

Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust Annual Report 2023/24



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Introduction

Tēnā koutou katoa e te Tautiaki Hoiho whānau,

It is a huge honour to present the Annual Report on behalf of the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust (YEPT/Trust) for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The Report covers a period of transition for us. We farewelled Sue Murray in September, who since the turn of the century has so loyally steered the Trust through so many challenges as General Manager and so effectively grew the Trust to the extremely professional organisation it is today. I must also acknowledge Eric Shelton, who stepped back from the Trust Chair role that he had held since 2014. I will endeavour to serve the Trust as selflessly as Eric, but I have already accepted that I will never attain the great heights of his quick-witted humour. Peter Simkins will also close off his incredible 30-years of dedication as Trustee (including a stint as chair in the 2000s). For Peter we are continually thankful.

It is to these people's credit that the Trust is in its strongest ever position. The operational side of the Trust's activities continue to demand more and more, and our staff rose to the occasion again this year. We said 'see you soon' to some incredible people this year (Ben, Max, Euan to name a few) but rest assured that our operations continue to be led by the best science, and executed by selfless professionals who are the best in their field. Thank you to Trudi, Amanda, Caitlin, Cat, Louise, McKenzie, Emma and Sandy (and to all our Trustees) for everything you do.

We are truly grateful to all those that moved on this year, and to the incredible staff that continue to grace the Trust office and reserves every day.

It would be wrong of us to ignore the plight of the penguin numbers this year, the causes and complexities of which Trudi so intricately addresses in her far more qualified words. It goes without saying that we are doing everything in our power to turn this species around.

If you take nothing else from this report, take this: we are not giving up.

Kia mate ururoa, kei mate wheke

Fight like a shark, don't give in like an octopus.

Hoiho / Yellow-eyed penguins

The Northern population of hoiho has **continued to decline** (17% since last year, and **78%** over the last 15 years), and comprises birds from Te Waipounamu / the South Island and Rakiura / Stewart Island. There were a total of **163 breeding pairs** this season (131 pairs across Otago and Southland, none in Canterbury, and 32 pairs on Rakiura). This is compared to 196 pairs last year (161 pairs on Te Waipounamu, 35 pairs on Rakiura). Unfortunately, despite intensive intervention and conservation management, numbers are still rapidly declining.

In 2023/24 there were **19 nests at YEPT sites on the mainland** compared to 27 last season (a huge **30% decline**). Female breeders in particular struggled this season, six females were not seen and likely did not survive during their annual moult. One female was found dead at moult (from broncho-pneumonia). This poor adult survival has major implications for the survival of the hoiho population, particularly given that no young females were recruited this season to replace the breeding females.

In 2023/24 there were **21 nests at annually monitored sites on Rakiura** compared to 22 last season (a much smaller decline than the 31% reduction in the previous year). All of the colonies are surviving at very low numbers.

Summary of the season

Nest searches on the mainland were carried out by the YEPT ranger team (**Cat Lea, Ben Goldsworthy, McKenzie Inch**). The **Department of Conservation (DOC)** hired a hoiho ranger to help monitor birds on Rakiura for the first time this season, and YEPT and DOC worked together to complete nest searches and monitoring. The majority of work on Rakiura was carried out by YEPT contractor (**Sandy King**) and hoiho ranger **Sara Larcombe** (DOC). Long standing volunteers **Dean Nelson** and **Dave Houston** and **Vincent Leith** (mana whenua) completed a nest search of Whenua Hou. The teams were supported by our Science Advisor (**Trudi Webster**). Rangers were assisted by willing volunteers at various sites.

The first chick hatched on 1 November at Tavora. The hatch period was spread out and extended late in the Catlins with the last chicks hatching on 1 December 2023. Candling was completed for eggs to assess whether they were fertile, and help identify potential foster nests and reduce unnecessary monitoring. All eggs except three were fertile. One egg that was candled as fertile failed to hatch and the subsequent necropsy found a malformed chick with no eyes or upper beak.

There have been continued improvements to our management of small chicks and treatment of diseases that occur in the first couple of weeks of life. Uplift of chicks to the **Wildlife Hospital Dunedin (WHD)** means that treatment of **diphtheritic stomatitis (DS)** is highly successful and has significantly reduced deaths. Rangers monitor nests every other day to ensure that hatch date is accurate and conduct initial health checks at 3 days old. At this age early signs of DS can be detected and treated before a chick gets too sick. Most of the successfully hatched chicks were uplifted to WHD for treatment for about 5-7 days. The majority of chicks (93%) showed signs of minor DS at 3 days old during their first check. Treatment was **highly successful, 96.6% of chicks** were **released** from WHD (28 chicks). The YEPT team again supported DOC Murihiku by transporting chicks between WHD and the Catlins.

Respiratory Distress Syndrome (RDS) has been observed again this season in small chicks and was responsible for **15 chick deaths** across the entire mainland (a reduction from 24 deaths last season). The reduction is partially explained by the 17% decline in nest numbers, but also points to improvements in treatment at WHD.

Four chicks died at YEPT sites early in the breeding season during the first few weeks linked to RDS; three were dead at the nest in the first 3 days, one died 24 hours after uplift to hospital, and one died at the nest 48 hours post release from hospital. A chick from Long Point was euthanised later (12 January) after a chronic aspergillosis infection.

Unfortunately, chicks in **Rakiura** also exhibited signs of DS. Disease is suspected to be the reason for poor chick survival in Rakiura during the first couple of weeks of life. This year at the sites that are monitored annually **77% of hatched chicks died** within two or three weeks of hatch. This is a priority for management in future seasons.

There were seven cases of **Metabolic Bone Disease (MDB)** for the first time this season. Chicks were 2-3 weeks old when they exhibited increased respiratory effort with square-shaped rib cages (rather than normal rounded rib cages in healthy chicks). MDB is typically due to nutritional deficiencies (specifically low levels of calcium, phosphorus or vitamin D), and it is suspected to be linked to RDS.

Fostering was again used as a successful chick management tool this season. Three chicks were fostered to Trust sites from other locations (Papanui, Green Island, Boulder Beach). Another six chicks were fostered within Trust sites and one chick was fostered to a nest monitored by **Penguin Rescue**.

Early on several chicks needed fish bones removing from their throats. Research few years ago showed that parents were attempting to feed fish that is too big for small chicks to swallow. Chicks needed oral swabs with chlorhexidine for a week afterwards to keep bacteria from invading the resulting abrasions.

The health and weight of chicks was monitored at least weekly through to fledge. Chick weights tracked well on Otago Peninsula and in North Otago (typically more than 100% of their estimated weight for age). Chicks in the Catlins did not do so well, tracking below their estimated weight for age, and required significant supplementary, with most of the chicks receiving several feeds each week. Birds were fed

whole fish (anchovies, salmon, sardines) and we are very grateful to **Sanfords (Kaitangata), Solander Gourmet Seafoods** and **Seafood Bazaar** for donating much of the fish.

A few chicks from the Catlins were uplifted very early for rehabilitation at the **Otago Peninsula Eco Restoration Alliance (The OPERA)**. Two chicks were only 15 days old and another eight were uplifted once they reached 30 days old. Unfortunately, almost all chicks from the Catlins were uplifted by the end of the season (18 underweight, 1 had an injured parent).

Chicks at YEPT sites were transpondered on 24 January in Otago and 1 February in the Catlins. Ben and Trudi also helped Cheryl Pullar (DOC) to microchip chicks at DOC Murihiku sites (31 January and 2 February). Sandy King transpondered chicks in Rakiura with assistance from Sara Larcombe (DOC).

