

Winter 2018

Partnership news from the Department of Conservation

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## Winter 2018

Kia ora tatou

Visible in the mid-winter sky just before dawn, Matariki (the Pleiades) is a small cluster of stars that signal Māori New Year. For Māori, this time signified remembrance, fertility and celebration, and is associated with harvest and work to plan and prepare the ground for the new year's crops. Many of the stories and events we share in this newsletter tie in nicely with this theme.

A cause for celebration is the additional \$181.6 million in [Budget 2018](#) for DOC in operational funding for conservation initiatives. This funding will enable us to plan and complete essential work in predator control, biodiversity initiatives, and strengthen our capability and capacity to deliver on our mandate.

More great news. New Zealand has its own genetically distinct blue whale population. As an endangered species this means they are special taonga that need our protection. [Auckland Whale and Dolphin Safari](#) contributed sightings and data of blue whales to the research, and would like to celebrate by giving away a double pass to one of their Safari's.

Finally, the following two months provide wonderful opportunities to celebrate Matariki in a way that reflect our modern times. You can help Auckland Council plant 60,000 trees in South Auckland, or you can spend time with astronomers on Aotea/Great Barrier Island, our own Dark Sky Sanctuary.

Please feel free to send your conservation story in to us so we can share your success, provide us with [feedback](#) or send this on to others so they can [subscribe](#).

Ngā mihi  
Pieter Tuinder

## Featured news



### Great Walks differential pricing trial 2018/19

In a trial starting this October, four of the nine Great Walks will cost approximately double for international visitors staying in huts and campsites. "The seven-month trial from October 2018 to April 2019 will provide information on the effectiveness of pricing as a tool to manage visitor pressure," Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage says.

Investment in maintaining the nine Great Walks exceeds the revenue made from users' hut fees by up to \$3.8 million each year, and the trial expects to generate approximately \$2.9 million per annum. The increased accommodation fees for Milford, Kepler, Routeburn and Abel Tasman Coast tracks might also encourage overseas visitors to use less visited Great Walks where prices remain the same.

Prices remain the same for New Zealanders, and is free for those aged between 0-17 years. [Read more](#)

*Image: Wynston Cooper*



## Budget backs nature

New Zealand's distinctive native plants, wildlife and natural landscapes will benefit from an additional \$181.6 million in operational funding for conservation initiatives over the next four years. "Our plan backs nature", says Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage.

The Operational funding includes:

- \$81.3M to boost landscape-scale predator control over 1.8 million ha
- \$76M for biodiversity initiatives across land, freshwater and marine ecosystems
- \$16.2M for DOC to strengthen its core

