



# The Inlet

Newsletter for the Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet

DECEMBER

2013

*The Inlet is a newsletter that brings together local and regional news affecting the Pauatahanui Inlet and its environs.*

*The Inlet comes out three times a year and current or back issues can be downloaded from our website.*

*The newsletter includes items of concern that affect the area as well as general interest topics for everyone.*

*Please contact us if you would like to contribute to The Inlet.*

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## FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Dear Members

As you read through this edition of the newsletter you will see that we have just come to the end of a few months of particularly intense activity. The annual clean-up of the Inlet took place in November and on 1 December this year's triennial cockle survey attracted a large crowd of enthusiasts all keen to take part in this crucial activity. Thank you very much to all of you who were involved in these two projects. I hope you enjoyed the two days and that you gained satisfaction in knowing that you contributed directly to activities that are a very significant part of our care of the Inlet. I always get a lot of pleasure while out on the cockle survey seeing small teams of people spaced along the shore in either direction all intent on digging up, counting and recording these seemingly humble but, in fact, very important residents of the Inlet.

In October we sent out a questionnaire asking for your views on the need to control the numbers of Canada Geese in the Inlet and the preferred methods of control, if any.

Approximately 30 percent of current members responded to the questionnaire. Of those approximately 80 percent indicated that they believe there is a problem with numbers of Canada Geese and that some form of control is required. To reflect our members' views we have drafted a policy essentially stating that GOPI supports action to control numbers of the Canada Geese. Very soon we are going to send the draft policy out to all members and ask for feedback; we will also send a full summary of the responses to the questionnaire to accompany the draft policy.

The committee will not be relaxing for long after the Christmas break as it will be planning for the 2014 photo competition in January. I would like to say thank you to the members of the committee for all their work this year and also to their partners who so cheerfully allow themselves to be conscripted into the 'voluntary' workforce.

To finish I wish you all an enjoyable and safe Christmas and New Year.

**Tony Shaw**

## INLET CLEAN-UP

On Sunday 10 November, 60 to 70 volunteers turned out to pick up rubbish around the Inlet in our twenty-second annual Pauatahanui Inlet clean-up. As in previous years the event was jointly organized by GOPI and Keep Porirua Beautiful, with considerable support from Plimmerton Rotary. We are always grateful to Plimmerton Rotary who not only provide a sizeable number of rubbish collectors but also organize the sausage sizzle at the end. The food for the sausage sizzle came courtesy of Paremata New World which also donated a lucky draw grocery voucher.

In addition to our usual stalwart partners, this year we were very pleased to meet representatives from Conservation Volunteers and Sustainable Coastlines. Sustainable Coastlines run 'Love Your Coast Wellington' a tremendous programme of coastline clean-ups and educational presentations for schools throughout the Wellington area.



*Gathering at Browns Bay for the clean-up on 10 November.*



*Paula Keats and Emily from the geocaching group.*

In another first this year, we were joined by a large group of geocaching enthusiasts who made the clean-up a 'Cache In Trash Out' (CITO) event. Many thanks to Andrew Myers for arranging this. CITO's were something of a mystery to the GOPI committee but we now know that these take place around the world where geocachers combine clearing up rubbish with the very modern activity of geocaching. For members who, like the committee, were unaware of geocaching, very briefly it is an outdoor activity in which the participants use GPS receivers or mobile phones and other navigational techniques to find 'caches'. These are usually hidden waterproof containers holding small items that can be collected or swapped when the cache is successfully located. They can also be something much smaller such a disk with information confirming that the marker has been found. We were intrigued to learn that Pauatahanui Inlet has become the venue for a new recreation we had not heard of before and of course were delighted to be joined by the participants in keeping our Inlet beautiful.

## MORE ABOUT GEOCACHING

For those members who would like to know more about geocaching, and perhaps even get involved with this interesting activity, you can follow this link to the website page set up specifically for GOPI: [http://www.geocaching.com/geocache/GC4PJ3T\\_guardians-of-pauatahanui-inlet-cito](http://www.geocaching.com/geocache/GC4PJ3T_guardians-of-pauatahanui-inlet-cito).

