



**PROTECTING NATURE  
TOGETHER**  
WWF-NEW ZEALAND  
CONSERVATION IMPACT REPORT  
2024-2025



**We're proud to give  
a voice to nature on  
your behalf**

## WELCOME:

*From rolling out a major campaign to protect the Hauraki Gulf to joining forces with a former prime minister, it's been an incredibly busy year for us here at WWF-New Zealand.*

Though we may be a small team, we are mighty – and together we've achieved a tremendous amount. Our 2024-2025 Conservation Impact Report is a chance to share these highlights with you and thank you for your continued support. Without you, we simply couldn't do the work we do for nature.

This report provides a snapshot of our efforts over the past year – from advocating for greater marine protection, to supporting local conservation groups and raising awareness about the steps needed to save our endangered taonga species from extinction.

We're especially proud to have released our groundbreaking *Nature Positive Aotearoa* report, produced in partnership with EY. This first-of-its-kind economic analysis for Aotearoa found that protecting nature could save New Zealand more than \$270 billion over the next 50 years. We think that's a pretty strong argument for Government, industry, and others to invest in Te Taiao. The report has made a significant contribution to ongoing discussions about the merits of nature-positive action and the critical role a healthy natural environment plays in Aotearoa's economic, social, and cultural wellbeing.

We also rolled out a major campaign advocating for the protection and restoration of Tikapa Moana/the Hauraki Gulf. Tens of thousands joined us to demand the Government reverse its last-minute decision to allow commercial fishing in new protected areas of the Gulf – all while helping to keep this issue in the spotlight.

As we commence the celebration of 50 years of WWF in Aotearoa, our focus on giving a voice to nature continues – and we're proud to do that on your behalf. Of course, the journey is far from over. We pledge to continue our mahi for nature now and for future generations.

Ngā mihi,



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



*Hon. James Shaw*  
Chair, WWF-New Zealand

# INTRODUCTION

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

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

## How we work

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

We achieve impact 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, education and policy advocacy.

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 our work is guided by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework – a global treaty to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030.

We're particularly focused on accelerating marine protection in Aotearoa, 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 environmental impact.

# SNAPSHOT OF THE LAST YEAR



## Advancing marine protection

Aotearoa New Zealand's marine environment is incredibly diverse and home to up to 80 percent of our native species. From the Hector's dolphin to the hoiho/yellow-eyed penguin, many of the creatures that inhabit our waters and coastal areas are found nowhere else on earth.

Despite having one of the largest ocean territories on earth, less than one percent of New Zealand's marine environment is highly protected. Our marine species and habitats are being pushed to the brink.

That's why WWF-New Zealand is advocating to protect 30 percent of our ocean by 2030, in line with the global '30x30' movement.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are places where human activities like fishing or mining are limited. These protections are essential to protect our marine life, and we need many more of them. And our research tells us that most New Zealanders agree.

Earlier this year, polling we commissioned from Horizon Research showed 81 percent of New Zealanders believe marine protected areas should be expanded. Many described feeling "concerned", "disappointed", and "frustrated" with the Government's record on marine conservation.

We heard New Zealanders loud and clear – and as part of our advocacy for much greater marine protection, we joined forces with international marine and climate agency Only One to launch a new phase of our campaigning for 30x30, including a public petition calling for stronger ocean protection.

A highlight of this work was our collaboration with former Prime Minister Helen Clark on an opinion piece for The Guardian, coinciding with the United Nations Ocean Conference in France. Together we called on Aotearoa to rejoin the global conversation on ocean protection, end destructive bottom trawling, and safeguard our blue backyard for future generations.



## Restoring the Hauraki Gulf/Tīkapa Moana

The Hauraki Gulf is one of New Zealand's most treasured places. It's globally recognised for its unique wildlife, including whales, dolphins, seabirds, and many fish species – and is hugely significant to our country culturally and economically. But as we know, the Gulf is in trouble.

Overfishing, habitat loss, pollution, sedimentation, and the effects of poorly planned urban development have led to a 57 percent decline in key fish stocks in the Hauraki Gulf, a 67 percent decline in seabirds, and a 97 percent decline in whales and dolphins. Sharks have declined by an estimated 86 percent, while crayfish and scallop populations are now functionally extinct in some areas.