capability and capacity to deliver on the

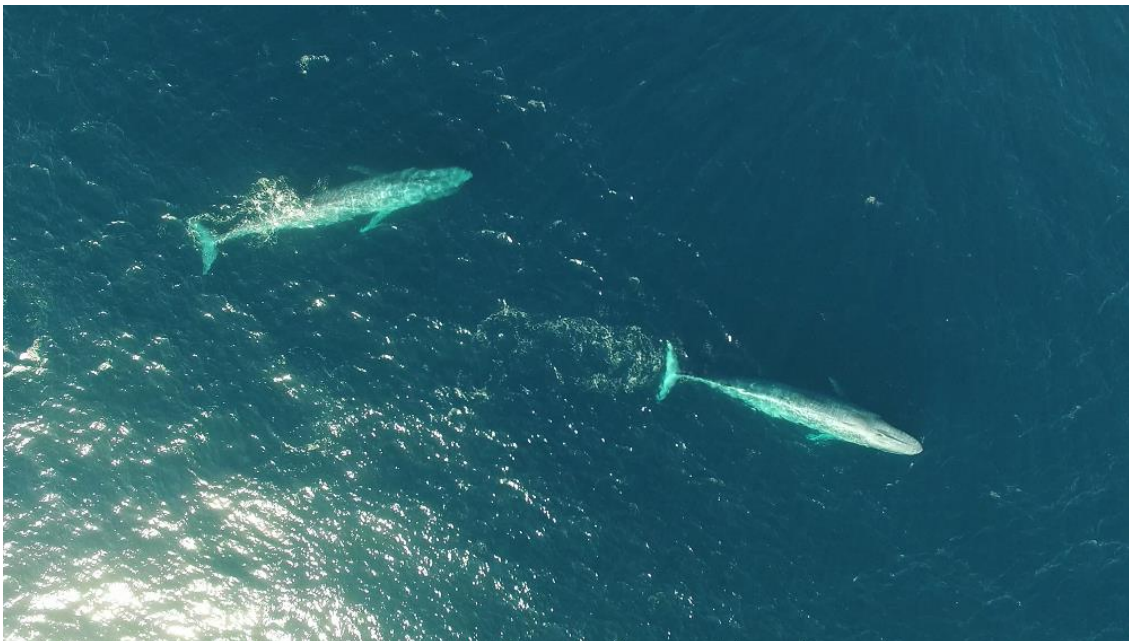
Government's priorities

- \$5.5M to enable better visitor management, in areas such as transport and waste management
- \$2.6M to fund better protection of the unique landscapes and biodiversity of the Mackenzie Basin.

*Image: Philip Moll*

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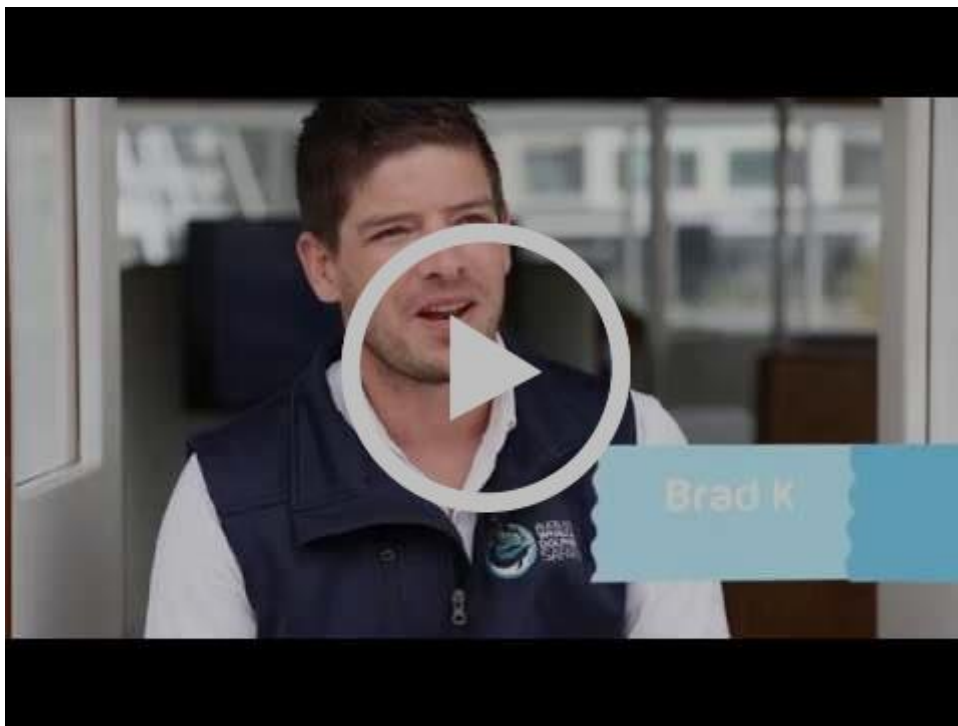
## Blue whales call Aotearoa home



A [new study](#) reveals that a population of blue whales frequenting the South Taranaki Bight (STB) is genetically distinct from other blue whales in the Pacific and Southern Oceans. Hydrophones deployed in the region recorded blue whale calls on 364 days in 2016. “When we conducted biopsies of individual whales, we also discovered that they are genetically distinct from other blue whale populations,” said [Leigh Torres](#), co-author on the study led by Oregon State University’s [Marine Mammal Institute](#).

The study identified 151 individual New Zealand blue whales between 2004 and 2017, and used that and other data to estimate a minimum abundance of 718.

The study was supported by numerous groups, including DOC and partners Auckland Whale and Dolphin Safari (AWADS). They contributed sightings data and photographs of blue whales seen in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. To celebrate the findings, AWADS will give away a double pass to their Whale and Dolphin Safari, worth \$360. To go in to win, simply watch the [AWADS sustainability video](#) below and [tell us](#) what resident whale population (with accurate punctuation, spoiler alert!) can be found in the Hauraki Gulf.



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**Refreshed 1080 information on DOC website**



1080 is a highly emotive subject. Considerable misinformation circulates online, making it difficult to know what to believe. DOC has updated and refreshed its [1080 website pages](#) to provide the public with the fact vs fiction about biodegradable 1080 as a form of pest control. The content addresses concerns about the safety of 1080, including how it breaks down in the environment and risks to non-target species. There is also an overview of previous operations and how research and development has shaped the tightly controlled and targeted operations of today. Videos, including one from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) feature, as well as links to external agencies.

