



Bream Head/Te Whara CONSERVATION TRUST



NEWSLETTER : JULY 2021 GET INVOLVED / PLANTING NURSERY / SUCCESSES / AMAZING VOLUNTEERS



Message From The Patron

John Maasland

The last year was a difficult one for all organisations. No less so for the Trust although it had two advantages, its operations are in the open air and in a wellness environment in living nature.

I congratulate the Trust for being able to maintain rigorous control over predators and weeds to maintain the high ecological values that now exist on the slopes and in the valleys that can be enjoyed on the Te Whara trails.

- We need access to nature for reflection, adventure, exercise and inspiration.
- Our economy is dependent on our environmental values.
- We need healthy fulfilled communities.

Climate change cannot be denied. The Trust is one of the voluntary front-line units protecting our most valuable national asset. It deserves full support from public agencies.

John Maasland



Bream Head Conservation Trust

P O Box 855, Whangārei

Email: info@breamheadtrust.nz

www.breamheadtrust.nz

Working in partnership with iwi, the community, the Department of Conservation, the Northland Regional Council and Whangārei District Council and local and national businesses.

Message From The Chair

Greg Innes - Chair BHCT, Councillor Whangārei Heads WDC



With most of this year under some level of lockdown, the governance and management of the Trust's operations have required more voluntary effort than I can recall in any previous year. I thank our Board of unpaid Trustees for volunteering their time, effort and wisdom to this vital work.

The new relationship the Trust has with the Department of Conservation since the coming into effect of the Te Whara Community Agreement, has given the Trust a much clearer legal foundation for it to do the mahi on this special piece of Crown land with confidence and authority. The Agreement gives the Trust further authority to plan and carry out conservation on the Ocean Beach Recreation Reserve as resources become available.

More than this, because the native species that have sanctuary on the Scenic Reserve know no boundaries, the Trust has accepted a wider responsibility for predator control in the adjoining landscape to the north. It now has a formal agreement with the Northland Regional Council to install and service in collaboration with sister organisations, a predator control buffer with private landowner consent on the northern boundary from coast to coast. It has agreed to work closely with NRC to initiate an effective extermination regime over this southern tip of the Whangārei Heads peninsula as the precursor to rolling predator interception leading to exclusion up the entire Whangārei Heads peninsula.

The Trust is nothing without its kaimahi of contractors and volunteers. Management of the Trust's field work continues under supervision of the Head Ranger and Project Manager Adam Willetts. Working daily in this challenging terrain with tools, traps and toxins requires rigorous health

and safety protocols. The safety record over the year was generally excellent with only one incident requiring a report to WorkSafe NZ. A volunteer slipped on a greasy track and injured an ankle. She was attended to quickly by the Ranger and helicoptered off the Reserve.

The Trust has come of age. It performs an essential role in long term protection of the Scenic Reserve. It needs to plan for perpetuity. Two of its founding Trustees retired this year. We farewell with gratitude, my Deputy Chair, Robin Lieffering and strategic and legal advisor Rod Gates. They were key figures in forming the Trust and creating within it a culture of professionalism and good order that underpins the high reputation it enjoys in the community.

This loss will mean more than a simple changing of the guard. The Trust is reconsidering its structure going forward because the notion of what "conservation" means on this landscape has changed. Eradication to zero requires new standards in operational SOP's, new tools and an underpinning with new sciences. The advancing influence of global warming will alter desirable and necessary outcomes. The composition of the Trust's governing body will need to be open to change and incorporate new knowledge and experience.

Like all not-for-profit voluntary organisations, the Trust survives mainly on the generosity of others. Over the last year, however, it has funded specific operations both inside and outside the Reserve on a contractual basis with DOC and NRC. This will increase and necessitate the Trust acquiring the competency to operate a largely self-supporting business while retaining its status as a charitable trust.