Late last year the Government announced last-minute changes to the Hauraki Gulf Marine Protection Bill to allow a type of fishing known as ring-netting to take place in two of the new 'high protection areas' – zones which had been explicitly designed to exclude

both commercial and recreational fishing and provide a haven for marine life to recover. WWF-New Zealand worked swiftly to launch an extensive campaign calling on the Government to reverse its decision.

More than 32,000 people signed our open letter to the Prime Minister and nearly 10,000 people used our email tool to directly contact decision-makers voicing their concern.

We also worked hard behind the scenes and engaged with Auckland MPs, other political parties, businesses, and local community groups to keep the spotlight on this issue.

While the Government has not reversed course, we have been inspired by the incredible response from people who care about protecting our marine environment for future generations. Our fight to continue protecting this treasured place on Auckland's doorstep is far from over.

## Charting a path to a Nature Positive Aotearoa

WWF-New Zealand and EY published a major report demonstrating that investing in nature is not only vital for our wellbeing and environment – it makes economic sense.

A Nature Positive Aotearoa shows that protecting nature could save Aotearoa New Zealand more than \$270 billion over the next 50 years.

This economic analysis, the first of its kind in New Zealand, demonstrates that urgent investment into protecting Aotearoa's threatened species and habitats could save the country significantly in the medium-to-long-term.

The report outlines the opportunities nature-positive action brings for New Zealand's primary sectors and identifies actions the Government could take to create the right conditions for businesses to invest in nature.

This includes making it mandatory for businesses to assess and disclose their impacts on nature so consumers and investors can make more informed decisions – as well as initiatives such as a system of biodiversity or carbon credits generated by nature action, or an investment fund that targets nature-related projects.

We celebrated the Government's recent announcement it would be supporting a voluntary nature credit scheme to incentivise the restoration of biodiversity on private land.

During his speech outlining the scheme, Associate Minister for the Environment, Andrew Hoggard, highlighted WWF-New Zealand's report with EY, citing our findings to demonstrate that a voluntary nature credits market is "worth it financially".

## Supporting communities on the ground

Predator eradication, waterway restoration, and the rescue and rehabilitation of kororā / little blue penguins are just some of the initiatives WWF-New Zealand has supported this year.

WWF-New Zealand's Community Conservation Fund, in partnership with the Tindall Foundation, supports 'flax-roots' community projects to conserve and restore Aotearoa's natural environment and educate New Zealanders about its importance.

Over the years we have supported countless amazing local conservation groups – and this year has been no different, with 18 projects achieving some incredible outcomes for their local communities.

Just one example is the work of the West Coast's Motukiekie Wilderness Trust, which has combined forces with other groups to manage more than 18,650 hectares in the Paparoa Range and Victoria Forest Park and enhance predator control efforts. The group recently made an exciting discovery with the help of conservation dog Tui, who spotted several breeding pairs of the rare endangered whio (blue duck) - a species that's returned to the area thanks to predator eradication efforts.

We're also supporting the Motuihe Trust in their ongoing restoration of Motuihe Island in the Hauraki Gulf/ Tīkapa Moana. Once farmland, the island has been transformed by volunteers over the past 25 years into a pest-free, regenerative forest now home to native species such as the little spotted kiwi, tuatara, saddleback, red-crowned parakeet, Duvaucel's gecko, shore skink, and wētā.

WWF-New Zealand's funding has supported weed control, biodiversity monitoring and native species planting – ensuring the hard-won conservation gains over the last two decades are sustained.

As part of our partnership with Reckitt, this year WWF-New Zealand also joined forces with far north iwi Ngāti Kuri to save the unique white-flowering rātā moehau. This is one of Aotearoa New Zealand's rarest plants – with only 13 documented adult trees left in the wild.

We are supporting Ngāti Kuri with propagating seedlings, and planting trees in their rohe in Te Tai Tokerau / Northland. Ngāti Kuri is trialling new plantings to preserve genetic diversity and support this beautiful tree's recovery for the future.





