

# **Chatham Islands Conservation Board**

*Te Pou Atawhai O Wharekauri Rekohu*



## **Annual Report** to the New Zealand Conservation Authority

1 July 2010 - 30 June 2011

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## **Annual Report 1 July 2010- 30 June 2011**

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

Serviced by the Department of Conservation  
Chatham Island Area Office  
PO Box 114, Waitangi, Chatham Islands  
&  
Wellington Conservancy  
PO Box 5086, Wellington

### **Front Cover Photo**

Chatham Island tui at Pukewhenua, Pitt Island, Chatham Islands

**Photographer:**  
Celine Gregory-Hunt

# 1 INTRODUCTION

2011 has seen a huge change in the delivery of conservation values on the Chatham Islands. A new government heralded in a more collaborative approach between DOC and communities, including business, to achieve better results with the resources available. I believe this has been beneficial for the Chathams, as most land is in non governmental ownership, the landowners are recognized for the work already done and encouraged and enabled (with Department support) to further conserve and enhance their own environment.

A highlight of the year for the board was the privilege of hosting the full complement of the New Zealand Conservation Authority. The Authority oversees the activity of local Conservation Boards and reports directly at ministerial level, so it was a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the unique issues facing conservation on the Chathams. They were impressed with the level of achievement done with so few resources, a testament to the existing level of community commitment and the supportive relationship with DOC.

The Taiko Trust and CHART can both be congratulated on the work they are doing. Each organisation is now producing a newsletter communicating their aspirations and achievements and I encourage every like minded person to become involved if they can. Special mention to the Taiko Trust, particularly for their role in the tui and tomtit translocations, as well as CHART, for progress on the Waitangi dune restoration project. Both have had huge impact encouraging and raising public interest for conservation. I would like to acknowledge the leadership roles of the prospective Chairpersons Liz Tuanui and Lois Croon in making these initiatives a success.

The appointment of Alison Turner as the Biosecurity Officer for the Council has been a huge milestone in maintaining the conservation gains on the Island. Her pro-active attitude and unique skill-base makes her tailor made for the role and a real asset in a community based programme.

Of special significance during this year has been the work done on the Tree Carvings at Hapupu. These are of international significance and because of their uniqueness their apparent decline in health has triggered worldwide concern among scientists. New technology has been used to digitally record them, some dead trees have been removed and their overall future is still being debated.

Fond farewell to Ken Hunt, who has developed a real affinity for the Island and who assisted stewarding in a more community based partnership role for the Department during his time as Area Manager. The Board acknowledges his vision and input and wishes him all the best for the future.

Also a reluctant farewell to Judy Lanauze; a dedicated Board member with each meeting a mission to travel to Chatham from Pitt Island. The Board regret her departure from the table and wish her well for her future.

The Board also acknowledges and thanks the Area DOC staff for their hard work, enthusiasm, and approachability. It is only the relationship between the Department, the Board and the Community that makes the role of the board effective and enjoyable.

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.

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Meetings attended (out of 4)</b>
Joanne(Jo)Tuanui, Chatham Island (Chairperson)	3
Eileen Cameron, Chatham Island	1
Lois Croon, Chatham Island	3
Celine Gregory-Hunt, Pitt Island	2
Vaughn Hill, Chatham Island	3
Shirley King, Chatham Island	1
Judith (Judy) Lanauze, Pitt Island (Deputy Chair)	1
Charles (Chuck) Landis, Dunedin	4

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

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

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

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 the current Chairperson of the Hokotehi Moriori Trust. Shirley has a sound grounding for the social and indigenous culture of the Chatham Islands, and maintains a strong link with the Imi of the island.

Judy Lanauze is the other Pitt Island representative on the Board, appointed in 2005. Judy has lived on Pitt Island for 26 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.

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



Photo: The Chatham Island Conservation Board meeting held in May 2011 at the Whakamaharatanga Marae; Clockwise from front left, Ken Hunt (Chatham Islands Area Manager), Lois Croon (CICB member), Celine Gregory-Hunt (CICB member), Eileen Cameron (CICB member), Alison Turner (ECan Biosecurity Officer), Vaughan Hill (CICB member), Dave Houston (DOC Technical Support Officer), Judy Lanauze (Deputy Chair)

### **3 BOARD MEETINGS AND INSPECTIONS**

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

Two informal half day discussions were held due to insufficient members present for a quorum.