Greg Innes

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Jon Moore
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Jenny Lawrence

Rangers

Adam Willetts

Simon Braithwaite

Keith Townsend

Claire Braithwaite

breamheadtrust.nz

Bream Head Conservation Trust, P O Box 855,
Whangārei. Email: info@breamheadtrust.nz



Rangers Operational Summary

It may seem all doom and gloom for 2020, but there were some positive highlights operationally;

- Winning NRC's award for best 'Environmental Action in Pest Management'
- The 2020 rodent annual average residual tracking index (RTI) for rats returned an astonishingly low 0.22% (+/- 0.33%), which is the lowest ever RTI for the Trust and a continuation of the downward trend.
- BHCT managed to attain and retain two excellent contract rangers,
- Official opening of our excellent operational headquarter facility
- Installation and management of the buffer predator control network

- More pest plants were controlled over more area than ever before through mature plant containment and the establishment of the FoRT monthly weed volunteer programme.
- The ranger team have now installed the econode remote reporting devices to the 36 DOC200 traps on Ocean Beach Road and the boundary, and a mature stoat has already been caught on the mayonnaise lure in Autumn 2021 (a time when mature stoats are difficult to catch).
- We reached the milestone of 60 volunteers involved on the ground with the operational mahi and quite a few of these are in the more youthful age category than has been traditionally involved, perhaps a reflection of people focusing since Covid19?
- The 2020 Lizard survey was fairly even with previous surveys but what was exciting was the discovery of lizards in a 'control' survey area that had never previously returned any lizard species (this is why that area was chosen as a site - to hopefully one day show population migration within the reserve).
- Assisting this result is the intensive mouse control operation at both the Placostylus hongii (pupurangi/ flax snail) and Bream Head/Te Wara skink sites, which returned an exceptionally low mice RTI of only 2%.
- The invertebrates RTI was also very pleasing again this year and continues to climb in proportional relativity to the decrease in rodent pest abundance. 2020 saw a wonderful annual average RTI of key invertebrates in the reserve of 35% (+/-3%). This means that if one were to place a tracking tunnel laced with peanut butter anywhere in the reserve for one night they have a 35% chance of finding a key invertebrate.
- Kiwi coast bellbird/pateke survey showed bellbirds locked into BHSR at the time of year that they would not be migrating to and from the islands.
- A new toxin known as Double Tap has been added to the 1200+ bait stations throughout the reserve in late 2020, and the bait stations lowered to just above ground level. This serves several purposes but the main ones being that it will be a good switch out of toxin, with its peanut butter lure it should be more palatable for Norway rats and a lot easier for them to attain with the lowered stations.

A full summary of this report can be found on the website - go to breamheadtrust.nz

Predator Free Whangarei - Update

The Bream Head/Te Whara Conservation Trust has been actively involved with the initial development of this project alongside Northland Regional Council (NRC) and its other partners. This project is a shared vision between the community and NRC to remove possums, rats and stoats from our rohe. The clear statement from the council from the outset is that this project builds on the work and successes of the community groups who have been restoring the biodiversity of our beautiful area for many years already. There has been a strong ethos on community ownership in this model, this type of landscape scale project with many multiple land-owners and stakeholders adds complex time and diversity hurdles to the operation. However, like the foundation for a building, if you take the time and invest in the right methodologies it will endure far longer and stronger. The Trust has community group representation on the operational advisory group and the steering committee, therefore providing key advice/support throughout this project thus far.

As you will probably be aware the first stage goal is to eradicate possums, starting on Whangarei Heads peninsula and moving northwards. Community groups that already exist have been approached by NRC to quote for services for some aspects of the eradication project, and some of these are still in the negotiation phase. It is important that it is recognised that this landscape scale operation is new to all parties and requires an open and transparent partnership to manage the initial development and implementation of the work. By doing this it will set the model for other groups/contractors and the council going forward with the project. The Trust envisages that this project will not only take biodiversity restoration to the ultimate level here at the Heads but also form part of the sustainability solution that our community groups so desperately need. We all hope that this important project will complement the huge investment and gains our groups have already delivered in biodiversity restoration at Whangarei Heads.

Official Opening of BHCT Operational Facility

This event was initially postponed due to covid restrictions and then narrowly missed a bad weather front coming through – but the rain stayed away and we were able to celebrate this fabulous facility.