## Empowering youth voices

Our rangatahi are the next generation of kaitiaki and WWF-New Zealand is proud to elevate their voices in whatever way we can.

This year we partnered with Save the Children New Zealand to support young New Zealanders to advocate for the health of our ocean through a global youth forum known as 'Citizens of the Ocean'.

Some of the amazing rangatahi who attended our workshops were selected to attend the global Ocean Citizen Summit in France, where they were empowered with leadership, advocacy, and ocean literacy skills to inspire, amplify, and accelerate youth action to protect our ocean.

Two young New Zealanders, Veronica Rotman and Quack Pirihi, also represented New Zealand at the UN Ocean Conference, presenting a Global Youth Manifesto calling for equitable, science-based, and Indigenous-led ocean solutions.

*“Being able to attend UNOC3, connect with leaders in the Pacific, learn more about how indigenous knowledge is informing climate action, stand in protest against deep sea mining, and meet so many amazing rangatahi, was an honour of a lifetime.”*

- Quack Pirihi.



## Educating the next wave of ocean advocates

We are now in the second year of advancing three marine education initiatives thanks to the generosity of former Ironman World Champion Sebastian Kienle.

We are supporting three incredible organisations to engage young New Zealanders in taking action for our ocean: Young Ocean Explorers, Project Jonah and Love Rimurimu.

So far:

*“The children talked all the way home about how much fun they had and how much they had learned all day. They were so enthusiastic about the programme and they thought the staff were great. The best activity they have done all summer”*

– Parent feedback.



**442 new students**

have learned about seaweed biodiversity and kelp restoration, including participating in snorkel field trips.