Thirty-four chicks at the OPERA required soft releasing in the Catlins. Chicks were temporarily contained in an enclosure at the release site to gradually adjust to their new surroundings prior to release, which then improves release success. The first group of eight were released into pens on 26 February, the second group of 12 on 4 March, and the final group of 14 on 11 March. All but two of the chicks headed straight out to sea within an hour of the enclosures being opened. Hopefully fledgling survival is good this year!

By mid-February only three chicks remained at annually searched sites on Rakiura (last season 13 chicks fledged from these sites). Five fledglings were found on Whenua Hou, although one chick was later found dead during moult (3 chicks fledged last year). Unfortunately, two underweight chicks were uplifted from Whenua Hou (8 February) with approval and support from **Tāne Davis** and the **Whenua Hou Committee** and **DOC**. One chick weighed only 2.95kg! Both birds were successfully released in the Catlins, as there is no option for soft release on Whenua Hou.

Very few juveniles have been seen across the Northern population range this season which means that marine resources were insufficient to sustain last season's chicks.

Twenty-two adults were uplifted during the start of moult for supplementary feeding to ensure that they survive (6 Catlins, 3 coastal Otago, 13 Rakiura). Birds on the mainland were taken to **the OPERA** and to **Mamaku Point rehabilitation facility** from Rakiura. Several birds in Rakiura were exceptionally underweight and needed fluid support. **Emma Simpson-Boyce** has successfully released a pair of hoiho so far. We greatly appreciate the hard mahi of YEPT rangers, the OPERA, Penguin Rescue and Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony to ensure that hungry hoiho are well fed and survive.

Ten injured hoiho were uplifted to WHD from YEPT sites; four of these had foot / leg injuries (typically lacerations), one had an eye injury, two had injured flippers and three with wounds on their backs. Four adults were from coastal Otago and six from the Catlins.

Two breeding females died at YEPT sites which will likely lead to reduced nest numbers again next year. A female from Long Point was euthanised on 22 December 2023, three days after uplift with irreparable nerve and tendon damage to her legs. A breeding female from Helena Falls was found freshly dead near her access track on 28 February, cause of death was determined as Pasteurellosis.

Across the mainland, there have been six hoiho deaths this season from a bacterial infection (*Pasteurella* spp); five in North Otago and one in the Catlins. Harry Taylor (DOC/MPI) is carrying out further testing to work out which species of *Pasteurella* bacteria we are dealing with. Hopefully then we may be able to investigate potential sources of infection and/or management actions. There have been two deaths so far across the mainland from avian malaria.

The Trust continue to invest significant effort into urgently needed management to improved outcomes for hoiho on Rakiura and Whenua Hou. Extensive planning took place with DOC to organise logistics, plan for potential issues and share resources. **Richard Seed** has supported this in his role as Senior Ranger (DOC), the aim of which is to ensure consistency of hoiho work between DOC operations teams.

The Trust have a good relationship with **Rachel and Roy Thompson** at **Mamaku Point Conservation Trust** and are keen to continue development of the rehab facility to support hoiho from Rakiura. The rehab set up is excellent with a mosquito-proofed rehabilitation enclosure and a shed to support fish

preparation and storage, cleaning and housing of equipment, but needs additional capacity. We thank **Ant Simpson** and **Matt Hare** for their ongoing support. Thanks to a donation from **DOC** the Trust have been able to hire **Emma Simpson-Boyce** to run the rehabilitation facility this season. **WHD** have provided veterinary support and a Veterinary Operating Instruction to enable Trust staff to administer pain-relief medication. The **OPERA** have been supportive and provided some of the fish required, alongside **Solander Gourmet Seafoods** and **Seafood Bazaar**. **Carolyn Squires** at **Southern Seafoods** provided additional fish storage. Last year 24 hoiho were successfully rehabilitated at the facility and released back to their respective colonies. This year we have already uplifted 13 so far, and will continue to search habitat for failed breeders that have been missed, and successful breeders yet to moult. We hope that this facility will help improve survival and the fate for adult hoiho on Rakiura.

Summary of hoiho breeding

Kātiki / North Otago

- Tavora: **2 nests** (1 in 2022/23), 4 eggs, 4 hatched, 4 fledged, **2.0 chicks per nest (cpn)**

Ōtākou / Otago Peninsula

- Okia: **2 nests** (1 in 2022/23), 4 eggs, 3 hatched, 1 fledged, **0.5 cpn**
- Otapahi: **2 nests** (6 in 2022/23), 4 eggs, 3 hatched, 2 fledged, **1.0 cpn**
- Fuchsia Gully / Dicks Bush: no search undertaken (2 nests at Fuchsia Gully in 2021/22)
- Otekiho, Allans Beach, Whareakeake, Kaikai, Omihi: **0 nests** (0 in 2022/23)
- Papanui (south): **0 nests** (0 in 2022/23) [9 nests entire Papanui, 12 in 2022/23]

Tokatā / Catlins

- Long Point: **8 nests** (10 in 2022/23), 16 eggs, 15 hatched, 12 fledged, **1.5 cpn**
- Helena Falls: **2 nests**¹ (3 in 2022/23), 4 eggs, 4 hatched, 3 fledged, **1.5 cpn**
- Harts Rock: **1 nest** (1 in 2022/23), 2 eggs, 1 hatched, 1 fledged, **1.0 cpn**
- Cosgrove Creek: **2 nests**¹ (5 in 2022/23), 4 eggs, 4 hatched, 4 fledged, **2.0 cpn**
- Purakaunui: **0 nests** (0 in 2022/23)

Rakiura / Stewart Island

- Anglem Coast: Rollers Beach: **2 nests** (2 in 2022/23), 4 eggs, 4 hatched, 1 fledged **0.5 cpn**
Golden Beach: **0 nests** (0 in 2022/23)
- Neck area: Oneki / The Neck: **0 nests** (0 in 2022/23)
Steep Head: **2 nests** (2 in 2022/23), 3 eggs, 2 hatched, 1 fledged, **0.5 cpn**
Glory Cove: **4 nests** (5 in 2022/23), 8 eggs, 8 hatched, 1 fledged, **0.13 cpn**
- Bravo Islands: **7 nests** (6 in 2022/23), 13 eggs, 10 hatched, 0 fledged, **0.0 cpn**
Tommy: 1 nest (1 in 2022/23), 1 egg, 0 hatched, 0 fledged, **0.0 cpn**
Groper: 3 nests (2 in 2022/23), 6 eggs, 5 hatched, 0 fledged, **0.0 cpn**
Goat: 3 nests (3 in 2022/23), 6 eggs, 5 hatched, 0 fledged, **0.0 cpn**
Crayfish: **0 nests** (0 in 2022/23)
Refuge: **0 nests** (0 in 2022/23)
- Whenua Hou: **6 nests** (7 in 2022/23), 12 eggs, 11 hatched², 4 fledged, **0.66 cpn**
Penguin Bay: **1 nest** (0 in 2022/23), 2 eggs, 2 hatched, 0 fledged, **0.0 cpn**
Sealers Bay: **3 nests** (3 in 2022/23), 6 eggs, 6 hatched, 3 fledged, **1.0 cpn**
Roderiques: **0 nests** (0 in 2022/23)
NW Bay: **1 nest** (2 in 2021/22), 2 eggs, 1 hatched, 0 fledged, **0.0 cpn**
Alphonse: **1 nest** (2 in 2021/22), 2 eggs, 2 hatched, 0 fledged, **0.0 cpn**

Please note: all chicks are represented in statistics for their natal sites, not foster sites. An additional three chicks were fostered from Papanui, Green Island and Boulder Beach (Highcliff) and resulted in three fledged chicks which are not represented in the numbers above.