The evening featured waiata and karakia, speeches, a performance by Whangarei Heads School kapa haka group, live music from Seabren Struijcken, champagne for the toasts and a meal sponsored by Northport.

The trust is extremely grateful to the many sponsors who donated goods, time, expertise and money to construct the facility. We are especially grateful to property owner Alphonse van Polanen Petel and his family who allow us to be on their land. A list of sponsors is now recorded on our gratitude board that hangs on the wall next to the deck.

We've come a long way from one very hot container! This operational, educational and research facility reflects the passion and dedicated approach of all our volunteers, friends, rangers, supporters and trustees.



breamheadtrust.nz

Introduction To The Financial Statement

Whilst special projects and new equipment are specifically funded, the rest of our operational expenditure has to be funded through donations, fundraising, grants and an increasing amount of contracts undertaken by the trust for DOC and NRC. Over 90% of our expenditure is on direct restoration activities. The Trust has operated at a cash deficit over the last two years due in part to the reduction in corporate funding.

We are hugely grateful for the support we receive from our donors and grant moneys, without which we could not achieve what we have. Added to that is the wonderful support we receive through the dedication of our 60 plus strong volunteers who give over 3000 hours annually, tirelessly servicing bait lines, cutting tracks, dealing to invasive weeds, monitoring and recording bird calls, running school visits and the all-important governance role of the trustees.

A summary of the last three financial years plus the full set of accrual based audited financial statements can be found on our website - go to breamheadtrust.nz

Calendars

Last year we were privileged to work with local artist Terry Fitzgibbon to produce a "Bream Head Calendar". Terry is frequently described as "a creative, incurable enthusiast." He has illustrated over 20 picture books, with five of these featuring his own quirky verse and design-work. Sales of the latter have now topped over 100,000. Terry uses both traditional and digital mediums in a variety of engaging styles for either print or web and safeguarding nature has always been the source of his inspiration. We thoroughly enjoyed the collaboration with him and the results were stunning. We sold over 450 calendars, many remained local but others were posted around New Zealand, and some went to the UK, the USA and Canada. Thank you Terry! We are hoping to produce a range of blank greeting cards later this year, so look out for them ...

Look out for the cards by local artist Terry Fitzgibbon



Education Report

The Bream Head Conservation Trust education programme works closely with schools to educate and engage young people in the conservation work being undertaken on the reserve; we hope that their awareness will encourage them to value conservation in the future. We are keen to promote our programme and the numerous possibilities there are for engagement across all education sectors. With this in mind we are currently reviewing the information we give on the BHCT website, along with the education resources and ideas we offer.

2020 threw all our cards up into the air and after planning a promising year of engagement with various schools, lockdown level restrictions meant we had a number of postponements, and along with so many others, we needed to adapt and be resourceful. Setting up a basic nursery in collaboration with a private landowner has added new possibilities for schools to engage with us in the collection of seed, growing seedlings and planting on the reserve.

Despite lockdown restrictions we had four schools engage with our programme in 2020 on six occasions, involving 183 students. Towards

the end of the year we held an information evening for primary and secondary teachers, supported by the awesome facilitators who work alongside us with our programme – EnviroSchools facilitators Jane Norman and Jacqueline Knight, and Kiwi North educator Shirley Peterson. Our multi-talented head ranger, Adam Willetts, spoke about his work on the reserve and the message he aims to give students when they visit – he is a natural educator and gives a strong message to students when they visit the reserve. The information evening was very successful and will become an annual event. We are looking forward to expanding our programme with the support of volunteers and hopefully a paid educator sometime in the future. We are happy to connect schools and students with various experts and locals who have specific knowledge and connections with the reserve... one thing we all have in common is a passion to preserve the taonga that is the Bream Head Scenic Reserve; seeing students' enthusiasm and engagement in conservation mahi is incredibly rewarding and all the motivation we need to continue our work.

Lil Craig



Bream Head Te Whara Scenic Reserve where possums are already scarce thanks to the many years of pest management work by an army of community volunteers.

But, as important as it is to rid the reserve of animal predators, there are other pests in our forests and large areas that need help and this is where the important work of pest plant management and native tree planting comes in.

