found this experience extremely valuable.

I attended the conference after having just returned from inland China, where thousands of years of civilisation have literally stripped te environmental resources and a monumental conservation effort is being employed to halt the decline. The contrast made me look at New Zealand with fresh and grateful eyes. The lesson is reinforced that it is the richness of our environment that literally sustains us and there are dire consequences when we trade it in for short term gain. The reaction by many New Zealanders to the proposed mining on Schedule 4 Conservation land certainly indicates a recognition of how precious these natural resources are.

We are looking forward to the opportunity of hosting the Conservation Authority in October of 2010 and sharing this unique place we call home.

Jo 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)Tuanui,ChathamIsland (Chairperson)	3
Eileen Cameron, Chatham Island	4
Lois Croon, Chatham Island	3
Celine Gregory-Hunt, Pitt Island	4
Vaughn Hill, Chatham Island	2/3
Shirley King, Chatham Island	2
Judith (Judy) Lanauze, Pitt Island (Deputy Chair)	4
Charles (Chuck) Landis, Dunedin	2

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 38 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.

Celine Gregory-Hunt is one of the two Pitt Island Board members. She 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.

Shirley King began her term of the Board in September 2006. She has a strong affiliation with Moriori and is 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 is the other Pitt Island representatives on the Board, appointed in 2005. Judy has lived on Pitt Island for 25 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 Landis is our only mainland member appointed in 2008. Charles (Chuck) is a retired professor of geology also interested in island biology, who has a long standing interest in conservation matters. Chuck brings extensive scientific experience to the board table.

Vaughn Hills was appointed to the Board in 2009. Vaughn, 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. Vaughn has worked in the local fishing industry and brings an understanding and interest in marine conservation.



The Chatham Island Conservation Board in front of the restored Glory Cottage with DOC staff; Alan McKenzie (Conservator), Ken Hunt (Chathams Area Manager), Pitt Islanders Dianne Gregory-Hunt and Ann Humphries.

Board members present are; Celine Gregory-Hunt, Eileen Cameron, Jo Tuanui, Shirley King, Lois Croon, Judy Lanauze and Chuck Landis.

Absent is Vaughan Hill.

3 THE BOARD'S DISTRICT

The Chatham Island area is one of the four 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 with occasional snow.

Generally main Chatham Island is low-lying and comprises flat to rolling topography. The highest point on the island is only 294m. There are many swampy valley floors and extensive peatlands. The catchments are generally small and shallow though 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 and 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 been 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. Twenty nine of the Chatham Island's 392 native plants, 18 of the 73 native birds, 8.5% of New Zealand's threatened freshwater fish and 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 Crown Land 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 further 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.

4 BOARD MEETINGS AND INSPECTIONS

Four full day Board Meetings were held on main Chatham during the reporting period.

12 August 2009, Norman Kirk Memorial Reserve Lounge

4 November 2009, Whakamaharatanga Marae

8 February 2010, Ellen Elizabeth Preece Conservation Covenant, Pitt Island

11 May 2010, Whakamaharatanga Marae

Three Board meetings were attended by the Wellington Conservator, Alan McKenzie. Auckland based Technical Support Officer for the Chatham Islands, Dave Houston joined the Board for the May meeting.

Board meetings are always attended by the Chathams Area Manager, Ken Hunt and Conservation Board Support Officer, Alex McKillop. Other Departmental staff are encouraged to attend to talk to any issues if needed. Kenny Dix, Pitt Island ranger attended the Pitt Island meeting in February. Abigail Liddy, Fauna ranger attended part of the May meeting.

Abby Biltcliff, Secretary of Chathams Heritage and Restoration Trust spoke with the Board at the August meeting. The Mayor Alfred Preece and General Manager of Chatham Islands Council Owen Pickles attended the November meeting of the Board. Alison Turner, recently appointed Biosecurity Officer met with the Board in May.

Other guests welcomed to meetings were Dianne Gregory-Hunt, Pitt Island resident as well as a member of the Pitt Island Reserves Committee and the Pitt Island Reserve and Conservation Purposes Charitable Trust. Dianne along with Bill Carter, Chairperson of the Pitt Island Reserve and Conservation Purposes Charitable Trust, and Ann Humphries joined the Board on Pitt Island.

Field Inspections

The Board took the opportunity during the November meeting to inspect the new staff housing units that were under construction at the time.