¹ One nest was found later in the season

² There was no hatch check in Nov/Dec, so for nests where we have no data, all chicks were assumed to have hatched.

Science and Research

The Trust continues to provide scientific advice and support for hoiho conservation management, wider environmental issues and relevant research.

A significant review of the chick management plan was completed to support all hoiho operators (**DOC, Penguin Rescue, OPERA, WHD**) in the 2023/24 season, due to our constantly adapting approach to management. The updated version added information on hatch issues and relapse of DS, uplift of 3 day old chicks to minimise disease issues, egg development and decision rules for supplementary feeding.

The avian malaria action plan was revised following discussion with stakeholders and veterinarians (**Lisa Argilla** from **WHD**, **Kate McInnes** and **Harry Taylor** from **DOC**). The update highlighted vector control (e.g. mosquito proofing, non-pharmacological methods) and added data on malaria cases in 2022/23.

The Trust continues to work with the Disease Response team, and reviewed the Annual Hoiho disease report released by Harry Taylor summarising mortalities in 2022/23, various diseases (e.g. RDS, DS, avian malaria) and describing chick and egg intervention methods.

The Trust maintain a watching brief about Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) which has been circulating globally since Dec 2021. This season it spread into the subantarctic in October 2023 and subsequently the Antarctic Peninsula in February 2024. Biosecurity NZ are monitoring the situation closely and DOC released an advisory for all wildlife managers and bird banders in September 2023.

The team continue to monitor heatwave conditions through publicly available data at the Moana Project (<https://www.moanaproject.org/marine-heatwave-forecast>). Hoiho habitat was subject to almost continuous strong or severe marine heatwaves last season, but this year activity has been minimal.

Dr Janelle Wierenga (Massey University) continued her pathogen discovery postdoctoral research. The Trust continues to support and provide data and samples for her research which found a novel gyrovirus associated with RDS and a megrivirus linked to DS. The collaboration resulted in a co-authored paper in *Vet Micro*: Wierenga et al (2023) "Total infectome investigation of diphtheritic stomatitis in yellow-eyed penguins reveals a novel and abundant megrivirus" DOI: 10.1016/j.vetmic.2023.109895.

Pathogen discovery work is extended further as **Harry Taylor** started his PhD at **Massey University** on the epidemiology, pathogenesis and diagnostics of RDS and the associated gyrovirus.

The Trust also supported and collected samples for postdoctoral research investigating the links between hoiho diet, microbiome and susceptibility to disease by **Dr Eiren Sweetman (University of Otago)**.

Liaison continues with **Carissa Turner (Science Communication, University of Otago)** for her PhD on dogs and interactions with wildlife on our beaches, and the development of messaging for dog owners.

Aleria Jenson (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, USA) visited New Zealand at the start of the year to report on the hoiho recovery process, and review hoiho tourism. A report to the HTG included expectations for visitors, protecting the mana of the hoiho and consistency of messaging.

Maddie van der Plas (Wildlife Management, University of Otago) completed her research project in May, following an eight week placement with YEPT last summer. Trudi was host supervisor and her project examined outcomes for birds that had undergone treatment and or rehabilitation.

Dr Chris Niebuhr and **Simon Howard (Landcare Research)** continue to develop the "Mossie Model shiny app" which enables us to model avian malaria risk for the Otago Peninsula and Catlins.

Collaboration with **Dr Robert Poulin**, **Dr Steph Godfrey** and **Antoine Filion (Zoology, University of Otago)** resulted in co-authorship of a paper in *Austral Ecology*: Filion et al (2023) "Interannual patterns of avian diseases in wild NZ avifauna near conservation areas" DOI: 10.1111/aec.13400. Final revisions are being made to another paper on "New insights into avian malaria infections in NZ seabirds".

Dr Brian Walker (Fairfield University, USA) visited Dunedin for a couple of months as part of his Global Fulbright Scholar Award to quantify microplastic contamination in penguin scat, and establish a shared protocol to allow for further collaboration between researchers.

An interview was conducted as part of **Holly Bates Williams** research (Science Communication, **University of Otago**) to examine how human-wildlife interactions are presented on social media and how we can use media to elicit responsible wildlife behaviour.

Advice and assistance with sample collection was provided for **Katy Rossiter** (Botany, **University of Otago**) for her MSc on the uptake of seabird nutrients in native plants particularly at hoiho colonies.

We were invited to join a seabird research group “the Raft | Pūtere” established at the University of Otago to share information and ideas.

Strategy and Policy

Hoiho Governance Group (HGG) & Hoiho Technical Group (HTG)

Work continues in partnership with **Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, Department of Conservation | Te Papa Atawhai, and Fisheries NZ | Tini a Tangaroa** to progress hoiho recovery, and specifically to advance the actions in *Te Mahere Rima Tau* (5-year plan) which supports *Te Kaweka Takohaka mō te Hoiho* (strategy).

The **Hoiho Governance Group** have moved forward positively with partners as they begin the task of reviewing the strategy. There have been some changes to the HGG membership; **Jana Hayes** joined existing members **Ben Hodgson** and **Puawai Swindells-Wallace** from TRoNT, **Sue Murray** retired and **Eric Shelton** stepped down as chair of the Trust, and so **Gus Griffin** joined as the new YEPT chair and **Trudi** is temporarily filling the Trusts other position. **Aaron Fleming** and **Kris Ramm** continue to represent DOC and **Allen Frazer** represents Fisheries NZ.

There were also changes to the **Hoiho Technical Group** membership this year with **Rob Win** (FNZ) recently changing roles within MPI and leaving the group. Existing HTG members **Bruce McKinlay, Hendrik Schultz** and **Richard Seed** (DOC), **Trudi** (YEPT), **Ben Hodgson** and **Puawai Swindells-Wallace** (TRoNT) continue to meet monthly to drive the hoiho recovery programme.

The main role of the Hoiho Technical Group (HTG) is to progress the hoiho recovery programme through the actions in *Te Mahere*. A progress report for 2022/23 is available at www.doc.govt.nz/hoiho-recovery. Presentations at the Annual YEP symposium reported on progress and priorities for next season. One of the main focuses of HTG work this season has been drafting a shared advice briefing to HGG (ahead of a joint hui, date tbc) on the outcomes after five years of implementing *Te Kaweka* and *Te Mahere*. This includes an overview of the successes and failures of the process, priorities and actions that are out of our control, and what we need going forward to enable effective hoiho recovery. HTG also provided advice to Fisheries NZ on their Multi-threat Risk Assessment project, for a variety of operational issues (including transpondering, recreational planning, hoiho database, egg and chick management) and research proposals (e.g. blood sampling).

There is significant investment in representing the interests of hoiho at fisheries meetings including the **Aquatic Environment Working Group, Biodiversity Research (BRAG), Technical Working Group** and the **Conservation Services Programme**. Advice was provided for the hoiho multi-threat risk assessment project on population models, spatial mapping of threats, and the estimate of bycatch risk from fisheries. Fisheries NZ released their research priorities for 2024/25, which included an assessment of green LEDs for setnet mitigation, a comparison of methods to generate capture estimates and two projects on climate change). Feedback was given on four projects proposed for the **Conservation Services Programme** research for 2023/24; including hoiho diet, microbiome, and disease susceptibility; updating the population estimate for Campbell Island; describing habitat use and diet at a colony on Rakiura; and identifying camera-detected protected species captures.

