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CAWTHRON MARLBOROUGH ENVIRONMENT AWARDS

2019

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JUDGES' REPORT

COMMUNITY INNOVATION

KAIPUPU WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

INTERVIEWED

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DATE

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JUDGES

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INTRODUCTION

Kaipupu Point Mainland Island Society is responsible for the restoration and protection of Kaipupu Wildlife Sanctuary. It aims to: *"Enrich the community through the restoration and guardianship of Kaipupu Wildlife Sanctuary, where native flora and fauna thrive in a pest-free environment that can be appreciated by all."*

The sanctuary is one of more than 50 "mainland islands" across Aotearoa originally envisaged by Sir Paul Callaghan, and while the project won the Habitat Enhancement Category of these Awards in 2015, an important focus for the group now is to take a more proactive educational role.



Since 2005 an impressive number of people have worked to build the sanctuary with funding from donations, sponsorships, subscriptions and grants. There are approximately 100 volunteers on the database with about 30-40 getting out each week to check traps.

The challenge is to motivate more people to take action for the environment. Currently this is being achieved through a hands-on conservation education programme aiming to engage and inspire the whole community. A particular educational challenge is widening the group's reach to engage the wider community as well as national and international visitors. A variety of tools have been developed to achieve this including a bi-monthly newsletter, taking part in the Toyota Kiwi Guardians Programme, plant sales, and guided tours which teach visitors about native flora and fauna, as well as encouraging them to be involved.

The judges were impressed by:

- Kaipupu's ability to flourish thanks to the knowledge, skills and commitment of the volunteers who maintain tracks, guide visitors, manage traps and plant natives; and the paid, part-time staff
- There is significant technical innovation and use of recycled materials such as weta hotels and Onduline lizard houses that are transferrable to other conservation areas
- Collaborative approach is evident in work with:
 - Other groups dealing with issues such as wilding pines, wasps and Picton Dawn Chorus creating a halo round Kaipupu. Kaipupu is also working jointly with Picton Dawn Chorus to complete a lizard survey of Kaipupu Wildlife Sanctuary, Victoria Domain and the Wedge.
 - Engagement with central and local government to leverage scarce resources
 - Local sponsors
- Inter-generational learning commitment evident in programmes delivered into schools as well as welcoming schools, parents and children on site and the development of a wide range of integrated resources also available at their shop and open to visitors in Picton
- A robust, long-running programme that has kept performing despite the inevitable uncertainties around funding and policy settings due to:
 - Well-articulated vision and active strategic and operational planning building on previous achievements
 - Dedication to providing great casual as well as guided visitor experiences
 - A programme with breadth and depth on the ground and with the community
 - Passion, commitment, knowledge and skills of co-ordinators, the relationship with sponsors and their public acknowledgement of those sponsors
- Quality of the work undertaken and the ongoing maintenance
- The ability to mobilise such a large and committed volunteer network

GENERAL INFORMATION

Kaipupu Point is approximately 40 hectares of peninsula jointly owned by DOC and Port Marlborough between Shakespeare Bay and Picton Harbour. The land was originally a food collection site for Māori, and from 1900-1983 was used to graze livestock for the Picton Freezing Works. Before restoration, it was over-run with pests (possums, stoats, rats etc.) and the forest was degraded, resulting in little bird life.

In 2008, a predator-proof fence was built between the point and the mainland and by late 2012, most pests had been eradicated using an initial Brodifacoum drop followed by trapping. Now there is an efficient network of pest monitoring and trapping lines, whereby a variety of traps (including Goodnature self-setting traps) are checked weekly, averaging 200-250 volunteer hours per month.

To ensure predator-free status, trapping tunnels and camera traps are being used to gather data. Traps are evenly distributed around the peninsula and are much in evidence for visitors walking on the path. Rat numbers are down to about eight a week. They pose an ongoing problem as rats are good swimmers and Kaipupu is in easy reach. Possums are rare, with one or two caught a year.

In late 2017, a company was contracted to undertake weed control funded by the WWF Habitat Restoration Fund. This, combined with volunteers who worked to remove weeds and engage in intensive planting programmes, has contributed to significant forest restoration. The overall aim is to recreate the original forest. Schools are a focus for collecting seeds and running planting projects, such as Queen Charlotte College year 10 students who planted 150 trees.

In late 2018, Marlborough District Council (Council) funding was confirmed to bring back a contractor to continue the weed control programme.

For the public, a visit to Kaipupu Point usually starts with a short boat trip. The group works closely with commercial water taxis, such as Beachcomber who give a \$1 donation for each visitor. The group has a DOC concession to run tours and since seasonal demands were too much for volunteers, they now sub-licence to Cougar Lines and Eco Tours using guides that the Trust has trained.