25 August 2010, Whakamaharatanga Marae, Te One, Chatham Island

9 November 2010, Whakamaharatanga Marae, Te One, Chatham Island

9 February 2011, Whakamaharatanga Marae, Te One, Chatham Island

17 May 2011, Henga Lodge, Henga, Chatham Island

All Board meetings were attended by the Wellington Hawke's Bay Conservator, Alan McKenzie and Area Manager, Ken Hunt. Auckland based Technical Support Officer for the Chatham Islands, Dave Houston joined the Board for the November 2010 and February 2011 meeting.

The Conservation Board Support Officer, Alex McKillop was on secondment at the Te Anau Area Office for the first six months of the year and Bronwyn Bell, Board Support Officer for the Wellington Hawke's Bay Conservation Board travelled to the island for the August meeting to take the minutes. Lynette Pickles from the Chatham Island Council took the minutes at the meeting in November.

Alison Turner, Environment Canterbury Biosecurity Officer was invited and attended each meeting of the Board this reporting period.

Other guests welcomed to meetings were Bruce Tuanui from the Taiko Trust, Deborah Goomes from the Chatham Islands Council, Rob Fenwick the communications advisor to the Director General of DOC, Simon Nickoloff from the Chatham Islands Tourism Development office and Toni Gregory-Hunt from the Chatham Islands Enterprise Trust.

## **4 THE BOARD'S DISTRICT**

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

The Chatham Islands lie 860 km east of Christchurch, at 44° south in the path of the Roaring Forties and consist of eight islands of appreciable size. The total land area is 97,000 hectares of which main Chatham Island (90,000 ha) and Pitt Island (6,190 ha) are the largest. The Chathams straddle the international dateline: local time is 45 minutes ahead of the rest of New Zealand.

The Chatham Islands are an amazing collection of islands consisting of contrasts and extremes: Beautiful still sunny days with magical blue skies through to raging 45 knot storms that in their own way are awe-inspiring. For much of the year the climate is temperate – temperatures in the low twenties in midsummer but can drop close to 0 degrees in the winter with scattered hail and sleet with 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 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. Forty one of the Chatham Island's 465 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 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 of the CMS for the Chatham Islands and at the time of publishing this report it was looking likely that 2012 would see the beginning of the review of the Chatham Islands document. The Board were pleased to hear that Matt Ward, the DOC officer tasked to coordinate the writing of the national CMS's, would be invited to visit the Chatham Islands and talk to the Board about the process and consultation with the community and further afield. The Board thought that it would be beneficial for Matt to visit closer to the time when the CMS is being written so that a public meeting could be arranged while he was on the island.

Board members took part in the Quintessentially Kiwi survey to help form a national picture for the preparation of second generation Conservation Management Strategies.

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

### **Concessions**

There was no concession applications received that 'triggered' the need for the Department to consult with the Conservation Board. However, a one-off guiding permit application was received from a cruise ship company and consequently a permit was issued to Heritage Expeditions Ltd for guiding 58 people on two of the DOC reserves on main Chatham. The Board raised their concerns about the potential impacts of visiting cruise ships, including the wider issue of biosecurity threats posed by visiting vessels and thought it necessary that they are consulted about any future applications received of this nature.

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

### **Research Proposals**

Four high-impact 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 research on bottle neck populations of Chatham Island black robin and tomtits – Canterbury University

A report on the research findings on of the genetic consequences of population bottlenecks of robins and tomtits was presented to the Board with a further proposal to take blood samples from the two species to look at potential inbreeding of robins. The board were in favour for the research to proceed.

Application to research the diet of seabirds - NZ Wildlife Health Centre and Massey University

The Board were presented with an application to collect diet samples from Chatham petrel chicks from Rangatira Nature Reserve for research to be undertaken that might help improve survival rate of translocated seabirds. The Board members present supported the research however were unable to make a resolution due to the lack of quorum.