Bycatch in setnets continues and there have been four hoiho bycaught off the Otago and Southland coasts since cameras were installed on fishing vessels in October 2023. Liaison continues with **Rob Win** and **John Richardson (Fisheries NZ)** and the **Graham Parker (Fisheries liaison officer)**, and the Trust hopes that mitigation measures can be put in place to address this ongoing impact.

A submission was completed to the **Ministry for the Environment** and DOC supporting the potential Biodiversity Credit System to enable investment in projects and activities that contribute meaningfully to protecting, restoring and enhancing our native biodiversity.

The Trust continues to collaborate with local authorities, including provide advice as a member of the **Otago Regional Council (ORC)** Regional Policy Statement (RPS) reference group for the coastal environment and on Significant Natural Areas. Information was provided for a regional threat assessment of birds carried out by ORC including hoiho population numbers, and various parameters and qualifiers. Ongoing discussion with **Sam Thomas** and **Scott Jarvie** (ORC) ensured that issues relating to hoiho are well informed. Engagement for a review of **Dunedin City Council's** Dog Control Policy and Bylaw occurred ahead of formal consultation next year.

The Trust also reviewed the **International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** Species Survival Commission Penguin Specialist Group Draft Strategic Plan, including strategic goals to foster collaborations, understand the status of all penguins, strengthen conservation planning and implementation, and facilitate dissemination of scientific information.

Habitats

Summary

Typically, the volume of work undertaken at the Trust's reserves and habitats is constrained by the hoiho season. Staff resource is focused on the ever-increasing demands of hoiho monitoring, but progress and improvements were made during the winter and spring. Highlights across the sites were:

- 2,670 trees and shrubs planted;
- 271 hectares treated under our weed control programme targeting boxthorn, broom, elder, gorse, mallow, pine, sycamore and lupin;
- 343 hectares trapped across a network of 415 traps to target mustelids, rats, cats and possums;
- 20,250 metres of tracks maintained (excluding hoiho access).

Sadly, large swells caused by storm events affected all sites from north to south this season, with Okia sustaining most damage. Swathes of dune were carved away creating steep bluffs and destroying established plants reminding us how climate change is having immediate consequences for our work.

Long Point

The fencing project to exclude stock and make way for native plantings was largely completed at the end of March 2022. Harakeke (flax) production continues at the Trust's Nursery to provide shelter and improve survival for the planned plantings of shrubs and trees.

Trust rangers planted 134 trees, shrubs and harakeke on 12 and 13 July at Manuka Beach below the carpark. On 18 August 462 native trees and shrubs were planted by **Fonterra** staff from Edendale and Stirling at dispersal gully close to the field base. **Brian & Jan O'Callaghan** donated an additional 200 native plants for Long Point, which were also planted in the dispersal gully area.

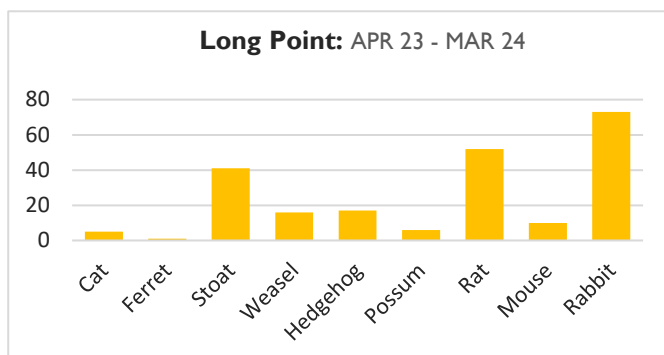
Weed control and maintenance of plants were undertaken on the reserve and around the field base, as well as regular maintenance of the walking track and carpark.

We are extremely grateful to **Roy Johnstone** and **Jim Young** from **Forest & Bird South Otago** Branch for continuing to monitor trap lines at Long Point. This year we installed a new buffer zone trap line, c.4km from the Long Point field base consisting of ten double-set DOC 200 traps along Long Point Rd. These traps were funded by the donation from Southern Insulation in 2022, and have been checked and rebaited by Trust staff.

The Trust continue to support **Forest & Bird (F&B)** with tītī monitoring on the Point, and 15 burrows in Area 3 had incubating adults this year. Following last year’s predation event (just as tītī chicks were preparing to fledge) trapping and baiting to target rats has been ramped up. **Blake Affleck** carried out some possum trapping around the property for F&B as a buffer around tītī nests.

Rabbits continue to be an issue at Long Point, with some damage to the new flax plantings on the eastern side of the peninsula and the habitat particularly in Area 3. High numbers of mustelids, particularly stoats, were noted over the summer and are likely in response to large rabbit numbers.

All of the Trust’s traps were cleaned, serviced and calibrated during the winter/spring. The recorded catch at Long Point (including Cosgrove, Helena Falls, and Long Point Road) was 221 pests.



By the numbers...

Plants planted:	596
Predator traps in operation:	189
Tracks maintained:	6,250m
Nest boxes for hoiho:	12

The Long Point field base has been used regularly through the year with 58 bed nights recorded for Trust staff undertaking hoiho work, particularly during nest searches, chick checks, soft release and moult when staff are working long hours. The base minimises driving and enables us to maximise ranger time and resources. The base is also essential for storing and preparing large quantities of fish to feed to hungry chicks, as well as for storing and cleaning field gear and habitat maintenance equipment.

New marker posts were added to improve visibility of the **Long Point Loop Walk** which was completed and opened in December 2022.

Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research and the **Department of Conservation**, continued their monitoring of the coastal turf plants at Long Point throughout the year.

Okia

There is significant erosion at the north end of Okia beach affecting both hoiho habitat and walking tracks. This has resulted in access issues for penguins and people, and safety concerns. YEPT worked with **Dunedin City Council** to make sure they were well aware of the situation. This resulted in the establishment of public signage warning of the dangers of the resulting steep cliffs, and the re-routing of the Okia walking track, including updating the walk guide.

Natural regeneration of native plants is evident across Okia Reserve which is very encouraging. Two planting days were held at Okia. Three hundred trees were planted on 28 July 2023 by **Otago Polytechnic** horticulture course students to extend last years’ plantings along the northern fire break. The horticulture students were again assessed by their tutor during the planting which counts towards their course accreditation. On 14 August another 250 trees were planted by staff from **Monarch Cruises** as part of their annual commitment to planting.

Existing newer plantings were spray released as part of our after-planting care program. Weeds are a never-ending task at this large 231hectare reserve and our weed control program continued mostly outside of hoiho season. Gorse, broom, elder and blackberry were the typical targeted weed species.

The 4WD track received focussed attention, and along the whole track the relentless lupin and muehlenbeckia was cut back to enable improved vehicle access around the Reserve. The firebreaks were also cut, as they are every other year, this time by **Neil Sheppard** one of the local farmers.

Other regular tasks carried out around the reserve include fence maintenance, maintaining nest access and cutting back muehlenbeckia near nest sites, maintaining visitor tracks, stiles and signage, removing graffiti and advocacy and compliance work as required. Four sea lion pups were born in the Okia pines areas this season.

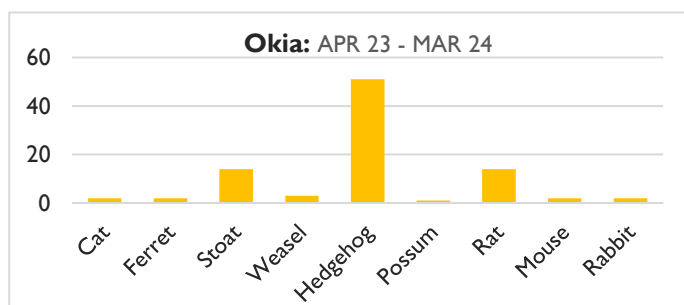
Dunedin City Council (DCC) staff **Lucy Summers**, **Hagino Baker** and **Stephen Hogg** were given a tour of Okia on 27 April to acquaint them with the reserve, and show them current issues (e.g. compliance, signage, coastal erosion) and well as focus areas for habitat work.