This year, thanks to a grant from MPI BHCT is able to give our struggling native plant nursery a big boost with a water reticulation system, a shade house and support to resume our popular planting days.

This next year will be an exciting time and much of the work being undertaken to detect and eradicate possums will also be crucial for our ongoing fight against rats and stoats.

Thank you to all of the dedicated volunteers who give up their precious time to help protect and restore New Zealand's unique biodiversity.

Jenny Lawrence

3 Rangers have joined the team with our amazing Head Ranger Adam Willetts



Simon Braithwaite

Simon was born in Northland and grew up having a mint time roaming the bush, sailing, surfing and fishing in the area. A trained mechanic, he spent the last 17 years working in various mechanical maintenance fields. Wanting to work in nature, he made the change in 2020 and enrolled in a Rural Pest Management course at Northland Polytech. He thoroughly enjoys the bush mahi and the challenges that come with the work!



Keith Townsend

Keith grew up under the shadow of Pukaha Mount Bruce on the banks of the Ruamahanga river. A bush bashing Wairarapa boy that fell in love with Whangarei Heads landscape and community. Keith has a background in biodiversity restoration and monitoring having studied environmental management at Otago University and worked in DoC's Tier 1 Monitoring Team and Offshores Islands Team on Raoul Island and the Hen and Chicks.

"For me working on Bream Head Scenic Reserve combines two great joys in my life. I can be up on the hill and looking out at the surf, or I can be out in the waves and looking up at the bush, thinking how lucky and grateful I am to live and work in a place like this!"



Claire Braithwaite

Claire is a West Australian wahine from the Perth hills (Noongar Boodjar country) who fell in love with a local kiwi and ended up in Whangarei Heads. She grew up enjoying the freedom to explore and roam in the unique and beautiful South West Australian bush.

Since her postgraduate studies in Sustainability and Climate Policy Claire worked for many years in an environmental education role for a large local government authority south of Perth. This mahi has developed in her an aspiration for connecting children with the natural world, and support kaitiakitanga into the future. It brings her much joy to be able to learn from and work with fantastic volunteers, trustees and colleagues both on and off the maunga.

Since writing this Claire and Simon have decided to move back to Australia to be near Claire's family as they await the birth of their first child. Congratulations, we'll miss you both.

Volunteer Update



"I always wondered why somebody didn't do something about that; then I realized that I am somebody".

The Bream Head Conservation Trust was founded by community volunteers and community volunteers have been caring for this taonga for many years.

Right now, there is a wonderful program airing called "Fight for the Wild". This 4 part series is showcasing the dire state of New Zealand's biodiversity crisis and the many passionate people behind the battle. It is so heartening and impressive to see that this battle is being fought by volunteers throughout New Zealand. They won't surrender despite the odds and take each challenge with renewed enthusiasm.

The goal of Wellington's Predator Free 2050 group is to have the world's first predator free capital city and they are on the way to total eradication of possums, rats and stoats.

At the other end of the island, Whangarei Heads is starting its own eradication plan beginning at the

Forest Restoration Team

Do you want to get involved, meet some mates and have a cuppa (after you've done some weed work)?

ForT (Forest Restoration Team) meets once a month for a few hours to tackle weed infestations on the reserve boundary, in areas that are usually easily accessible. This is a way to make a real difference with instantly noticeable results.

If you are keen to join this growing team contact

BHCT ranger Keith Townsend 027 322 1357



breamheadtrust.nz



New Developments for our Plant Nursery

Following on from our earlier story about the nursery we are developing on Rupert and Wendy Newbold's property at Ocean Beach – we have received a huge boost.

We were successful in our bid for money to further enhance this facility. We will now be able to construct a robust and user-friendly shade house with a water wicking system that will be used to keep the plants well hydrated during the drier months we seem to be having more of!

During April we received a delivery of new planting trays and seed-raising mixture and a working bee was held to fill the pots with the new mixture and sow the seeds.

