



HELPING NATURE THRIVE

WWF-New Zealand
Conservation Impact Report

November 2024

A close-up photograph showing a person's hand, wearing a blue jacket, gently touching a small green plant with round leaves growing in dark soil. The soil is covered with dry twigs and sticks. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the ground and some other small plants.

**OUR WORK TOGETHER
IS HELPING US TO CREATE
A BETTER ENVIRONMENT -
TODAY, AND FOR FUTURE
GENERATIONS.**

WELCOME:

We're delighted to share our Conservation Impact Report for 2023-2024 with you. With your support, we have achieved some significant wins for nature during the past year.

While there have been many highlights, we have had two standout victories. After years of advocacy work, we have finally seen greater protections for our seabirds with the introduction of mandatory bycatch mitigation measures for the surface longline fishing fleet. New Zealand has more seabird species than anywhere else in the world, but many of them are perilously close to extinction and the number one threat they face is being caught accidentally in commercial fishing nets. The gold-standard fishing practices Aotearoa has now adopted will help to keep these precious taonga safer.

That win follows the roll-out of cameras on boats for the first four priority groups of fishing vessels, and with that, a greater understanding of what's happening out at sea. We have long campaigned for this, as having cameras on boats provides much needed transparency, including accurate and independent data on accidental by-catch, and helps us make informed decisions on how to protect our marine life. We will continue to advocate for the continued rollout of cameras on boats, and for our fisheries management to be based on good science and evidence.

These policies are both crucial wins for our seabirds, particularly the critically endangered Antipodean albatross, and show us the power of our advocacy work.

We're also continuing to support 'flax-roots' community conservation work in partnership with the Tindall Foundation. This year we have supported 19 conservation initiatives, ranging from helping to care for little penguins/kororā, to supporting a mobile environmental classroom to teach tamariki about caring for our environment.

Our work together is helping us to create a better environment – today, and for future generations.

Of course, our work is not complete. We need to fight for nature more now than ever before. With your support, we will continue to hold the government of the day to account, support industry to make nature-positive change, and be a champion for Aotearoa's precious wildlife and wild places.

Ngā mihi,



*Dr Kayla Kingdon-Bebb,
CEO WWF-New Zealand*



*Matt Valentine,
Chair of the Board of Trustees,
WWF-New Zealand*

INTRODUCTION

The health of our environment and wildlife in Aotearoa New Zealand is at a tipping point. More than 4,000 of our native species are either at risk or threatened with extinction. Our ocean is under threat from overfishing, plastic pollution, and rising sea temperatures. We are also seeing an increasing number of climate-related weather events, which are having devastating consequences for local communities, wildlife, and our economy.

With your support, WWF-New Zealand is continuing to work hard to champion our environment and protect our native taonga species and their habitats through advocacy, education, industry partnerships, and on-the-ground action.

In this report, we highlight some major milestones you have helped us achieve in the past year, ranging from securing a significant win for our threatened seabirds to speaking truth to power – one fish finger at a time.

How we work

WWF-New Zealand is part of the WWF International Network, the world's largest independent conservation organisation. WWF's overall mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature.

We achieve success by bringing together individuals, communities, businesses and government to develop and implement innovative, evidence-based solutions. We also recognise the leadership of tangata whenua and seek to support the delivery of initiatives and outcomes prioritised by iwi and hapū.

We educate, raise awareness, and build support for nature through effective campaigns and policy advocacy work.

We support local community groups to deliver high-impact conservation outcomes on the ground.

And we partner with other organisations to deliver results and achieve outcomes that otherwise would not be possible.

Our strategic focus

At WWF-New Zealand we've centred our work around the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework – a global treaty which aims to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030.

We're particularly focused on accelerating marine protection in Aotearoa so we meet the global goal of protecting 30% of our ocean territory by 2030, supporting more sustainable fisheries, and reducing threats to marine life.

We also work to put nature at the heart of Aotearoa's response to climate change and to help businesses reduce their impacts on the environment.

4,000+



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WITH EXTINCTION**

SNAPSHOT OF THE LAST YEAR

Giving seabirds a voice

More seabird species breed in Aotearoa New Zealand than anywhere else in the world – but about 90 percent of our seabirds are either at risk or threatened with extinction. WWF-New Zealand has long advocated for stronger rules to prevent our seabirds being caught in longline fishing nets as accidental ‘bycatch’.