DCC's Task Force Green members continue their long association with the Trust running trap lines from December to June each season at Okia, Otekiho and Papanui and Hoopers Inlets. Trust rangers operate lines between July and November when hoiho monitoring does not take priority.

As part of the wider possum eradication programme, the **Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group** continued to undertake work in and around Okia. The Trust continue to liaise with OPBG as they increased their possum control efforts over the winter. OPBG staff and contractors targeted specific areas of possum habitat with variety of traps (live cage, automated AT220s, leg holds on ramps), and monitored for any possum sign using thermal scopes and a scat detection dog.

Work is ongoing alongside DCC, ORC and neighbouring landowners to eliminate rabbits from the Okia Reserve. A draft management plan for rabbit control is currently being prepared by the DCC. The Lead Ranger carried out rabbit-shooting sessions when workload allowed, focusing specifically on the Hazel Slope at the north end which is a hotspot for rabbits.

Traps were fully cleaned and serviced over the winter. There are now 113 traps in operation at Okia and the recorded catch was 91 pests.



By the numbers...

Plants planted:	550
Predator traps in operation:	113
Tracks maintained:	11,500m
Nest boxes for hoiho:	8

Otapahi

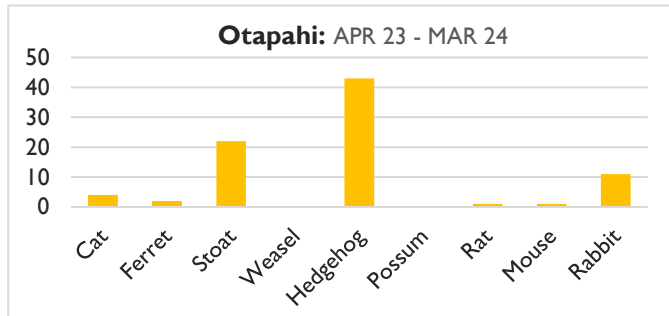
On 15 February, 700 pingao plants were planted by rangers behind the dunes and on Wharekakahu headland. Weed control across the Reserve this year focused on broom in Cicily basin and mallow at Wharekakahu, as well as weeds along the trap line.

We continued with work to open up the habitat to improve access for hoiho at Alfred beach, behind the dunes at Cicily beach, and on the headland between the two beaches. In particular the team targeted well-established lupin throughout the dunes, opening up the access to native vegetation further in. Access tracks and steps down to Cicily beach were also cut by rangers.

Rabbit control was undertaken by the Trust this season as work priorities allowed, with a major focus on the hide area at Alfred beach.

The Trust continue to liaise with the **Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group** who ramped up possum control over winter. Philproof bait stations were used for possums around the perimeter of the reserve alongside additional monitoring with baited chew cards and cameras, and live capture traps.

Roy Swailes and the **NZ Deerstalkers Association** and **Fisher & Paykel** volunteers do a fantastic job carrying out the trapping every two weeks at Otapahi (apart from when access is limited during lambing). Traps were cleaned and serviced by Trust rangers during the autumn and winter, and the 45 traps in operation caught 84 pests (excluding OPBG possum control).



By the numbers...

Plants planted:	700
Predator traps in operation:	45
Nest boxes for hoiho:	12

Tavora

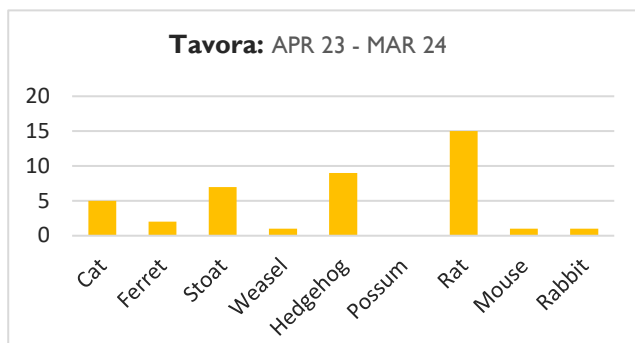
A memorial seat and plaque overlooking Tavora and out to the beach was installed this year for **Patricia Lady Mark QSO** funded by the Intergenerational Climate Ambassadors. Pat was a longstanding YEPT Trustee, chair of the Tavora Reserve Management Committee and spent many happy hours at Tavora and other reserves, planting, weeding and enjoying the habitats. In recognition of Pat’s dedication and passion for conservation and hoiho, the Trust and Pat’s family undertook a memorial planting of 12 native plants near “Pat’s seat” on 29 April 2023. Trust rangers and volunteers planted an additional 100 trees for Pat’s Intergenerational Climate Ambassadors planting above the “slip site” on 24 July 2023.

The slip site planting was then extended below the macrocarpas by **University of Otago** Management students who planted 550 trees on 15 September 2023. Planting success rates are high at Tavora as the soil is rich and well-draining and the micro-climate is favourable.

Existing plantings were spray-released in autumn and our weed control program on rest of the Reserve continued including control of blackberry, banana passionfruit and climbing nightshade.

Other general tasks around Tavora included maintenance of the walking tracks and carpark, removal of graffiti, and provision of information for visitors.

Checking the trap lines, consisting of 21 operational traps, was undertaken by Trust staff this year and we recorded catches of 41 pests.



By the numbers...

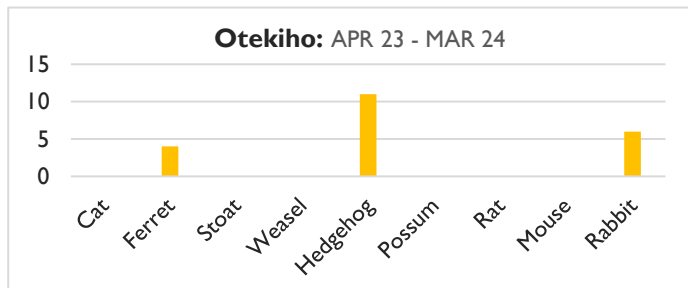
Plants planted:	650
Predator traps in operation:	21
Tracks maintained:	2,500m
Nest boxes for hoiho:	6

Tavora Reserve was closed from 1 November 2023 to 29 February 2024 in order to protect the hoiho during the sensitive breeding season. Unfortunately, a few individuals breached this notice.

Otekiho

There is currently no hoiho activity at Otekiho, however it is nesting habitat for kororā (little penguin). This season Trust rangers carried out gorse and banana passionfruit control and fencing checks as part of our work programme. The **Dunedin City Council** employed DM Holdings to undertake rabbit control (Pindone baited carrots) on the reserve.

Dunedin City Council's Task Force Green continue to assist with predator trapping at this site for six months of the year. There are 24 traps in operation which were cleared of weeds this season, and the recorded catch was 21 pests.

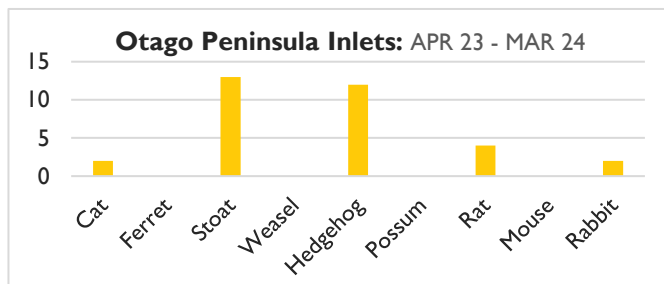


Omihi

Hoiho are occasionally found at Omihi, although no birds have bred here since 2017. At Omihi we work collaboratively with staff from **the Otago Peninsula Eco Restoration Alliance**. This season we carried out weed control (mainly gorse), carried out fence checks and scrub barred around the plantings.