About 80% of our bird species are at risk of extinction, and the biggest threat to our wildlife is predation by introduced pests such as rats, stoats and possums.

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## **SOSSI celebrates arrival of 40 tīeke/saddleback**



On 28 May, 40 tīeke/saddleback were translocated from Tiritiri Matangi Island to [Shakespeare Open Sanctuary](#) to start a new population within the safety of the predator proof fence. The birds were flown in by helicopter and released on New Zealand Defence Force land, which makes up part of the sanctuary.

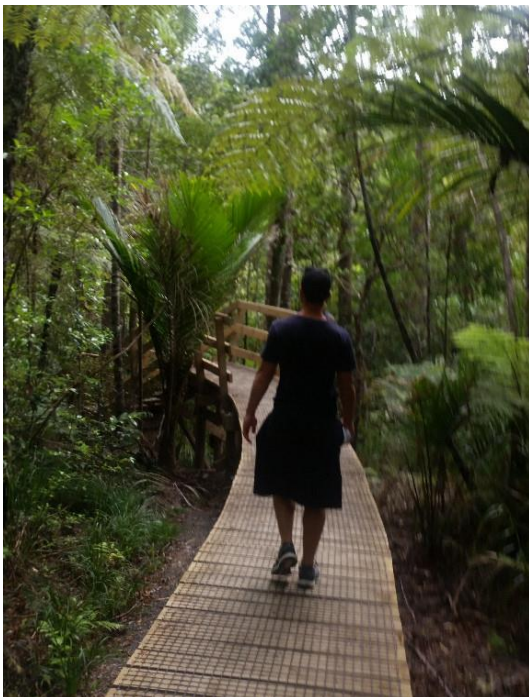
Tīeke are noisy, conspicuous birds and are poor fliers, spending much of their time foraging on the ground for invertebrates and fruit. This makes them vulnerable to predation by rats, stoats and cats, so safe havens like Shakespeare are vital to the recovery of the species on the mainland. A further 10 tīeke will arrive from Tawharanui Open Sanctuary in the coming weeks.



## Creative partnership renewed

More New Zealand artists will be inspired by the places, people, and stories of New Zealand's unique environment and cultural heritage with the continuation of the successful Creative New Zealand partnership with DOC. [Wild Creations](#) offers artists the opportunity to experience DOC environments and/or programmes as inspiration for new art work.

They may work in any art form or area of arts practice supported by Creative New Zealand. The 2017 recipients include artists [Michel Tuffery](#), [Shelley Simpson](#) and [Jonathan Carson](#). “The work of these talented artists is giving DOC great opportunities to connect more New Zealanders to conservation stories through art,” says DOC Director, National Operations, Hilary Aikman. [Applications](#) open today. [Read more](#)  
*Image: [Shelley Simpson](#)*



## Okura Bushway temporarily closed

DOC has temporarily closed the walkway through Okura Bush Scenic Reserve, on Auckland’s North Shore. The walkway, from the Haigh Road entrance to Dacre Cottage, has closed to prevent the spread of kauri dieback.

Kauri dieback is caused by microscopic spores in soil that infects kauri roots. The disease is spread on footwear by walking through mud contaminated with kauri dieback spores.

While measures to eliminate muddy sections of track have been undertaken on the track, there is still work to be completed, so closure is the safest option during Auckland’s wettest months.

The walkway will undergo further track upgrades including the installation of two new walk-through



footwear cleaning stations; at the southern Haigh Road entrance, and above the steps near Dacre Cottage.

The track closure is supported by a rāhui placed over Okura Bush Scenic Reserve by mana whenua.



## Leading the charge against the moth plant

After a skirmish with a moth plant on Motutapu Island on a planting day, Mt Albert Grammar School teacher Mike Ashby recognised them adjacent to his school grounds. When he realised how rampant the plant was on the mainland, he created an inter-school competition to collect pods from moth plants before they could broadcast their seeds. Mike then got in touch with local boards to see if they would sponsor a prize to encourage students in the area to collect pods. In 2017 they collected 3500, then ten times that number this year.

