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## **JUDGES' REPORT**

### **COMMUNITY INNOVATION**

### **PICTON DAWN CHORUS**

<b>INTERVIEWED</b>	Pip Macfarlane and Jess Ferrentino
<b>DATE</b>	25 October 2022
<b>JUDGES</b>	Kay Saville-Smith, Kaja Jungersen

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Founded in 2015 by a group of committed residents, Picton Dawn Chorus (PDC) has proactively pursued its mission for “the community working together to restore our native birds by removing introduced predators”.

Over the past seven years it has increased community participation and education, created a halo of protection around Kaipupu Sanctuary, and increased birdlife around Picton and the gateway to the Sounds.

PDC now works closely with Envirohub and Kaipupu Sanctuary. They share premises, resources and support each other. Collaboration and sharing across organisational boundaries without losing their separate identities has meant better use of people and resources, and minimised duplication by providing better community services and leveraging with sponsors.



The judges were impressed by the constant innovation in how they do their work and engage volunteers.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Since winning the Landscape and Habitat Enhancement Award in 2019 and receiving Ministry for the Environment Jobs for Nature funding, the organisation has grown both in staffing (now eight paid staff) and operationally. This has enabled them to undertake a range of integrated activities to achieve their strategic goal of:

*“Providing a halo around Kaipupu Sanctuary, protecting and restoring native birdlife and protecting the natural heritage for our children and future generations.”*

PDC is proactive and has set an additional “stretch goal” of being predator free by 2030 rather than the Government’s target of 2050.

In 2022 PDC received significant funding from The Jobs for Nature initiative (\$700,000 over three years). This has enabled the operation to be more streamlined with reporting quarterly, frequent informal contact with officials and commissioning professional expertise. To provide some strategic direction to PDC, Andrew Macalister of R&D Environmental Ecological Consultants was commissioned to create an Operational Plan, resulting in an increase of the scope from 2,000ha to 4,815ha.

PDC works on Department of Conservation, Port Marlborough, Te Atiawa and Marlborough District Council land as well as with private owners so it has been important to develop working relationships with all stakeholders. All players have been responsive. With private landowners, PDC works with them to “adopt a trap line” although many farmers do not have the time to manage trap lines. Volunteers can manage these if access is granted and there are regular discussions to facilitate this.

At the heart of PDC are the volunteers and the community providing more than 10,000 hours of labour a year. To date, there are more than 2,300 traps across 4,815ha and more than 14,000 pests from Picton and Waikawa have been removed. PDC is actively looking at pathways and initiatives to get an intergenerational workforce and plan for the future with young people and whānau involved.

Staff collaborate regularly with events run by the Picton Environment Centre, and participate in outreach to schools and other organisations to communicate their work and volunteering opportunities. Sometimes other organisations offer their staff for a community working day. One such group built a trapline in the bush.

Volunteer roles are many and varied – setting and monitoring traps, managing trap lines, making traps, catch data entry, working in deep bush and in urban areas, community engagement and staffing stalls, newsletter writing and publicity. Volunteers need to be actively managed through the roster and supported to ensure they are well trained and physically able as some sites are steep and challenging. Coordinators have to manage workload, time, monitor weather and be aware of health and safety considerations. Covid also changed the way they worked.

The trapping operation is highly organised. The shed is well ordered with all the trap lines clearly identified and named in Te Reo Māori. There are comprehensive kits in bags (sponsored) for volunteers for each trap line.

He Toki a Tāne/Nature's Champion is a key initiative for recognising the work done by the public in the urban area. It is a partnership programme with Daltons, the garden products company, to encourage community engagement and environmental stewardship/kaitiakitanga in the Picton/Waikawa area. People or local businesses receive a Daltons \$200 product prize pack and the Nelson representative regularly comes to Picton to host seminars about planting for birds.

He Toki a Tāne has engaged locals to build the constantly expanding urban buffer zone essential to protect Kaipupu especially through the development of 'Urban Trapping Starter Kits' for catching rats. Each neighbourhood has a trap leader who, with others, helps homeowners with tasks such as the mechanics of setting the trap, clearing the trap and managing data entry, all of which contributes to meeting neighbours and community building.