After our public campaigns and petitions, parliamentary submissions, meetings with officials and ministers, and efforts to raise the profile of this issue in the media – on top of our long-standing work to get cameras on board fishing boats – the Government finally agreed this year to strengthen bycatch mitigation measures for the surface longline fishing fleet.

All commercial fishers using surface longline fishing methods are now required to either use special hook shielding devices or implement all three of the key seabird bycatch mitigation measures at the same time.

This is a huge win for our seabirds, particularly the critically endangered Antipodean albatross, and shows the power of our advocacy work.

Since many of our birds are dying out on the high seas, we need to keep up the pressure to make these best practice mitigation measures mandatory internationally. This is a position that New Zealand can now much more credibly advocate for – and has already – now that we are finally ‘walking the talk’ at home.

At the same time, we’ve been delivering change on-the-ground by supporting the efforts of the Southern Seabirds Trust, which works directly with commercial and recreational fishers to reduce harm to New Zealand seabirds from fishing.



Supporting conservation in our communities

Every day in Aotearoa we hear inspiring stories of the incredible conservation work local communities do on the ground.

WWF-New Zealand, in partnership with the Tindall Foundation, supports local communities and educational facilities to run projects that conserve and restore Aotearoa's natural environment and the native species in these habitats.

This year alone we have supported 19 projects, which range from protecting species like our little blue penguins / Kororā, regenerating 'green corridors' for wildlife, and educating kiwi kids via a mobile environmental classroom.

One of the projects is 'Take Action – Clean Your Beach', led by Our Seas Our Future Charitable Trust. This supports schools, community groups, and organisations to clean their local beaches by providing free clean-up kits, and in 2024 over 3,000 people have taken part.

“WWF’s sponsorship of our beach clean-up kits has been invaluable in helping us expand our reach and impact. A heartfelt thank you to WWF-New Zealand and the Tindall Foundation for their support.”

– Our Seas, Our Future.

The projects we support have helped hundreds of volunteers and tamariki to take conservation action. Whether that's through planting natives along our waterways, setting trap lines in the bush, rehabilitating species, or cleaning up our coasts, communities all over the country have come together to nurture nature.

It's heartening to see so many amazing grass-roots environmental initiatives across the motu and we're grateful to partner with the Tindall Foundation so we can continue to support these local conservation efforts.



Growing a wave of new ocean advocates

Together with Ironman Champion Sebastian Kienle, WWF-New Zealand is helping to empower and inspire the next generation of Kiwis to become passionate advocates for our oceans and the life within it.

Through our Marine Education Fund, we've been supporting Young Ocean Explorers, Project Jonah and Love Rimurimu. So far this year:


- 155 students have learnt about kelp forests and seaweed restoration, including field trips to gather, plant and monitor seaweed;
- 198 children have had hands-on experiences, exploring Goat Island Marine Reserve and Kelly Tarltons and learning about Aotearoa's precious marine life;
- 4,299 primary schools and kindergartens students have had classroom presentations on marine mammals and how to protect them for the future.

“My daughter is gaining so much knowledge about oceans and marine life, and is so enthusiastic about learning more, and doing more, to protect the oceans.”

– Feedback from a parent about the Young Ocean Explorers programme.

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Putting ocean health on the agenda

In Aotearoa New Zealand, we have a deep connection with the ocean and a long and rich history with the sea. But our marine environment is facing many threats, with unsustainable fishing, plastic pollution, and climate change destroying ocean habitats and pushing our marine species to the brink of extinction.

It was important to us to make sure the health of our ocean was on the political agenda in the lead up to the 2023 General Election. Between July and October 2023, WWF-New Zealand ran a pre-election campaign focused on ocean advocacy. This campaign urged political parties to adopt '10 Asks for the Ocean'. We set out the critical and necessary steps to ensure a thriving and resilient marine environment and outlined our top priorities for the incoming Government.

Our 'Asks' were publicly supported by other ocean-focused NGOs and community groups and we secured a range of written and verbal commitments from political parties. This campaign culminated in a pre-election debate, Our Moana, Our Future, attended by the major political parties and well-covered by national media.