The [moth plant](#) is a woody stemmed vine that can grow up to eight metres high, climbing up trees and shrubs. It forms a large, heavy canopy that can smother and kill plants and prevent the establishment of native plant species. [Read more](#)

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[Rotoroa Island](#) has had an unprecedented number of rat incursions this summer. More than eight Norway rats have been recorded from bait take and tracking tunnel records. Rats were eradicated on Rotoroa in 2011, with three incursions. DNA testing points to the rats coming from Ponui or Waiheke Islands. Islanders can help by targeting buildings and places where rubbish is stored with traps, while boaties can assist with ensuring their vessels are pest-free. Visit [doc.govt.nz/treasureislands](http://doc.govt.nz/treasureislands) for tips on how you can help keep our islands predator free, and if you do see signs of rats on Rotoroa please let island staff know.

## Earthmoving contractor repairing damage on Motutapu

If you've been to Motutapu Island recently you will have noticed an earthmoving contractor repairing slip damage caused by Cyclone Debbie, just over a year ago. The contractor is working at three sites on Motutapu, and will ensure there is no risk to people visiting Motutapu, or camping at Home Bay, as long as they follow the contractor's instructions on how to keep themselves safe.

## Rangitoto and Tiritiri Matangi on Google

Pest-free islands Rangitoto and Tiritiri Matangi are the latest beauty spots to join Google's Street View site. Through Google Maps, users can click into 360-degree panoramic photos taken along tracks and at individual sites on the islands. The images were collected using the Google Street View Trekker - designed for use in locations only accessible by foot. The Trekker is a backpack fitted with 15 camera lenses that collect images every 2.5 seconds, and weighs in at around 18kg!

## Events

### Million Trees presents Matariki Planting

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This Matariki, [Million Trees](#) and Auckland Council invites you to celebrate the season by planting 60,000 trees in June and July. Every volunteer will receive a free tree from [Trees That Count Trust](#), and there will be a free sausage sizzle after each planting. Matariki is strongly associated with the celebration of harvest, of gifting food, and planning or preparing the ground for the new year's crops.

**Totara Park:** Friday 15 & Saturday 16 June, 10am – 12pm & 1pm – 3pm

register for Totara Park planting event at [tim@hohu.co.nz](mailto:tim@hohu.co.nz) by 31 May, and for Puhinui Reserve planting event by 30 June.

## Matariki Festival on Aotea/Great Barrier Island celebrates the heavens

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From **29 June - 30 July**, residents and visitors to Aotea/Great Barrier Island will be able to enjoy guided sessions with astronomers, night photography workshops, storytelling, and a twilight ball during Matariki. As the only island to be recognised as a Dark Sky Sanctuary, Aotea is a very special place to witness the rise of Matariki, the Māori name for the cluster of stars also known as the Pleiades. And its only a 35 minute flight from Auckland!

[Matariki Festival Aotea/Great Barrier Island](#)

## Forest & Bird 2018 Conference

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Join Forest & Bird for its 2018 conference, themed "Achieving a Paradigm Shift for Conservation". Saturday's programme features exciting and challenging presentations on fresh water, climate change, nature on land, and Māori conservation innovations. Conservation Minister, and Forest & Bird Distinguished Life Member Hon. Eugenie Sage is the keynote speaker for the Conference, and Environment Minister Hon. David Parker and Fisheries Minister Hon. Stuart Nash will also be attending to talk about the coalition government's ambitions for our environment and our oceans.

View the full programme and register at [www.forestandbird.org.nz/agm](http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/agm).

Registrations closes **5pm Tuesday 19 June**.

**23 – 24 June, Forest and Bird, 205 Victoria Street, Wellington**

## Stream water quality at La Rosa Garden Reserve

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It's been more than 3 years since the Waitahurangi and Parahiku streams were daylighted at La Rosa Gardens Reserve. Join Ecomatters for a water quality testing session and learn about what changes have occurred. Paul Woodard from aFISHionado will be attending with his native fish display - a great opportunity to see these inconspicuous animals up close! Tea and coffee will be provided.

**Saturday 16 June, 10am – 12pm**

## Public Volunteer Planting Days

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[Motutapu Island](#): 8 July, 22 July; Register at [admin@motutapu.org.nz](mailto:admin@motutapu.org.nz)

[Motuihe Island](#): 1 July, 15 July, 29 July; Register at [info@motuihe.org.nz](mailto:info@motuihe.org.nz). Also, book your planters seat on the ferry by phoning Fullers on 3679111.

[Rotoroa Island](#): 21 July; Register at [info@rotoroa.org.nz](mailto:info@rotoroa.org.nz)

[Shakespear Open Sanctuary](#): 15 July, 22 July

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