



Next meeting:

Wed 24 Aug 6pm, Meow café:
The Kermadec Islands Marine Reserve – impressions of a pristine marine environment

Tom Trnski, Research Manager and Curator Marine Biology at the Auckland Museum, will talk next week about his recent expedition to the Kermadec Islands—one of the few remaining pristine marine environments in the world. Tom will describe the background to the expedition, show many beautiful images and discuss the challenges of establishing marine reserves in New Zealand and elsewhere. Find out more at <http://kermadec.aucklandmuseum.com/#&slider1=2> and <http://kermadec.aucklandmuseum.com/expedition-team/dr-tom-trnski/>.

Turn to pages 3 and 4 for further articles celebrating Taputeranga's birthday, including the Friends of Taputeranga Marine Reserve Charitable Trust, DOC's monitoring programme and a perspective from a local diver.

Happy 3rd birthday Taputeranga marine reserve!

Taputeranga Marine Reserve was established in August 2008 after a long consultative process with the local community.

Tim Walshe, of the Friends of Taputeranga Marine Reserve, reflects on changes since the reserve has been in place and offers some advice to help divers and snorkelers make the most of this fantastic resource: "Now the reserve has been in place for a few years it's interesting to see how the number of species is increasing along the shore line. This increase is not happening in a wave along the whole coast but is building up in pockets. Hopefully these will spread over time as each pocket meets and swells into a total coverage.

"One of the biggest pockets at the moment is east of the snorkel trail (see map, page 4). If you swim from the trail entrance to this area you will be followed by big blue cod who inquisitively cruise the area like sharks. On the way there you will be met by butterflyfish. Outside the reserve these fish are normally very shy and bolt into the weed as soon as they see a diver. But within the reserve they often swim right up to you for a good look.

"Once you have found the rocky reef area head into the channels and valleys within the reef and see large groups of crayfish gathered in the crevices. There are so many now that they are standing on each other's heads. The depth in these ravines is 5 to 8 metres so you can use either snorkel or scuba to visit these 'bugs'. The crayfish are resident and remain here all year.

"Because the valleys channel wave force it is important to dive this area when the sea is calm. Flat water will also give the best visibility."



Image: Danica Stent





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Eyes and ears

Help our local marine enforcement officers by reporting any illegal or suspicious activities.



Call **0800 4 Poacher** (0800 4 76224) for illegal fishing or **0800 DOC HOT** (0800 362 468) for wildlife or marine reserve related issues.

Don't forget Greater Wellington's environmental pollution hotline

Under the Resource Management Act, it is illegal for anything other than rainwater to go into stormwater drains. If wastewater or liquid household wastes such as detergents, oils or paints get into the stormwater drain, they will pollute streams, aquifers, harbours or the sea.

People pouring substances such as cement and paint down the stormwater drain could face enforcement action. If you see any incidents of pollution going into our city's waterways, call the council's pollution hotline on **0800 496 734**.

Conservation week

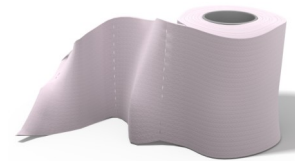
11-18 September

Visit www.conservationweek.org.nz to get involved.



POOPS update

At the beginning of August, Blue Wellington hosted another successful POOPS (People in Opposition Of Polluted Stormwater) meeting. A diverse group attended, including Forest & Bird Stalwarts, local interest groups, town and council consent planners, marine scientists, aquatic enthusiasts and Blue Wellington first timers.



Stormwater concerns include discharge of raw sewage into the stormwater system during heavy rain events, discharge of chemical pollutants from roads and vehicles and sedimentation issues around the Wellington coastline. Not only do our coastal waters receive all this contamination, but it passes through terrestrial waterways on its way to the coast. It was decided that the best way to get these messages across and raise public awareness was to produce a fact sheet to raise public awareness of:

- The existence of separate sewage and stormwater systems.
- The frequency and types of contamination in the stormwater.
- Locations of local stormwater outlets.
- Public eyes and ears – using the pollution hotline.
- Public Information – anyone can ask for a progress report on Wellington City Council compliance with the stormwater consent.