Other habitats

We continue to maintain trap lines around Papanui and Hoopers Inlets, which **DCCs Task Force Green** carry out for six months of the year. There are 23 traps in operation and the recorded catch was 33 pests.



Nursery

Fulfilling the Long Point planting plan in the coming few years has meant the Nursery exceeded its annual production cap of c.5,000 plants during the year. The flax are all pricked out and growing in root trainers at the Nursery the majority of which are ready for planting at Long Point as soon as the grazing lease ends in 2024/2025. Trees and shrubs have been produced to continue our planting restoration at multiple sites from North Otago to the Catlins. Almost 20,000 plants are now waiting to be planted out at reserves including: 15,000 flax, 440 pingao, and 3,960 trees and shrubs.

The native trees planted were seed-sourced from site and include: tōtara, kōwhai, mānuka, ngaio, kānuka, lemonwood, cabbage tree, black māpou and broadleaf. Trees are raised for 2-3 years in the Nursery by which time several hours of staff and volunteer time have gone into growing each tree.

The number of plants from the Trust nursery planted this year was:

Apr 23-Mar 24	TAVORA	OTAPAHI	OKIA	LONG POINT	PRIVATE SALES	TOTAL
Trees & shrubs:	650	0	550	770	930	2,900
Flax & pingao:	0	700	0	0	200	900
TOTAL:	650	700	550	770	1,130	3,800

At the Nursery we built upon the improvements last year by cutting back the front hedge and overhanging trees in order slow down encroachment into the fence, planting areas and the power lines.

A huge thank you to **Greg Inch** and **Joe Thomas** who managed to fix the hardworking Grillo, which is a necessary tool for our habitat work and mowing. The Grillo had been suffering breakdown after breakdown, and now is restored to its former glory and purring like a baby!

Louise has been assisted by the rangers as seed collection continued across all of the sites from north to south; subsequently the seed has been either sown or stored.

Visitors to the nursery included Dunedin Community Care Trust students and carers in May.

The creek was checked and vegetation cleared regularly, and monitored during periods of heavy rainfall. Maintenance of the glasshouse and other support buildings at the nursery has occurred as needed.

Conferences / Symposia

The **Yellow-eyed Penguin Annual Symposium** was jointly organized by the Trust and DOC on 5 August 2023 at the University of Otago. Presentations were contributed to and delivered by YEPT staff on a variety of subjects including population numbers, disease, the hoiho strategy and action plan, and the hoiho monitoring and rehabilitation programme on Rakiura.

The majority of the Trust's Operations team attended the biennial **Oamaru Penguin Symposium** on 3 May organised by Philippa Agnew. The Trust provided contributions to several of the presentations.

The 11th **International Penguin Conference** was in Viña del Mar, Chile this year from 4 – 8 September 2023. Unfortunately our Science Advisor could not physically make it to the conference, but attended a workshop on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza online and presented a poster on behalf of the HTG on "*Developments in the management of hoiho in a changing and unpredictable environment*".

Trust staff attended several seminars at the **University of Otago** (e.g. Dr Brian Walker: Microplastics, and Penguins and People in Patagonia, and also **DOC** (e.g. Dr Jerusha Bennett: Emerging Diseases of NZ Seabirds, and parasites of NZ sea birds).

A presentation was given to the **Southland Conservation Board** on 22 June 2023 focusing on the plight of hoiho, particularly in Southland and the work programme that is necessary to ensure hoiho survival and is being developed on Rakiura and is planned for Whenua Hou.

Advocacy and Outreach

Iwi consultation

The Trust continues to build meaningful relationships with iwi. During the year advice and guidance was sought from **Tāne Davis** and the **Whenua Hou Committee**, in particular for uplift of birds on Whenua Hou and disease research work. Trudi continued to liaise with **Ben Hodgson** and **Puawai Swindells-Wallace** through the Hoiho Technical Group. Trudi also continues to build a solid relationship with **Jill Skerrett** and **Rakiura Māori Lands Trust**, regarding hoiho monitoring and

rehabilitation mahi in Rakiura. Trudi met with kaumatua **Philip Smith** on Rakiura after muttonbirding season. Philip has an amazing depth and breadth of knowledge on hoiho, the islands surrounding Rakiura and of the human history of the region.

Community

The Trust regularly presents to social service organisations, educational institutes and others.

As part of **Wild Dunedin** Louise and Caitlin ran two very successful workshops on native plant propagation at Coronation Hall in Portobello on 18 April 2023. Caitlin also represented the Trust at the “My World of Penguins” event at Otago Museum (17 April) in collaboration with the **Wildlife Hospital Dunedin** and **DOC**.

Max enjoyed visiting students at **Māori Hill School** on 22 June to talk about hoiho and life as a ranger.

YEPT continues to build a relationship with **Halfmoon Bay School** and **Rakiura Rugrats** (pre-school) and the students have undertaken various environmental advocacy projects related to hoiho, as well as accompanying staff to release hoiho back into the wild (post-rehab) and visit the rehabilitation facilities.

The Trust remains a member of **Predator Free Dunedin** and are always delighted to see the progress with predator control to ultimately protect our native biodiversity. Ben attended the ORC pest hui at **Ōtākou Marae** with other community groups. The Trust enjoyed a visit to Penguin Place, prior to its rebranding to the **Otago Peninsula Eco Restoration Alliance** (the OPERA), and the teams enjoyed a shared morning tea and tour.

World Ranger Day (31 July 2023) was celebrated with a shared morning tea with DOC Rangers.

Events

A **fundraising quiz** took place on 22 June 2023, at CBK in the Octagon and raised \$8812 for hoiho. The venue was provided free of charge and the sound system was donated by Strawberry Sound. The event featured 33 teams (190 participants). Raffle prizes generously donated by various businesses, valued at over \$7000, were drawn during the event. An auction featured items like a framed Dick Frizzell print and tours of Emerson’s Brewery and Dunedin Airport. Cash donations were received from Gallaway Cook Allan (\$500) and Southern Hoiho Basketball (\$250) to support fundraising efforts.

The Trust organised a **community relay** at the Caledonian Grounds on 11 November 2023 to raise awareness about the declining number of hoiho nests on mainland Aotearoa. Participants completed 130 laps, representing 130 nests, covering a total of 52 km. The event coincided with the conclusion of Forest and Bird’s “*Bird of the Century*” competition. People of all ages and fitness levels came together to support the cause with 36 participants running, walking, and waddling with a plush hoiho baton for almost 5 hours. Special thanks to Hill City Athletics Club, Southern Hoiho Basketball, and Lala Frazer for their contributions and support, including raising over \$1,000 for hoiho conservation.

Media

Several joint media statements were released with **DOC** and **Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu** during the hoiho season. In addition an interview was conducted for the **Otago Daily Times** on moult.

Newsletters

The Trust’s main newsletter **Hoiho** was produced in May this year. The Autumn and Spring **Nursery Newsletters** were produced for the regular donors and supporters of the Nursery. We have continued to contribute regularly to the **Stewart Island News** and the **Catlins Coast Newsletters** about our hoiho operations work in those specific areas.

Social media

Caitlin Bowie, our administrator continues to manage the Trust’s social media accounts, posting regularly on Facebook and Instagram. Our accounts now have 6,500 and 2,000 followers respectively.