Research and Collection Application for broadbilled prions – University of Glasgow

Given the nature of the research and minimal impacts from collection of dead material from broadbilled prions, the Board supported the Department to permit the collection of the material for research in Scotland.

Collection of Pebbles from Rangatira Nature Reserve – Massey University

The Board supported the application to collect a small amount of rock from the Nature Reserve on the proviso that any material that was not used is returned to the original site where it was taken from.

The Board requested that a report of the research findings would be made available to the Board.

**Species translocation proposal**

Chatham Island tomtit translocation

During the last reporting period the Board had resolved to support an application from the Taiko Trust to transfer 40 juvenile tomtits from Rangatira Nature Reserve and Pitt Island to the Awatotara Manuel and Evelyn Tuanui Family Conservation Covenant in South Chatham. Due to uncertainty over the level of robustness of the tomtit population in these areas the proposal was deferred to be reviewed the following year. The Board were asked to reconsider the proposal in February this year and given that further information was known on the tomtit population numbers from both source areas, they were happy to provide their full support.

**POWERS OF CONSERVATION BOARDS**

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

**Chatham Islands Wildlife Notice**

At the November 2010 meeting, the Board were asked to comment on the revised draft of the Chatham Islands Wildlife Notice 2010. The Board were advised that the only considerable difference in the draft to the 1977 edition was the removal of point 4. [2], stating that you could not shoot black swan during the month of April prior to the duck shooting season. The Board were happy for swan to be hunted all year round. The Board decided that they would prepare an article for the local paper explaining what the Departments role is with regards to hunting of wildlife and what the new legislation would mean for islanders.



# **LIAISON**

## **A Department**

### Chatham Island Bird and Plant Recovery Group Meetings

Each year the annual threatened bird meetings are held on the Chatham Islands and Board members are encouraged to attend these meetings. This year the Board changed their meeting date so that it coincided with the recovery group meetings which provided valuable opportunity for Board members, particularly mainland member Chuck Landis and the two Pitt Board members to attend discussions and meet key recovery group members and scientists.

### Staff interviews

Board chairperson, Joanne Tuanui participated in the interview process for the new Area Manager. This involvement is valuable from a community perspective in helping assess the suitability for isolated island living.

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

The Board had raised their concerns about the management and decision making process leading to the extraction of the dying trees from the National Historic Reserve. The Board appreciated the degree of work the Department had invested with the Hokotehi Moriori Trust to preserve the rakau momori (tree carvings), however noted their concerns about the degree of fungal disease and speed of deterioration of the trees. Given that the rakau momori were international historic treasures the Board thought that further specialist opinion should be sought about possible solutions to the fungi problem rather than just extracting them from the reserve.

As a result the Department sought expert advice from an arborist on the mainland and arranged for him to come to the island to assess the forest and other effected trees during the week of the planned extraction of the five worst affected trees from the reserve.

## **B COMMUNITY**

### Chatham Island Museum and Cultural Heritage Project.

The Board invited Deborah Goomes from the Chatham Island Council to come to the November Board meeting to discuss developments with the museum project. The Board were very supportive of the establishment of a museum and cultural heritage facility for the island and were pleased to hear that progress had been made in terms of a Trust being established. The work that had already been undertaken on the conservation and preservation of existing historical items was commendable and the Board looked forward to hearing future developments.

### Community Open Days on Rangatira and Mangere Island Nature Reserves

The Board asked that the Department look into the possibility of holding community open days in the Tuku Nature Reserve. The Board thought it important for conservation awareness that the public be given the chance to see the bush where so much of the Department's intensive management is carried out to protect the Chatham taiko, one of the world's rarest sea birds.

### New Zealand Conservation Authority Visit

On the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2010, the NZCA were welcomed onto Chatham Islands on a glorious, calm and balmy day with radiant blue skies. Members of the Chatham Island Conservation Board, parents and children of Te One and Kaingaroa School were at the airport to greet the visitors and children performed a selection of beautiful waiata. The entire welcoming party took the visitors to their lodgings at Henga where kai was shared.