Steve and Pete from Blue Wellington met with Paul Glennie and Nicci Wood from the Wellington City Council in mid August. This provided lots of information for the fact sheet, which Steve and Pete are wading through now. To find out more, email Steve on sjmeads@gmail.com or watch this space!

Why all the dead seabirds?

July saw the largest ever recorded mortality event of seabirds on New Zealand's West Coast beaches. Tens of thousands of birds were found dead by Department of Conservation (DOC) staff, Ornithological Society members and the public, at rates of around 200-400 birds per km, suggesting somewhere between 100,000 and half a million prions washed ashore. Unprecedented numbers of live seabirds were also blown inland throughout the North Island. So where did this plague of seabirds come from?

DOC seabird specialist Graeme Taylor reported that the birds were mostly broad-billed prions, although other birds were also found. Broad-billed prions are not considered threatened by DOC, but this is based on very limited information. The scale of the event now raises some concerns about them.

The primary cause was a series of unusually severe storms. These low pressure systems created severe gale force onshore winds, thunderstorms and hail for up to 10 days. Massive westerly swells (over 10 metres) were recorded as far north as Auckland. Birds were blown out of their normal feeding range and fought the storm for days before dropping exhausted into the waves where they were pounded ashore. Normally these types of storms weed out juvenile birds and the sick and injured, with healthy breeding birds avoiding the storm centres. But many of these birds appeared to be mature birds that starved to death.



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Did you know?

New Zealand is home to the world's smallest and rarest marine dolphin – Maui's dolphin (popoto). So small they fit in a bathtub, the dolphins are critically endangered with a population of just 111 individuals. They are slow breeders, and the small breeding pool means inbreeding risk is high, which reduces the gene pool and increases birth defects and genetic problems.



Image: Forest & Bird

Critter of the month

Bull kelp (*Durvillaea antarctica*). This large brown algae (seaweed) can grow to 10 metres in length and can live for 10 years. It forms an immensely important underwater forest habitat for a range of fish and invertebrate species. Along our exposed Wellington coasts, it can help to dampen wave damage.



The Friends of Taputeranga Marine Reserve Charitable Trust was established in October 2009 to help the Department of Conservation (DOC) manage the reserve. Its primary purpose is to help to protect the marine reserve and to ensure that it benefits the community and future generations. The Friends group is particularly keen to foster the connection between community and marine reserve.

The idea for the Trust came from people who were either involved in or supported the establishment of the marine reserve. The Trustees have experience in marine science, the local community, commercial and recreational diving, central and local government, marine science and education, and conservation.

The Trust has already been involved in activities such as coastal clean-up projects, public awareness, compliance, user surveys and, most visibly, establishing a Snorkel Trail at the eastern end of Island Bay. It has established a website at www.taputeranga.org.nz and a community on Facebook.

The Friends can also **independently advocate** for the interests of the marine reserve with councils, DOC, other government agencies and with the government. The Trust has made submissions on a number of key conservation issues including mining, foreshore and seabed, seaweed removal and discharge of stormwater into the South Coast.

The Trust welcomes membership from Island Bay and the South Coast, and from anywhere in the Wellington region—if you're interested, email enquiries@taputeranga.org.nz.

Spotted something fishy? Here's how to help!

We're lucky that our awesome marine reserve is on our doorstep in full view of local residents and members of the public. While illegal fishing is rare, it does still happen. You can help make DOC's job as legal guardian that little bit easier by immediately calling **0800 DOCHOT** (0800 362 468) – DOC's emergency hotline – if you spot suspicious activity in the reserve. Providing it's safe to do so, it is particularly helpful if you can also:

- Take a photograph of the offenders in action.
- Take a photograph or write down their vehicle registration number (if they have one).
- Take a note of as many details as you can – you may be the only witness.
- Always keep your distance – do not approach offenders.



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Changes in the reserve... the science perspective

In collaboration with Victoria University of Wellington, the Department of Conservation (DOC) runs a programme monitoring Taputeranga Marine Reserve. In June 2008, a report was completed outlining the biological and physical information already gathered on the south coast over many years, largely by Victoria students. The ongoing programme aims to monitor the reserve annually for its first five years—this will enable it to capture any rapid changes after protection—and after this reduce the frequency of monitoring. Three summer surveys have been carried out so far at sites inside and outside the reserve, to assess:

- Fish abundance and size.
- Composition and abundance of species living on the intertidal rocks.
- Abundance and size of rock lobster, kina and paua and sex of rock lobster.
- Subtidal communities on rocky reefs, to detect any long term predator-prey flow on effects—for instance, if fish that eat seaweed increase, will the seaweeds and associated communities change?