Each month, Caitlin manages an Instagram takeover for US-based Sand Cloud, who give back 10% of their profit toward marine conservation.

Other advocacy work

In April, Trudi hosted **Xavier Maire** and **Marion Vegas** who were filming for a documentary “Birds of Aotearoa”. This included filming hoiho rehab work, Mamaku Point Reserve and an interview about Hoiho and wider conservation issues.

Craig McKenzie accompanied Ben and Trudi to Otapahi on 5 November to take photographs for a story in NZ Geographic focusing on treatment of hoiho chicks at WHD.

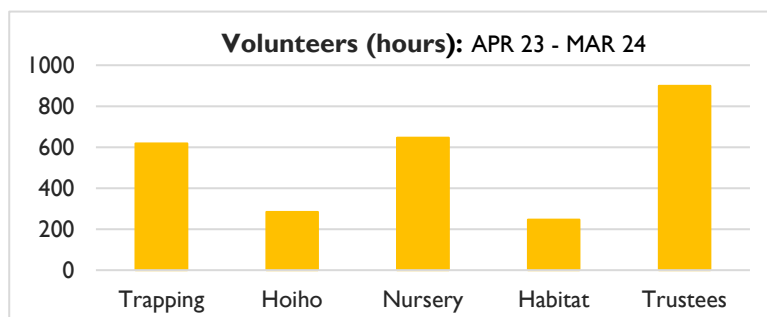
During the year, the Trust again worked with the **Southern Hoiho** women’s basketball team, who play in the Tauihi Basketball Aotearoa League. YEPT staff and volunteers attended local games, and the team supported the Trust at our Bird of the Century event.

Volunteers

Volunteers provide essential assistance to the Trust and carry out a significant amount of work which we could not do by ourselves. We are extremely grateful for each and every contribution, no matter how big or small. Once again, this year, volunteers have assisted us in the many areas of our work, including: governance, planting, nursery, predator trapping, and hoiho monitoring.

Trust staff enjoyed the annual morning tea and cake (lots of cake!) with the **Task Force Green** volunteers on 26 June. On 11 December we held our annual ‘thank-you’ BBQ for all volunteers at the Trust’s Nursery. This year we celebrated the tremendous efforts of **Stew Henry** who has now been monitoring trap lines for the Trust with Task Force Green for the last 20 years! What an amazing effort!

The total volunteer effort for April 2023-March 2024 was 2696 hours (1,756 hours 2022-2023):



We are ever grateful to the Nursery volunteers for their ongoing work growing thousands of plants (especially flaxes this season!) which are planted at reserves across the mainland. Without the hardworking volunteers, the Nursery output would be much reduced. On Wednesday mornings the Nursery is filled with willing workers swapping stories and sharing baked goods and a pot of tea or two.

Work Placements

An **Otago Polytechnic** horticulture student undertook a work placement at the Trust’s Nursery for six days between 8 and 19 May 2023.

The Trust enjoyed hosting James Roberts from the **Blake Ambassador programme** in March 2024. James ably assisted the Trust team with moult searches, as well as working with DOC in both Dunedin and the Catlins, and was a great representative for the program.

Funding

Founding Sponsor

The Trust has continued to be supported by the Mainland Brand (natural cheese & butter) owned by **Fonterra Brands NZ Ltd**, and has a sponsorship contract with them until August 2025. This unique sponsorship began in 1989 and continues to strengthen. In September 2023 we were delighted to host Kate Hughes (Fonterra Brands Group Marketing Manager-Cheese & Spreads) and look forward to continuing to grow this partnership in the future.

Grants

Name	Grant received	Purpose
Department of Conservation:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs For Nature/Mahi mō te Taiao (2021 - 2023) 	\$11,500 final instalment*	Operational work funding staff (3.0 FTE).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOC Operations 	\$807.59	Gas costs for chick transport on DOCs behalf
	\$18,342	Rakiura hoiho rehabilitation in 2022/23
	\$22,425	Rakiura hoiho rehabilitation in 2023/24
	\$575	Contribution to helicopter costs
Dunedin City Council	\$15,000	Contribution to annual costs of Okia Reserve
Grummit Sisters Charitable Trust	\$10,000	In support of the Ranger position
New Zealand Lotteries Heritage and Environment Fund	\$167,061	Operational work funding staff
Pacific Development and Conservation Trust	\$10,000	Supporting the Operations Manager position
WWF Community Fund	\$15,000	Supporting the Operations Manager position

* The final report for the **DOC** Mahi mō te Taiao grant was completed in June 2023. This grant enabled the Trust to employ 3.0 FTE operations staff for three years. YEPT is indebted to DOC for this support.

Donations

Name	Donation received	Purpose
AL Rogers	\$500 member donation	General purposes
AR Noordhof	\$1,000 member donation	General purposes
City Forests	\$10,000 annual donation	Science Advice
Dunedin Airport	\$543 from donation box	General purposes
Eleanor Hazel Carr	\$5,000 bequest	General purposes
Gallaway Cook Allan	\$500 quiz donation	General purposes
Hoiho relay (Lala's Limping Lap)	\$1,085	General purposes

Intergenerational Climate Ambassadors	\$650 Lady Pat memorial donation	General purposes
Jeanette Small	\$1,000 member donation	General purposes
Kay Robertson	\$1000 member donation	General purposes
Kokonga Ltd	\$500	General purposes
Little Yellow Bird	\$950 tshirt sales	General purposes
Mamaku Point Charitable Trust	Donated time and accommodation for staff	In support of the Trust's operations at the hoiho rehabilitation facility
Māori Hill School	\$424 from dress up day	General purposes
Maud Ingham	\$1000	General purposes
NZ Federation of Graduate Women	\$2,500 Lady Pat memorial donation	General purposes
The OPERA (Otago Peninsula Eco Restoration Alliance)	Fish (silverside)	Rehabilitation on Rakiura
Parnell Conference Centre	\$5000	General purposes
Paul Simmons	\$1,000 member donation	General purposes
Penguin Fund of Japan-Kaoru Shiga	\$720 annual donation	General purposes
Sand Cloud (USA)	\$15,268 Instagram takeovers & Giving Tuesday	General purposes
Sanford Limited (Kaitangata)	Salmon smolt	Fish for chicks and rehabilitation on Rakiura.
Scenic Hotel Dunedin City	\$538.80	General purposes
Seafood Bazaar	Sardines	Fish for chicks and rehabilitation on Rakiura.
Solander Gourmet Seafoods	Anchovies, scad and sardines	Fish for chicks and rehabilitation on Rakiura.
Southern Institute of Technology	\$2,000	Student placement on Rakiura & Whenua Hou 2022/2023
Southern Insulation (Ian & Denille Hamilton)	\$2000	Traps for Long Point
Stella Cullington	\$500 member donation	General purposes
T Milliken	\$500 member donation	General purposes
Top 10 Holiday Park	\$5,940 from fundraisers and donation boxes	General purposes
University of Otago (Yolanda van Heezik)	Loan of 12 trail cameras	For monitoring hoiho.
Yoshi Nakatsukasa	\$505.56 member donation	General purposes

To our **regular supporters**, and those of the **Coffee Club** and **Donate-a-Tree** schemes, our sincere thanks. Your regular donations are really appreciated.

Several members have generously gifted large donations to the Trust during the year, and we are extremely grateful for your support of our work.