Soon construction of the shade house structure will begin with poles being rammed and curved poles spanning the sides to carry the netting. The netting will be layered in different shade densities for specific plant light needs. We already have seeds germinating in trays under dabbled light amongst the manuka and another potting bench and seed raising mix bin will be added here.

The whole design is sympathetic to the needs of the students who visit – they will learn through action the process of seed sourcing through to propagation, weeding out, transferring pots and trays to planting and weed control in planted sites.

Thank You To Our Sponsors



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



FOUNDATION NORTH
Te Kaitiaki Putea o
Tamaki o Tai Tokerau



North Tec
TAI TOKERAU WĀNANGA



Robin Lieffering

With sincere regret the Bream Head Te Whara Conservation Trust has accepted the resignation of Trustee, Robin Lieffering, one of the founders of the Trust. Robin of all the Trustees did the hard yards providing inspiration and determination and undertaking governance responsibilities at critical stages of the Trust's formation and evolution.

In those early years as both a District Councillor and as a resident in the area she could stand as a Trustee representing her community from either or both positions. She arranged for the early meetings to be held in WDC meeting rooms with a Council Secretary. She was all things, organiser, environmental advocate, authoritarian on meeting procedures, friend and neighbour.

Above all things Robin was passionate about keeping her place in the land an example of natural beauty, her live in park.

The Trust thanks her for the solid foundation she helped to build and wishes her well in retirement. She is welcome to contribute to its deliberations and nudge it back on track any time she feels it necessary.

Rod Gates



Hours of work goes on behind the scenes at BHCT to raise money.

This is used to pay our rangers' salaries and keep our operations running smoothly. We estimate that 96% of the funds we receive are used directly in the reserve. Many people are already contributing on a regular monthly basis, and we are very grateful for this. These "Friends" receive Adam's regular ranger reports and invitations to various events happening in and around the reserve.

However, we would love to have some more Friends and we are offering the following incentives – if you are able to commit to contribute between \$10.00 and \$20.00 per month you will receive one of our quirky bumper stickers, if you can contribute between \$21.00 and \$45.00 per month you will receive one of our stunning caps and if you can manage over \$46.00 per month you will receive one of our gorgeous t-shirts. Check out our website www.breamheadtrust.nz or contact Claire@breamheadtrust.nz.

Thank you!



If you believe you've seen Myrtle Rust:

- don't touch it
- take photos if possible
- note the location and
- contact the hotline on 0800 80 99 66

Winners Of Environmental Action In Pest Management!

During lock down we were delighted to find out, in a virtual ceremony, that we had won the Environmental Action in Pest Management category at the Northland Regional Council's 2020 Environmental Awards.



STAG Report



As predicted, our closed borders have resulted in a significant increase in domestic tourism and an increasing appreciation what our country has to offer and of the efforts around the country to preserve and restore our biodiversity. The work done by BHCT and many other groups and organisations around the country is becoming increasingly recognised.

Research and innovation in the conservation science domain continues at pace with many exciting new developments promising both an improved understanding of predator behaviour and subsequent increasing sophistication in managing those numbers down. We have established close links with cutting edge research and development organisations such as Cacophony and ZIP and continue to work with Northland Regional Council as the local landscape project moves ahead with great opportunities to leverage off the experience and knowledge gained over the years by BHCT.

Local relationships with like-minded groups and organisations are important not only to share knowledge and information but to slowly integrate the areas in which we work into landscapes and ultimately the whole country. Recently we have been liaising with a community project on Bream Tail. This could be a "Head to Tail" story in due course hopefully.

With all the promise of new science and technology, we must not lose sight of the critical importance of continuing to do what we know has worked well for us to date and this never ceases to be a challenge to resource. A new emphasis for the next year will be on how we can acquire better and more focussed information on pest numbers, behaviour and disposition to allow us to best plan predator suppression and integrate with the wider Whangarei Heads Peninsular landscape project led by NRC.

The STAG welcomes input from anyone keen and interested in conservation science and, in particular, those with new and potentially practical and innovative ideas that can be explored and developed.

Roger Tuck

Give-a-Little

Another easy way for you, or someone you know, to contribute to our great cause. Check it out on our website.