To ensure data is regularly entered there is the "bait, set, check, win" programme. All data is kept in a database and when volunteers put in catch data they are entered into a monthly draw with prizes. PDC uses the Trap NZ app and volunteers need to be trained to enter the data into their phones. Currently it takes 2-3 hours a week to enter and manage data.

An important part of project is the Dawn Chorus Trapping enterprise. Here volunteers build and sell traps and profits go back to PDC. This initiative functions from a well-equipped workshop, where quality tools are on loan. Generous sponsorship from wood and building supply companies has enabled them to make a quality product. They are a well-organised and innovative group, inventing and trialling traps (both design and location in the bush) and selling them across Te Waipounamu.

### THE JUDGES WERE IMPRESSED BY:

- The very capable staff – not only their creativity and commitment to the ethos of PDC but also to the notion of collaboration with the Picton Environment Centre and Kaipupu Sanctuary to make the most of scarce resources. They are developing strong connections Marlborough-wide, such as with Garden Marlborough, Rarangi Dawn Chorus, Ngakuta Bay and the Tasman Environmental Trust and they're keen to develop data sharing and connecting with events such as Conservation week.
- This is a cluster of people passionate about the Kaupapa who are willing to think outside the box to meet environmental, biodiversity and community needs. They are constantly innovating, thinking of change and new ways of doing things and engaging volunteers, such as strategies to incentivise trapping efforts or enter the catch data. The Dawn Chorus Trapping enterprise is an impressive, streamlined operation.
- The thought put into enjoyable activities to engage whānau and young people such as the recent film night (Fight for the Wild) which fostered great conversations.



Picton Dawn Chorus  
December 21, 2022 at 11:56 AM · 🌐  
🌱 He Toki a Tāne WINNERS! 🎉  
Congratulations to Gary and Judith Andrews.



- This group has a lot of experience and while the primary trapping is in the local area, PDC tries to support smaller groups elsewhere and are generous with skills, knowledge and learnings.
- PDC is an organized and efficient operation, making good use of technology and volunteers and drawing on the considerable skills of its volunteers.

## PROBLEMS AND HOW THEY HAVE BEEN TACKLED

As with many organisations, the last two years has presented significant challenges to PDC.

- Covid, whānau events and face-to-face events at schools have been compromised but are now gathering momentum again. Staff are excited about re-engaging and educating the community through a range of activities and they are aiming to be present at local events again.
- Volunteer recruitment remains an ongoing challenge to ensure a good pool so that the 'faithful few' don't get burnt out. Many sites are steep and hard to access so a pool of fit and able volunteers is needed. Considerable thought is being given to succession planning and bringing whole whānau and younger folk through. This is done in collaboration with partners at the Picton Environment Centre so that volunteers are appropriately matched to the roles, often crossing organisations.
- Current traps are dealing to many common predators. However, cats remain a controversial problem. PDC is working on this, cognisant of the politics of both feral and pet cats. The Council also needs to work with PDC to get more action, such as "chip and snip" being compulsory. PDC is not anti-cat, but action needs to be taken to ensure responsible cat ownership.
- Biggest challenge for trapping enterprise operation has been finding suitable premises. Currently they have free premises and keep the property tidy in return, but they need storage space and the search is ongoing.

## SUMMARY

PDC has a well-recognized and established track record of predator control. Over the years, this organisation has articulated a clear vision and then set about building an efficient and collaborative organisation to achieve that vision.

Highly capable staff and skilled and keen volunteers have put that vision into effect, through community engagement and measurable results. For many, looking at the degradation of the environment around them, initiatives such as PDC provides positive, community-driven action.

## SUGGESTIONS

- To broaden the volunteer pool and spread the message to a younger demographic, it could be good to engage with NMIT and schools with a specific focus on courses that might intersect with PDC aspirations. Additionally, at community gardens, they may find like-minded people willing to engage.
- Given that many visitors come to Te Waipounamu to experience nature, walk the tracks and hear birdsong, engaging big players like the InterIslander/Bluebridge ferry companies to sponsor nature would be worth exploring.

- Building lasting relationships with other local companies such as winegrowers and forestry could also be beneficial. Trapping and planting in partnership would spread the message.
- For urban trapping, Picton real estate agents could introduce new homeowners to PDC by providing a backyard trap. This is being explored by Picton Dawn Chorus and we encourage the real estate industry to join such an initiative.