Personnel

Staff

Sue Murray, General Manager (1.0FTE) retired in September 2023

Tabi Kime, General Manager (1.0FTE) 4 September 2023 – 5 March 2024

Trudi Webster, Science Advisor (1.0FTE)

Amanda Salt, Operations Manager (1.0FTE) extended leave June 2023 – June 2024

Ben Goldsworthy, Lead Ranger (1.0FTE) last day 23 February 2024

Caitlin Bowie, Administrator (0.7FTE)

Louise Ashton, Nursery Supervisor (0.5FTE)

Max Harvey, Ranger-Technical (1.0FTE) last day 5 September 2023

Cat Lea, Ranger-Hoiho (1.0FTE)

McKenzie Inch, Ranger (1.0FTE) started 2 October 2023

Euan Whitton, Ranger (1.0FTE) last day 30 June 2023

Emma Simpson-Boyce (Rakiura rehabilitation coordinator) started 27 November 2023

Sandy King, Rakiura (Contractor)

At the end of September 2023, the Trust farewelled **Sue Murray** who retired after 24 years working at the Trust. Sue held several roles over the years, including Administration Officer, taking over the General Manager position in 2008. Sue's ability to forge meaningful connections with stakeholders and supporters elevated the Trust's profile and secured vital resources for our cause. She has helped countless Trustees and staff navigate the complexities of governance and operations over the years. We acknowledge the profound impact of her quarter-century legacy.

Ben Goldsworthy started with the Trust in April 2017 and has been a hardworking asset to the team with an immense knowledge of both habitat and hoiho work. Ben acted as Operations Manager for six months this season, and resigned in February 2023 to pursue a mechanics course at Otago Polytechnic.

Euan Whitton worked as a hoiho ranger, first for DOC and then for a year at the Trust, before applying his hoiho knowledge and skills to rehabilitation and monitoring work for our good friends at the OPERA.

Max Harvey left the Trust in September 2023 after two seasons as a technical ranger supporting the science and hoiho work. He is currently in the Galapagos working on Darwin's finches.

Tabi Kime came to the Trust in September 2023 from DOC where she worked as a Biodiversity Planner. Tabi made the difficult decision to resign her position in March 2024 to pursue other opportunities. We are thankful to Tabi for her work and time with us.

McKenzie Inch joined the team from Riding for the Disabled and has proved to be a very capable ranger and excellent team member and has picked up the necessary skills very quickly.

Emma Simpson-Boyce joined the team at the end of November as our rehabilitation coordinator. Emma is a trained vet nurse and has previous hoiho handling experience so is well suited for this role.

Staff Training

Staff members have continued to update the necessary certification for their respective roles, or undertaken new training (e.g. First Aid refreshers, predator trapping). Cat and McKenzie undertook transponder insertion training at the OPERA rehab with DOC on 9 February.

Our rehabilitation coordinator travelled to the mainland for a week of training at the end of November at the **Wildlife Hospital Dunedin**, where she helped the team treat small sick chicks, and for a week in January to assist with supplementary feeding of hoiho at the **OPERA**. We really appreciated the collaboration with these two organisations and the time and effort put into helping train staff.

Health and Safety

Although the Trust's health and safety plans are updated as soon as an issue is identified, our annual review of the whole suite of plans took place in August 2023. A weekly health and safety system is in place where the whole team discusses upcoming issues, hazards or things of note in the week ahead.

Hazard identification and on-the-day briefings are undertaken for most of the Trust's day to day operations. Specific health and safety plans are issued for bigger events.

This year we are pleased to report only minor H&S incidents (e.g. a rolled ankle, burst tyre fortunately with no consequences).

New personal protective equipment was purchased for staff and spray gear updated. Contact details for personal locator beacons were changed.

Compliance

The Trust continues to regularly review the Policy and Procedure Manual, and this year added a new policy about firearms. The Legislative Compliance Policy and Register were again checked.

Non-compliance by members of the public at Reserves continues to be an issue. We continue to work with District Councils and DOC in dealing with the very few members of the public who choose not to comply with conditions for protecting wildlife at our reserves.

Trustees

In December Eric took a step back from the Trust Chair Role. Eric joined the Trust Board back in 2003 and was Chair for a decade from 2014 to 2024. We are ever grateful to Eric for his leadership during a significant decade for penguin conservation and look forward to his continued support as a trustee.

Peter Simkins is retiring from the board after 29 years dedicated to the Trust. Peter joined the Trust Board in 1995 and was Trust Chair in the early 2010s. Peter fondly remembers an enjoyable evening talking rugby and penguins with Trust Patron Anton Oliver. He will also forever hold onto a trip to Mason Bay in which he was lucky enough to see a kiwi (Sue Murray still holds this against him as she was not quite as lucky). Peter also had a significant role in the purchase of Long Point Reserve.

During the year we farewelled trustees Abby Clarke, Helen Dent and Olaf Nilsen. Abby Clarke joined as an emerging leader trustee in 2020 before becoming a full trustee in 2021. Abby has taken on a new adventure in Northland. We wish her all the best.

Helen Dent became a trustee in 2018 and was well organised and a great strategic thinker from a business background. She was passionate about tourism and conservation existing in harmony. Helen also ran a small vineyard in the Waitaki Valley and donated profits from wine sales to support hoiho conservation.

Well connected Bluff fisher, Olaf Nilsen joined the board in 2018. He had a passion for conservation having been involved in the reintroduction of saddleback and snipe to the Tītī Islands. In 2019 Olaf was given special recognition at the Seabird Smart Awards for helping to spearhead a voluntary four nautical mile ban on set netting around Whenua Hou to reduce the risk to hoiho.

Gus Griffin has recently taken over the role of Trust Board Chair from Eric Shelton. Gus is a resource management lawyer and joined the Trust Board as emerging leader trustee in 2022 before becoming a full trustee in 2023.

We were lucky enough to bring Eiren Sweetman and Dan Whitburn into the fold in 2023. Eiren is a molecular biologist and conservation scientist. You may have seen reference to Eiren's work in the science and research section. Emerging leader trustee Dan is currently employed as Kaiwhakamarama for Te Hou Ora Whānau Services and also works at Ngāi Tahu Māori Law Centre. Eiren and Dan have already had a significant positive impact in their short time with us.

The remainder of the Board members continue to provide effective governance. I thank my fellow trustees for their dedication: Lala Frazer, Euan Kennedy, Hoani Langsbury, Jenna Sinclair, Luke Gardener, Margaret Murrell, Murray Brass, Tim Mephram and Vicki Crosbie.

Bereavements

The Trust acknowledges the passing of associates through the year, a loss to the penguin and conservation community.

We acknowledge the passing of **Mike Hazel** long-time supporter of hoiho conservation and the Trust. Mike and his wife, Margaret were regular volunteers at the Nursery, and grew many of the plants that were planted initially at Okia. In recognition of Margaret and her volunteering we named the Margaret Hazel Slope at Okia.

In April 2023 there was a private family gathering to reveal a plaque and memorial seat for Pat Mark, and the planting of some native trees and shrubs on the headland at Tavora. This was followed by the official public celebration of her life hosted at the University of Otago.

Conclusion

During a period of change for the bird and for the Trust, our staff and volunteers have again risen to the challenge.

Although present hoiho numbers are bleak, the Trust will continue to adapt to the myriad of threats to this species. The constant evolution and development of how we work, based on good science and institutional knowledge will help to address these issues at their foundations. Every season our incredible team and their partners get better and better at managing these threats. We will continue to do everything within our power to turn the tide in this conservation fight.

In the meantime, we urge you to spread the message to your friends and families. Hoiho need your help.

Thank you to all our stakeholders for their continued support. We hope this Annual Report meets your expectations and we will continue to execute this vital work into 2025.

Ngā mihi nui

Gus Griffin
Chair