

G R E A T B A R R I E R I S L A N D E N V I R O N M E N T A L T R U S T

Patron: Distinguished Professor Dame Anne Salmond DBE, FRSNZ, FBA. New Zealander of the Year 2013.

Trustees: Liz Westbrooke (Chairperson), Des Casey, Emma Cronin, Emmy Pratt, Peter Edmonds, Halema Jamieson John Ogden, Kate Waterhouse,

Editor of Environmental News: David Speir

Coordinator/ Secretary: Fenella Christian.

Great Barrier Island Environmental Trust Annual Report 2013.

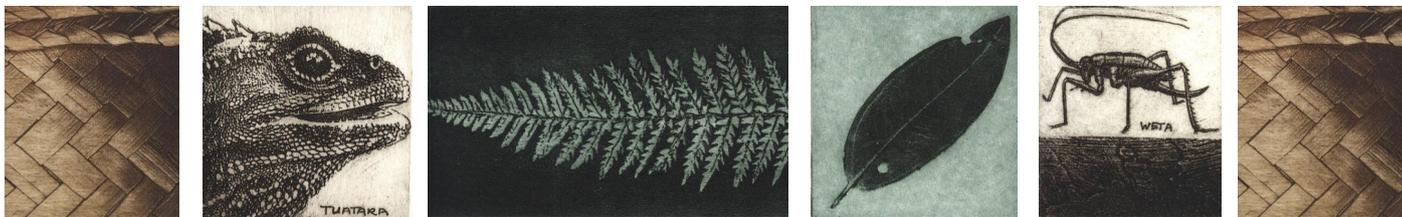
This is my last annual report as I am standing down as Chairperson after eleven years. The Trust is in a transitional phase, planning for a re-structuring and re-branding exercise to carry us forwards towards the goal of a pest-free Great Barrier Island. As I write this we are without a chairperson, but otherwise OK!

The most significant event in 2013 was the recruitment of Dame Anne Salmond, as our Patron. Anne is Distinguished Professor of Maori Studies and Anthropology in the University of Auckland, and well known to Kiwis as a prolific writer on New Zealand History and New Zealander of the Year in 2013. In November she was awarded the Rutherford medal of the Royal Society for ‘eminent work on Maori social structures and interactions with the European world, and on European exploration and engagement in the Pacific.’ She and her husband also manage a Conservation Sanctuary (Long Bush near Gisborne); we are honoured by her support of our pest-free vision for Great Barrier.

Two thousand and thirteen saw several significant milestones passed. Trustees attended and spoke at most meetings of the Environmental Strategic Planning Committee of the Local Board, emphasizing the need for a proper process of community consultation – including the off-shore based ratepayer community – on the future of the Great Barrier Environment. This is being taken up by the new board in 2014, which now includes two former trustees (Judy Gilbert and Sue Daly). We published the views of candidates in an election special of the Environmental News. Although we were not allowed to send this to all ratepayers (only to our members) the election resulted in a balanced board with a stronger commitment to environmental matters. The Local Board is actively supported by the relevant (Biosecurity; Environmental etc.) agencies within Auckland City.

We continued our strong association with the Department of Conservation. In our submission(s) on the Conservation Management Strategy we emphasized both the need for stronger protection of the DOC Estate, and pushed for a rodent eradication on Rakitu (Arid Island). We also strongly supported Iwi in their desire to see kokako returned to Te Paparahi. Before the end of the year the Minister for Conservation announced the proposal to raise the GBI forest from ‘stewardship’ to ‘conservation park’ status (still in public consultation phase). The new status will facilitate national bargaining for conservation and recreation dollars, and increase local awareness of the ecological significance of the Island. It may lead also to employment opportunities in eco-tourism and related activities. Commitment to eradication and restoration on Rakitu is a first step on the road to Island-wide pest management. The proposed assessment of the options for returning kokako to Te Paparahi is another step forwards. Hopefully this will be cemented into the Treaty Settlement with Ngati Rehua ki Ngati Wai o Aotea.

During the winter Liz and Kate organized an event for off-island members in the city, which we plan to repeat in future. The trust was also engaged in a ‘rat-trap package hand-out’ funded and run by the Local Board. Halema found ways to modify the traps to avoid bird by-catch. In August the Trust was invited by DOC to participate in a visit to Tiritiri Matangi by overseas visitors in the “Island Conservation International” organization. This was a good opportunity to spread the message of “eradication for GBI” to a significant audience of scientists and managers in this field both nationally



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and internationally. Similarly, later in the year (November) I gave the “Ecology in Action” plenary address to the “ECOTAS-13” conference in Auckland, attended by c.700 delegates mostly from Australia and New Zealand, presenting the case for ‘scientists’ to become engaged in community conservation work, using examples from Great Barrier. Overall, my feeling is, that once we have independent evidence that the ratepayer community wants to progress rodent eradication to the next level (feasibility study), the support will be forthcoming from local (Auckland) and national sources. We are on the radar.

Locally the trust made impacts by participating in the Walking Festival (April; Local Board/ Auckland City) and in the walks and talks organized by DOC during Conservation Week (September). Two trustees gave talks and three lead walking groups.

Birds continue to be a strong focus for the Trust because so many people enjoy them, and because they are indicators of the state on our environment. During the year we received Asher Cook’s report on his (GBI Trust sponsored) work on kakariki and tomtit on Hirakimata – the only numerical data on these species for the Island. A paper on New Zealand dotterel breeding and population size was published, and the Trust’s earlier work was included in a DOC report on the status of Bitterns on GBI. Surveys at Windy Hill and elsewhere indicate that kaka and tui in particular had a successful year. However, black petrels nesting in burrows on Hirakimata continue to decline. Kate Waterhouse and Emma Cronin have been strongly involved in a campaign to raise awareness of the dire situation, both locally and nationally, and some progress was made at the Hauraki Gulf Forum Conference with growing communication (cooperation?) between the Black Petrel Action Group, Southern Seabirds Solutions and the Draft Black Petrel Management Plan during the year. The Trust’s Bird Checklist is already out of date and ‘sold out’ (It’s free). There is growing evidence (e.g. the ECOTAS conference) supporting the economic value of ‘bird tourism’ and with so many ‘rarities’ on GBI this should be a strong driver of pest management.

Communication with members is mainly via the Environmental News (Des Casey and David Speirs) and the Bush Telegraph (Fenella Christian). The former is now issued twice annually to members only. The latter is quarterly and free to anyone. It is mainly local snippets of information with a view to engaging on-island residents and visitors with their environment.

Financially the year was tight, as we failed to get one significant grant. We did however receive c. 10k from the Port Fitzroy Protection Society, which we intend to devote to a research fellowship, possibly on the role of feral cats in the Fitzroy ecosystem. Clarifying funding issues, sharing workloads, and planning for future sponsorship occupied significant trustee time this year.

Overall 2013 has been a year in which we have looked to the longer-term future and seen light on the horizon. Progress in some ways seems very slow, but attitudes are changing as knowledge and awareness increases. It has long been an aim of the Trust to shift responsibility for the Island’s environmental future onto those with the power to effect change – the Local Board, Auckland City and the Department of Conservation in particular, and 2013 has seen significant advances in that respect.

Thank you all for your support.

John Ogden
Liz Westbrooke.