This wide-ranging campaign helped to elevate marine issues in advance of the general election and informed voters where each political party publicly stood on ocean policy at the time.

Greater transparency on fishing boats

WWF-New Zealand has long campaigned for more transparency on our commercial fishing fleets to better protect the health of our ocean and wildlife. We have been advocating for cameras to be installed on fishing boats since the idea was first floated over a decade ago, and WWF-New Zealand is the only environmental organisation in New Zealand to sit on the Government's technical advisory groups on this issue.

After much delay, a phased implementation of cameras on boats – for the first four priority groups of fishing vessels – was completed in January 2024.

We also saw the first tranche of data from the cameras on boats released in April this year. This was significant as it confirmed what many of us had suspected all along: there has been consistent under-reporting of fisheries bycatch of endangered species such as the Hector's dolphin.

It's clear we've not had an accurate picture to date of the threats to our marine species, but now we know, we can move forward in a positive way and better address these threats in the future.

Having cameras on boats provides much needed transparency, including accurate and independent data on accidental by-catch. We will continue to use our voice to shine a light on this issue in meetings with the government and in the media and will advocate for the continued rollout of cameras on boats.



Speaking truth to power - one fish finger at a time

New Zealand committed to protect 30 percent of our ocean territory by 2030 when it adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the UN High Seas Treaty.

Despite these commitments, less than one percent of our country's ocean territory is safeguarded in highly-protected Marine Protected Areas, and we are lagging behind the rest of the world. Our ocean's health is in crisis, with species declining at alarming rates.

In May 2024, we launched a cheeky campaign urging Kiwis to 'Give Shane Jones the Finger' until he commits to protecting 30% of our ocean by 2030.

As a result of this campaign, more than 9,000 New Zealanders gave the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries 'the finger' (in the form of a digital fish finger) and demanded urgent action to protect Aotearoa's declining marine species and habitats.

This campaign sent a clear message to the Government that the public expect the health of our ocean and the wellbeing of communities to be prioritised over short-term commercial interests.





Advocating for nature on the international stage

WWF-New Zealand also engages with the international community to advocate for our environment on the world stage.

That includes partnering with WWF-Australia and WWF-Pacific on a range of initiatives and we thank them both for their continued support.

Our staff, who are recognised as experts in their field, participate in high-level forums both nationally and internationally.

At COP28, the global UN climate negotiations held in December 2023, WWF-New Zealand co-hosted a side event exploring the vital role of nature-based solutions in tackling climate change.

This was New Zealand's only event at this major summit and it served as a platform for the global launch of Reclaiming Papatūānuku – an ambitious initiative that aims to restore and enhance over two million hectares of forest in Aotearoa New Zealand over the next 10 years.

Our event included a panel discussion with high-profile figures including New Zealand's former and current Ministers of Climate Change and helped to advance critical conversations on nature's role in meeting our climate goals.

Supporting Indigenous approaches to conservation

WWF-New Zealand and other WWF offices brought Indigenous leaders from across the Pacific together in April 2024 to share their experiences in the face of accelerating climate, ocean, and nature crises.

Nearly 100 representatives from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands gathered in Suva for the Oceania First Voices Regional Forum – a summit that gives a platform to indigenous people and communities across the Pacific and connects those most impacted by our changing climate.

The message from those attending was clear: Indigenous communities are critical to solving the climate and biodiversity crises – but only if their voices are heard.

WWF-New Zealand's Chief Executive Dr Kayla Kingdon-Bebb attended the forum with Ngāti Kuri representatives Sheridan Waitai and Toka Maaka.

In all our work, we continue to advocate for Māori rights and interests to be upheld and we celebrate the conservation leadership and expertise that iwi show, and have shown, for generations.



A SINCERE THANK YOU

None of our work would be possible without the incredible generosity of our supporters. Whether it's through making monthly donations, sharing our work on social media, signing petitions, or leaving a legacy – you have all played a part in protecting te taiao, our natural world.

We hope the environmental wins we have shared will inspire you to keep making a difference alongside us. With your support, we will continue to strongly advocate for nature in Aotearoa.

Toitū te marae a Tāne, Toitū te marae a Tangaroa, Toitū te tangata.

If the land is well and the sea is well, the people will thrive.