The February meeting was held on Pitt Island in order to give the Pitt community an opportunity to attend a Board meeting and have a field inspection of recent conservation initiatives on the Island. Sites inspected included a walk around the Ellen Elizabeth Preece Conservation Covenant, an inspection of the DOC base facilities, the recently restored Glory Cottage and a walk through the Waipaua Scenic Reserve.

An evening barbeque was held with the Pitt community which furthered the opportunity for the Pitt residents to become more familiar with the Board activities.

An opportunity during the August meeting was taken to inspect the staff units that were under construction at the time.

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)

With Ministerial approval to extend the revision of the current CMS to 2011, input into CMS monitoring has been on hold. The development of Conservancy Conservation Action Plans (CAPs) by the Area staff provided the Board with a good overview of the priorities over the next 5 years.

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

Concessions

Progress with Chatham Island concession applications was reviewed by the Board throughout the year. Three local concessions are being processed, and the New Zealand based Wrybill Tours application for a concession has been granted as part of a national concession.

Discussion on “triggers for sensitive areas” were reviewed to ensure the Board’s advice was sought for a range of sensitive areas, using both area and cultural criteria.

The application from a cruise ship to visit the Chathams raised concerns with the Board about large groups visiting reserve areas, and also raised the wider issue of biosecurity threats posed by visiting vessels. The Board’s concerns and follow up correspondence led to a recommendation for group size restrictions to reserve and improved vessel biosecurity measures.

Protection of Historic Sites

Koiwi/koimi found within Canon-Pierce Scenic Reserve gave the Board an opportunity to review procedures for protection of historic sites within Crown managed land. The role of the Historic Places Trust in reporting, recording and protecting sites was also reviewed with the Board.

Digital imaging of the rākau momori in the JM Barker (Hapupu) National Historic Reserve took place in 2010, and board member Shirley King reported to the Board on her visit to the team undertaking this work.

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

Research Proposals

Three external research proposals were considered by the Board during this reporting period. In all 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 all occasions the Board has requested reports on research findings.

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

Continuing forest bird research on Rangatira Island-Canterbury University

The Board was provided background to research that had been carried out over the previous two years. The Department had added seven conditions on the permit to visit Rangatira to reduce the possibility of adverse effects from the research. The Board agreed with the conditions proposed and gave their support for the application.

Chatham Island tui research proposal - Massey University

Given that this research was complementary to the Canterbury University forest bird research, and this work undertaken by an experienced researcher would add valuable knowledge to assist future Chathams tui management, the Board supported this proposal

Hadramphus weevil (speargrass weevil) and Rangatira spider research/collection-Lincoln University

The Board considered this proposal and generally supported research that improved knowledge of these species. Concern about what potential impact the collection of 50 Rangatira spiders might have on the island population, however led the Board to request further research on the Rangatira spider population and reproduction prior to collecting specimens.

The collection of speargrass weevils was supported by the Board.

Manaaki Tuna: proposal for moratorium on commercial harvest of longfin eel

The Board discussed the proposal for a moratorium on commercial harvest of longfin eel, and was concerned that there was little information available on the status of the Chatham Island eel fishery. A letter was sent to the Massey University Tuna Research Group seeking information on the longfin eel fishery on the Chatham Islands.

Species translocation proposals

Chatham Island Tui Translocation proposal

The Board considered and supported the Taiko Trust proposal to transfer a second cohort of tui from Rangatira to the Awatotora Manuel and Evelyn Tuanui family covenant. Following the success of the first transfer, the Board supported this proposal that provided for rat control within the covenant and post transfer monitoring of the tui.

Chatham Island Tomtit Translocation proposal

This proposal from the Taiko Trust for the transfer of 40 tomtits from Rangatira to the Awatotora Manuel and Evelyn Tuanui Family Conservation Covenant was discussed by the Board in light of the Department's recommendations on tomtit population trends. The Board resolved to support the transfer subject to evidence that rat density within the release area was at 5% or less.

Debate over the level of robustness of the tomtit population delayed approval of this proposal and it will be reviewed in 2011.

Chatham Island Taiko translocation proposal

The proposal to translocate taiko from the Tuku Nature Reserve to Sweetwater Covenant was discussed by the Board in February. A wide ranging discussion considered issues such as the existing predator control in place to protect taiko, and security of access to the private land covenant for management purposes. Given that this proposal will help secure a second taiko population, the Board resolved to support this translocation.