All the monitoring information will be assessed in 2012 to determine changes since marine reserve protection, with completed reports will be available on DOC's website at <http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/marine-and-coastal/marine-protected-areas/marine-reserves-a-z/taputeranga/monitoring/>.

DOC is also interested in supporting local dive and snorkel groups who may wish to monitor additional sites. If you're keen to get involved, please contact Helen Kettles, Technical Support – Marine, Wellington Hawke's Bay Conservancy, email hkettles@doc.govt.nz.

Changes in the reserve... the local diver perspective

There are two key changes I have seen in the reserve over the last few years: The first is the increase in the number of crays, especially in nests.

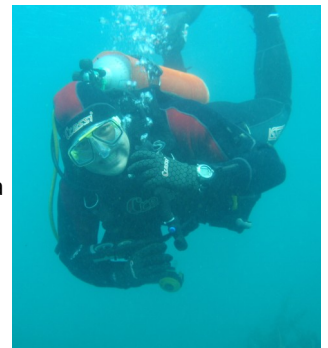
The number of nests and numbers of crays in the nests prior to the reserve were severely depleted. Now the numbers are on the increase and its not unusual to come across nests in dive sites that were once known for them.

The second is the number and behaviour of fish. It is much easier to get close to fish in the reserve and there appears to be more of them—based on the size of some of the blue cod, they have moved into the area rather than grown up there.

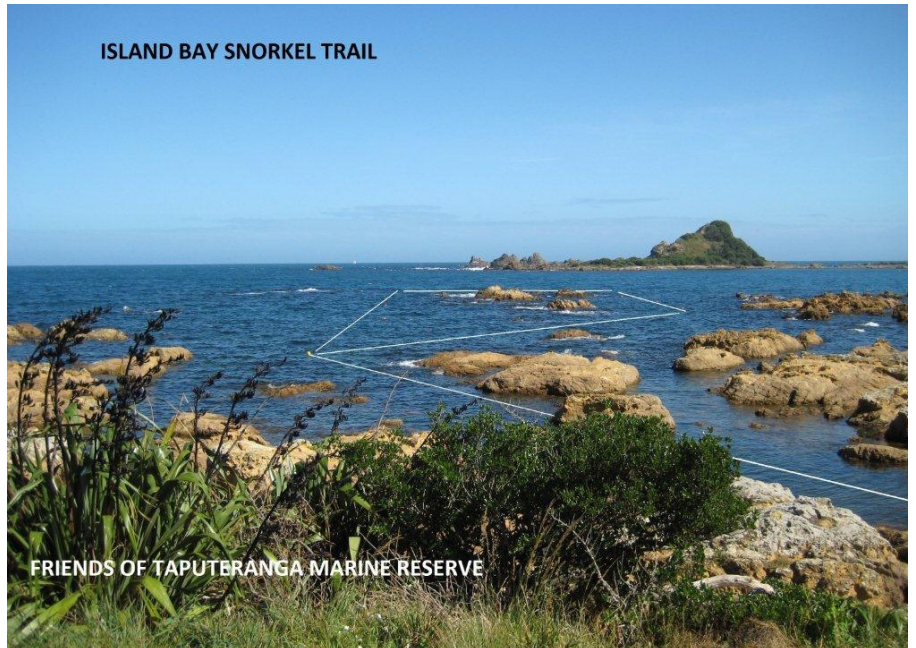
It's still nice to see butterfish grazing where you would only have seen their tails disappearing before. I am looking forward to what the next five years brings in the reserve and hope that poaching is eradicated in that time.

By local diver, Pete Humphris.

Local Blue Wellington diver and POOPS project leader Steve Meads, enjoying a dive at Sirens Rocks in Wellington.



ISLAND BAY SNORKEL TRAIL



FRIENDS OF TAPUTERANGA MARINE RESERVE

