



BLUE WELLINGTON

eNews October 2011

**Next meeting:
Wed 7 December 6-8pm,
Meow café:
Joint Christmas party with our
Wellington Forest & Bird
buddies.**

Come and join us for an end of year knees up. Learn about the Wellington branch of Forest & Bird and our other conservation groups — Greening Wellington, Climate Action Group, native plant nursery and more.

A chance to relax and unwind, celebrate all the awesome conservation work we do and enjoy a bite and a drink with other Wellingtonians.

Whale tales on our doorstep

Department of Conservation (DOC) whale researcher Nadine Bott has been studying the whales of Cook Strait for a number of years. At our recent September Blue Wellington gathering Nadine shared her whale tales and we were given an insight into the awesome work she, colleagues and ex-whalers are doing.



Breaching humpback whale. (Image: Nadine Bott)

Humpback whales were brought to near extinction as a result of illegal Soviet whaling in Antarctica from the summer of 1959 onwards. This resulted in a total collapse of NZ whaling at Perano station, Cook Strait. In 1964 humpbacks and other whales were protected by the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

The Cook Strait research aims to look at recovery of humpback whales since protection from commercial whaling. They do this by looking at population abundance, timing, pathways and winter breeding destinations of migrating humpbacks. They also assess the impact of Japan's proposed 50 humpback take from the Ross Sea as part of their JARPII whaling programme and assist with the protection of the species in the South Pacific.

The project is led by DOC but has extensive community support and involvement including the principal spotters being ex-whalers from the Perano Whaling station. The project involves non-lethal research techniques using sighting counts, photo-identification and biopsy research techniques.

The project started in 2004 as a 2 week project, but got extended to 4 weeks in 2008. Since 2004 it has run on an annual basis. Nadine's team have funding for another 2 years - giving them a total of 10 years of survey data.

Humpbacks are seen in inshore waters along the NZ coastline while migrating north to tropical breeding grounds in winter (e.g., Tonga, New Caledonia, etc) and then while migrating back south to their Antarctic feeding grounds. Research techniques try to mimic the historical situation as much as possible to directly compare modern day data with historical data. This allows Nadine to look at the extent of recovery over time.

2011 was a great year with 73 humpbacks seen as well as 19 sightings of blue whales, 4 sperm whales and 2 single male orca. Amazing to know we have such treasures on our doorstep.

Keep up the great work Nadine. Hopefully more funding will come your way and keep the project going for longer :)



Happy ex-whalers. (Image: Nadine Bott)



Blue whale. (Image: Nadine Bott)

Acknowledgements: OMV NZ Ltd; Cannon NZ Ltd; Transact Management Ltd; Auckland University; South Pacific Whale Research Consortium; Heberley Family; Ex-whalers; volunteers; ITM Blenheim; Mega Mitre 10; Smart Alliances; Roofline Marlborough.



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Events coming up...

There's some great events coming up over the next month or two. Check them out:

Miramar wharf clean up

Following Blue Wellington's recent grumble in the media about the polluted state of [Miramar Wharf](#), we're teaming up with local dive company The Dive Guys and the City Council to rid the waters around the wharf of the heavy pollutants. All technical & commercial divers welcome to help: This Saturday, 22nd October, 10am — 3pm.

Marine Mammal medic course

Project Jonah will be in town again on 12 November running one of their fabulous marine mammal medic courses. If you are interested, contact: Kimberly Muncaster, CEO of Project Jonah New Zealand:

kimberlymuncaster@projectjonah.org.nz

Or check out:

www.projectjonah.org.nz

www.facebook.com/projectjonah

Makara coast clean Up

Blue Wellington is planning a big clean up of the Makara coast in conjunction with the local community.

The event will be happening in late November. If you're keen to get involved, contact Chris at:

chris@postoccupancyevaluation.com

Educate to Eliminate

The Dive Guys are in action again on 26 November at Taranaki Wharf. Come check out the divers and rescued critters.

Conservation Week success

Conservation Week was a roaring success this year with heaps of fun-filled activities for all ages and interests. Of particular note for us were:

The great South Coast Cleanup

Following the success of the first combined community clean up of the South Coast last year, organisers teamed up with Blue Wellington and other groups to again clean up our beautiful south coast.

On 17 September 12 spots along the coast were awash with around 200 cleanup volunteers.

The good news is that only 460kg of rubbish was collected compared with 960kg in 2010 (52% reduction) - despite similar numbers of volunteers to last year. The difference was mostly due to fewer large (and heavy) items in 2011.

Over half of the 960kg in 2010 was from a number of larger items including televisions, car parts, broken chairs, paint tins and rusty metal. This year's collection included an old BBQ, a car battery, a car tyre and a chair. At the eastern Lyall Bay site the group recorded the number of cigarette butts. They collected 885 butts from the 600m of coast alongside the airport runway. Pretty disappointing given the number of available bins there.

A great event. Big ups to Helen Kettles and her co-organisers. Well done everyone involved. We look forward to next years event :)

Victoria University's Marine Treasure Hunt

Another great event, run by Victoria University's Coastal Ecology Lab, was a marine treasure hunt along the Taputeranga Marine Reserve coastal boundary. A really fab family-fun event with HEAPS of prizes and free give-aways from Forest & Bird, the Department of Conservation and more. Nice work Ursula and her team for organising this fantastic child focussed educational event. Hope you can bring it back again next year!



End of event rubbish collections: 2011(top) and 2010(bottom)



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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.

Biosecurity hotline

The arrival and uncontrolled spread of unwanted saltwater organisms is an ever present threat to New Zealand's unique marine environment. If you spot an [unwanted beastie](#) call MAFs Biosecurity emergency hotline on **0800 80 99 66**.

Did you know?

A seal and an octopus were witnessed having a scrap last week off the south coast. The fur seal apparently won.

Critter of the month

Tiger snail (*Calliostoma tigris*)

A large (50-70mm), striking gastropod common on rocky reefs.



Image: Kirstie Knowles

Calling our Stormwater Guardians to stop polluting

In February this year, Greater Wellington Council decided to grant resource consents to Wellington City Council, to allow the City's stormwater network, to be used in a similar way to that which has been operating for decades. This includes allowing harmful contaminants, such as raw sewage on occasions, to be discharged into our coastal areas. However the decision was conditional. Onerous conditions have now been placed on Wellington City Council, in order to reduce pollution coming out of the pipes.

Blue Wellington continues to be concerned about pollution coming out of stormwater pipes and has set up a working group to achieve 2 main objectives, which are -

- 1) Raising public awareness about the facts of pollution coming out of the stormwater network; and
- 2) Ensuring that Wellington City Council comply with their resource consent conditions - which includes the requirement for consultation to occur between Wellington City Council, Forest & Bird and other community groups such as Blue Wellington.

In association with this work, Blue Wellington wishes to take forward the idea that was raised at a recent Blue Wellington gathering, of having community stormwater guardians. These guardians will have informal roles of monitoring stormwater discharge points and reporting suspicious discharges to Greater Wellington's pollution control hotline. If you are interested in being a guardian, please contact **Chanelle** on chanelle.brodie@gmail.com for more information.

Finally, Blue Wellington wishes to advise all members, that if you see any pollution incident or concern, including suspicious discharges going into or coming out of stormwater pipes, that the best action that you can take, is to report this to Greater Wellington's 24 hour telephone environmental hotline on 0800 496 734. It is also most useful to the Council if also take photos of the incident.

pollution = raw sewage