Buff weka translocation proposal

Considering a recommendation from the department's Weka Recovery Group, and the Otakau Te Ropu Weka Group that supported translocation of 60 Buff Weka from the Chathams to Motatapu station, the Board resolved to support this proposal. The Board recommended that consultation with iwi/imi was essential for this proposal, and also promoted the value of local experience and advice in determining the best time for capture and moving Chatham's weka.

POWERS OF CONSERVATION BOARDS

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

Proposed mining on Conservation Land

At the November 2009 meeting, the Board discussed a proposal for mining on conservation land. While acknowledging there are no National Parks within the Chatham Board's jurisdiction, the Board agreed that under no circumstances should public conservation land held under Schedule 4 be considered for mining. The Board resolved to write to the Minister of Energy and Resources outlining their strong opposition to mining in public conservation land.

Chatham Island Pest Management Strategy 2008-2018

The Board have consistently advocated improved biosecurity and pest management for the Chathams and over the year

1. Wrote a letter of support to the DOC representative on the Chathams Marine Biosecurity Partnership advocating active management to prevent marine pest incursions on the Chatham Islands.
2. Met with the Mayor (Alfred Preece) and General Manager of the Chatham Islands Council to discuss progress with implementation of the Chathams Pest Management Strategy.
3. Invited Alison Turner, newly appointed Biosecurity Officer for the Chatham Islands to outline her role and planned work.

LIAISON

A Department

Chatham Island Bird and Plant Recovery Group Meetings

Each year the annual threatened bird and plant meetings are held on the Chatham Islands and Board members are encouraged to attend these meetings.

This year's meeting focussed on the black robin. A number of Board members and members of the Chatham's public attended presentations by experienced researchers, who explained their work on the black robin and their island forest ecosystems. Proposals to establish a third population of black robins were discussed.

Visits to Rangatira and Mangere Island Nature Reserves

The Board discussed and reviewed the criteria for visits to the island Nature Reserves.

New Zealand Conservation Authority Visit Planning

The Board welcomed and assisted with planning a visit for members of the New Zealand Conservation Authority, planned for October 2010.

Board Chairpersons Conference May 2010

Jo Tuanui attended the biannual chairperson's conference held this year in Wellington, with costs for this met by the NZCA.

B Community

Community Open Days

Open Days for the community to visit Rangatira Island were advertised, however there was little interest registered locally. It was acknowledged that the Board have been played a positive role with previous Open Days by coordinating boat transport, and that they would continue with this role for future Open Days.

Chatham Heritage and Restoration Conservation Trust (CHART)

After the successful launch of CHART early in 2009 the Board has enjoyed an ongoing close working relationship with the Trust. Abby Biltcliff, Administrator for CHART met with the Board to explain the Trust's current and proposed work, which include projects with Pitt and Chatham Island shags, along with translocation of snipe from Rangatira to Ellen Elizabeth Preece Conservation Covenant.

The development of a restoration plan for the Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Haumia Pa dune reserve in Waitangi is progressing well, with community planting days planned in the near future.

Restoration of the historical Waitangi surf boat, and nursery production of kowhai and pingao seedlings are other projects being developed.

Chatham Island Museum

The Board discussed a local proposal for upgrading the Chatham museum with interest, and invited the Mayor and General Manager of the Chatham Island Council to provide further information on this proposal.

Chatham Islands' Conservation Award

The Board initiated and funded an Annual Conservation Award in 2004 to recognise the voluntary efforts of anyone in the community who has demonstrated commitment to conservation on the Chatham Islands.

Kerry Moir was the sixth recipient of the Award in 2009. Kerry's awareness and action on emerging weed threats on the Chathams has been consistent and effective in containing the spread of weeds such as ragwort and broom. Kerry continually advocates for more action on problem weeds and raises community awareness about garden weed threats, including working with Kaingaroa School and participating in the 'weedbusters' programme.



Kerry Moir, recipient of 2009 Conservation Award

C Pitt Island

The Conservation Board has a standard agenda item where the minutes from the Pitt Island Reserve Committee are tabled and the Board has the opportunity to raise and discuss issues with the Conservation Board members from Pitt Island.

The August meeting of the Pitt Island Reserves Committee considered options for increased feral cat control on the island, along with a proposal to protect a bush area in the Waipaua lease block through fencing. There was discussion about a number of the bird translocations underway and proposed, with consideration on the possibility of parea being transferred from Chatham to Pitt Island.

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.

FINANCIAL YEAR 2009/2010

The Board annual of budget of \$17000 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 from Pitt to the main Island.