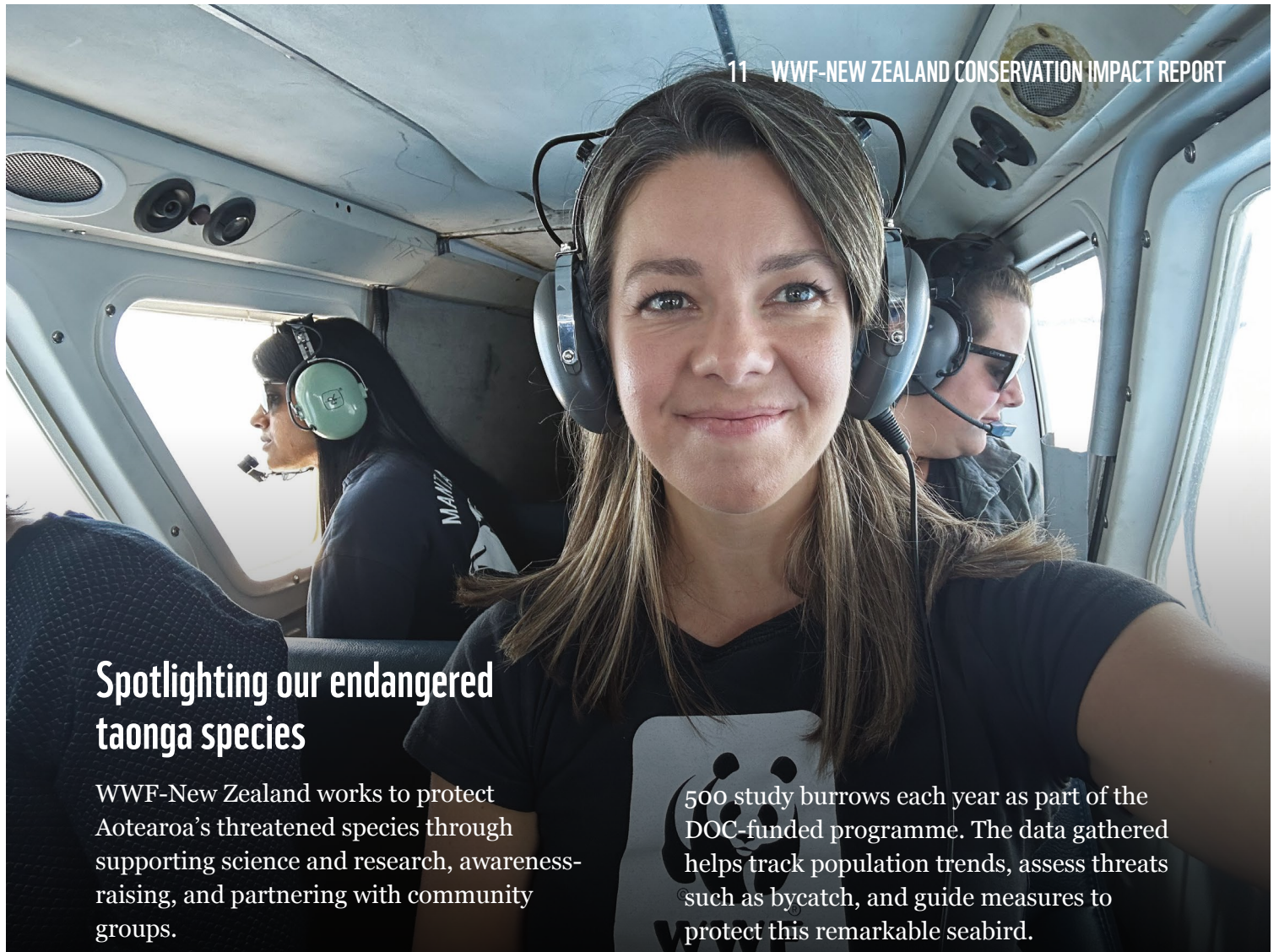
**More than 400 children**

have had hands-on experiences exploring Goat Island Marine Reserve and Kelly Tarlton’s Aquarium.



**Over 3,000 tamariki**

have taken part in classroom sessions on marine mammals, bringing the total to over 10,000 children.



## Spotlighting our endangered taonga species

WWF-New Zealand works to protect Aotearoa's threatened species through supporting science and research, awareness-raising, and partnering with community groups.

500 study burrows each year as part of the DOC-funded programme. The data gathered helps track population trends, assess threats such as bycatch, and guide measures to protect this remarkable seabird.

This year we have championed a range of iconic species, including the oceanic manta ray/te whai rahi and black petrel/ tākoketai. We joined Manta Watch NZ for the first-ever aerial survey of manta ray populations in the Hauraki Gulf – a major step forward in understanding this sentinel species. Mantas are important indicators of ocean health yet remain classified as 'data deficient' by the Department of Conservation. This field research is helping to fill critical knowledge gaps about their populations and habitats, and we secured stories on Seven Sharp and RNZ to grow public awareness of these majestic creatures.

We also joined Elizabeth 'Biz' Bell from Wildlife Management Ltd on one of New Zealand's longest running wildlife research projects aimed at understanding the threats facing the black petrel / tākoketai. Our CEO and Board members took part in population monitoring on Aotea / Great Barrier Island, where the team surveys nearly

The tākoketai is truly an incredible bird. It only breeds in Tīkapa Moana / Hauraki Gulf and then flies as far as South America to spend winter. The incredible range of black petrels means that they're often caught as accidental bycatch here and on the High Seas. In fact, the tākoketai is New Zealand's seabird most at risk from commercial fishing.

We were pleased that an RNZ journalist was able to join us for the trip to see the population monitoring first-hand. The result was an in-depth feature piece and podcast episode that helped bring the plight of the tākoketai to audiences across Aotearoa. By supporting and sharing this kind of research, WWF-New Zealand is helping to ensure conservation decisions are guided by science, while continuing to bring the stories of our most vulnerable species to the wider public.



## A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

None of our work would be possible without the generosity and dedication of our supporters.

Around the world, the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss are accelerating, and the need for urgent action has never been greater.

Yet in the face of these challenges, there is still hope – and that hope comes from people like you.

With your continued support, WWF-New Zealand will keep standing up for our beautiful wild places and treasured native species. We'll keep working to protect the ocean that sustains us, and to give nature a voice on your behalf.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

***Manaaki whenua, manaaki tāngata, haere whakamua***

*If we take care of the land and take care of the people, we will take care of the future*