The Authority had a busy schedule the following day beginning with their ordinary meeting. Chatham Island Board members showcased the Chatham Islands with a power point presentation taking the opportunity to raise conservation issues of particular concern. The evening meal was shared with the Board and invited people from various governance bodies on the Island. The chance to discuss local issues gave the Authority valuable insight to the make up of the Chatham Islands in general.

The following day saw a moody, blustery day emerge and the chance for a field trip to key sites on the island was honoured by all those that could make it. The historic Basalt Columns, Wharekauri station and Kaingaroa village were visited with the only chance for a short walk on a wetlands track at the Ocean Mail Scenic Reserve, due to some very wet weather! The day may not have provided the most extensive out door experience of the Chathams but was certainly profitable in terms of the chance for the NZCA members to see the diverse landscapes of the Chathams and to gain a good understanding of issues surrounding conservation on the Chathams.

The NZCA flew back to the mainland the following morning, having very much enjoyed their time. It was pleasing to the Board that the NZCA acknowledged the level of commitment and achievement of the Chatham community towards protecting and enhancing their environment, and were encouraged by the Authority's assurance to further the interests of the Chathams wherever they could.

#### Chatham Heritage and Restoration Trust (CHART)

The Board have enjoyed a close relationship with the Trust and have been privileged to receive first hand information from Conservation Board member and founding Chairperson of the Trust, Lois Croon. Key projects undertaken this year have been the ongoing restoration plan for the Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Haumia Pa dune reserve in Waitangi, with very successful community planting days with support from locals and visitors. As well as gaining local community support Lois has been successful in propagating hundreds of natives for future projects in the pipeline.

#### Chatham Islands' Conservation Award 2010

2010 was the 7<sup>th</sup> year running for the Board's Conservation award. Retired Conservation Board member James Moffett and his wife Annette were deservedly presented the hand crafted trophy for their commitment to protecting and restoring large areas of their 'Bluff' farm on Pitt Island. James and Annette also support and encourage others with conservation projects on Pitt Island and are a great example of foresight and planning for the protection of the environment.



8 km of extensive coastline regenerating after being fenced and protected from stock and on North East coast of Pitt Island, Chatham Islands.

#### Environment Canterbury Biosecurity Officer

The Board have enjoyed an active working relationship with Environment Canterbury (ECAN) biosecurity officer, Alison Turner who has been invited and attended every meeting of the Conservation Board in this reporting period

The Department have been working with ECan on developing a project proposal for an island wide approach to pest plant and animal control and have had the full support and encouragement of the Board in raising the importance of general awareness and education of pest control issues. The Board wrote to the Chatham Island Council congratulating them on the development of the position and noted their gratitude for her support in the Boards business and visa versa.

#### Chatham Island Tourism and Development Office (TDO)

The Board invited Simon Nikoloff (Tourism Development Manager) to the August meeting of the Board to talk about how the tourism marketing project for the Chatham Islands was progressing.

The Board were pleased to hear that marketing development continues with key themes of ecotourism, history, heritage and nature and were given the opportunity to make comment on a draft of a guide to the island promoting activities and places to visit that would be distributed nationally to promote the Chatham Islands.

### **C Pitt Island**

A large part of the Board discussions about Pitt Island was regarding the controversial project proposal for increased feral cat control on the island. Although the Pitt Island Reserves Committee was only able to meet twice prior to the Conservation Board meetings, the committee is kept up to date with the business of the Board, especially any issues that are of particular relevance to Pitt Island.

### **D General**

#### Board Minutes and Agendas

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

#### Chatham Rise Phosphate Project

The Board took an interest in a proposal from Widespread Energy Ltd to undertake exploration work on the Chatham Rise to mine for phosphate deposits. This activity was not within the Boards jurisdiction but it felt that if commercial exploitation was found to be feasible, a critical eye should be kept on the proposed mining programme. The Board were aware that there were unlikely to be any direct effects because of the distance from Chatham Islands, however secondary effects such as seabird feeding, fisheries, biosecurity, could warrant concern. The Board were aware that a detailed mining plan and environmental impact statement will be made public before any mining work is approved.

## **FINANCIAL YEAR 2010/2011**

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 Island to main Chatham.