A well-built pontoon made from donated materials and labour enables visitors to go ashore to a well signposted gathering area complete with tiles and mosaics of wildlife done by local schools using art as a means to learn about conservation. An established walking track around the peninsula allows visitors to see a diverse range of flora and fauna including boxes for little blue penguins, weta hotels and lizard houses.

The education programme operates from the moment people undertake the trip to Kaipupu with the overt aim to *“Engage and inspire the whole community (preschool to adult) through a hands-on conservation experience. It also aims to increase conservation knowledge within a framework of science and research, encourage a connection with nature and promote the application of ecological knowledge.”* By getting more people involved, they will learn how to help the conservation effort in their own backyards, such as planting trees or using traps.

Community engagement includes a programme of speakers to communicate conservation messages and to bring new people in, such as the Council’s Tui to Town project, Will Parsons’ wetlands restoration and Peter Gaze from Project Janszoon in the Abel Tasman. A release of kiwi and robins was undertaken in conjunction with Waikawa Marae, and regular plant sales also help raise community awareness.

Kaipupu Point activities consistently demonstrate a commitment to communicating the conservation message and learning about the environment. Some fantastic resources and information packs have been developed and are used on tours.

Kaipupu's educator is Andrew John, a former teacher, who visits schools with integrated programmes that fit in across the curriculum. Students don't just learn about weeds and their impact on the environment, they create posters, get out and remove weeds from school grounds and set up a display at Picton Library to inform parents and the community of native alternatives to weeds. In 2018, Andrew visited seven schools (kindergartens through to colleges) and more than 500 students with taxidermied animals, enabling them to see and touch stoats, rats, kereru or little blue penguin.

Another significant resource is "A Kids Guide to Kaipupu Wildlife Sanctuary and the Marlborough Sounds", developed by co-ordinator Rachel Russell to sit alongside the current school programme. Aimed at students from year 1 – 8, each child receives a copy of this book when they visit the Sanctuary. Filled with conservation themed activities related to the programme, it has extra activities that can be completed at school or at home as a way to share ideas and information.



In 2017, Kaipupu became part of the Toyota Kiwi Guardians programme (developed by DOC) and a Kiwi Guardians site, one of three in Marlborough. This is an activity programme where kids are encouraged to go on family adventures and take action in their own backyards. Children visit the Sanctuary with their adventure map that includes bird watching, the predator proof fence, sand stations and traps, and after finding the guardian post with the code word they are able to collect a medal for their efforts.

PROBLEMS AND HOW THEY HAVE BEEN TACKLED

Widening the reach: A particular educational challenge is widening the group's reach to engage the wider community as well as national and international visitors. The group has done much to achieve this. The bimonthly newsletter is an effective way of informing interested people, along with the Facebook page which appeals to a wide demographic. The newsletter is sent out to all members and supporters as well as being available on the website. There are also promotions in shops along with brochures and a short video in tourist spots.

Funding: As with many community organisations, the focus of the committee is to get funding for co-ordinators and other costs. Having these roles is vital for the success and cohesion of this work, particularly around co-ordinating volunteers and liaising with sponsors. The success of this project to date is indicative of the ability of the committee and co-ordinator to raise money through grant applications, fundraising and sponsorship. Kaipupu needs \$90,000 per year just for essentials. As a precaution, they need at least \$100,000.00 in the bank for contingencies such as storm damage as they can't get insurance.

Developing night tours: They would like to do night tours and star gazing but there are a lot of health and safety regulations to work through. Currently there are a variety of guided tours of the Sanctuary, in conjunction with water taxi companies and DOC. Dawn and twilight tours have also been offered. Night tours would provide more options for visitors.

SUMMARY

The work and achievements of the volunteers and co-ordinators of Kaipupu Wildlife Sanctuary since its inception is impressive. The visitor experience, starting with the boat trip, is fun and very informative. Volunteers are passionate and engaged and the education programme comprehensive and intergenerational, with a range of initiatives and strategies to raise people's awareness of the environment accompanied by practical things that people can do in their own lives, such as planting native plants in their gardens to help create a protective halo around Kaipupu.

Having paid co-ordinators has enabled the project to gain traction and make a real impact. The calibre of the volunteers and their ability to innovate has also contributed to the success of Kaipupu Wildlife Sanctuary.

SUGGESTIONS

- Iwi liaison is an area that needs more work and the committee are aware of this. Continue your efforts to get a Te Atiawa representative on the committee.
- Present the work undertaken to date to the Council's Environment Committee to raise awareness
- Discuss ongoing funding challenges with Council and explore what mechanisms may be available for further assistance
- Try to establish face-to-face contact with key funding agencies and arrange familiarisation visits for their staff