The short video will give you an introduction, but for more details you will need to join.



## THE PAUATAHANUI INLET COCKLE SURVEY - 2013

December 1 – what a great day! The sun shone, the wind was soft and warm, the view of the catchment hills from out on the mud flats was magnificent, and we completed our eighth triennial survey of the Inlet cockle population.

Our grateful thanks to all 107 people who turned up. This time, in addition to our members and the general public, we had substantial help from staff members of the Greater Wellington and Porirua City Councils, from Ngati Toa Rūnanga, Conservation Volunteers and a group of international students from Massey University.



*Cockle counters clockwise from the left: Shyam Morar and Megan Oliver (Regional Council scientists) with Massey University student Zhang Zhanmin working one of the transects at Browns Bay. Photo: Hu Peng.*

Because cockles are the most numerous animals living in the inlet and because their requirements for life depend on both the nature of the sediments on the beaches and the quality of the water that covers them they are ideal animals for monitoring the general ecological health of the Inlet.

While it is too early to make a definite statement about the result of the survey, a preliminary ‘quick and dirty’ review of the data does give us hope that the detailed analysis to be undertaken by NIWA may well show a continuation of the upward trend that began in 2004. NIWA’s report is due in early March.

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## KAPITI CAMERA CLUB PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT

Among the many visitors to the Inlet on the day of the cockle survey were a group of photographers from the Kapiti Camera Club tasked with recording the day’s activities. The members of the club have captured the essence of the event with a great collection of images focussed on the people who devoted their own time to conduct this important triennial assessment of the Pauatahanui Inlet cockle population.

The images can be viewed on the Kapiti Camera Club website by following the link:

<http://www.kapiticameraclub.co.nz/index.php?page=CockleCount>

You can also see Ray Lovell’s extensive coverage at:

<http://www.raylovell.co.nz/index.php?page=CockleCounting>

## NOW AND THEN

In the search for interesting photographs from the past, we found this image of the bridge across the Pauatahanui Stream from the Alexander Turnbull Library collection.



A view of Pauatahanui. Field, W H: Assorted photographic prints and negatives. Ref: PAColl-0341-01. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22326080>

Taken in 1911, and used as a postcard, the view shows the old Assembly Hall, the winding Pauatahanui Stream flanked by low-growing vegetation, and the Inlet in the distance.

The present day photo could not be taken from the same elevation and therefore the distant views are obscured, but the bridge is still much as it used to be, with some modifications. What has changed significantly however is that the banks of the river are now concealed by a mature growth of trees as a result of restoration after the initial settlers cleared the area of its original lowland forest. Pauatahanui village itself has of course undergone significant modernisation since the 1910 photograph was taken, and the assembly hall has been replaced by what was a newer community hall that eventually became converted to the Lighthouse Cinema.



Pauatahanui Bridge August 2013. Photo: Michael Waldron

## ON THE HORIZON

Completion of the section of Te Ara Piko, the Inlet pathway, along Grays Road between Motukaraka Point and Pauatahanui village is now scheduled to begin in January, probably to finish in March

The 2014 Photographic Competition is in the planning stage and the closing date is currently expected to be 9 April. We will let you know as soon as this is confirmed.

On Sunday 23 February Destina Munro from Kapiti Camera Club will be running a free workshop for all under-18-year-olds who would like to enter our 2014 photo competition. Please talk to young friends and family about this wonderful opportunity. Stout Cottage from 4pm to 7pm.

## NEW HARBOUR SUB-COMMITTEE

We were interested to learn that the Porirua City Council has created a five-member harbour sub-committee consisting of:

Chair - Councillor Bronwyn Kropp

Deputy Chair - Councillor Anita Baker

Members - Mayor Nick Leggett, Councillor Denys Latham and Councillor 'Ana Coffey.

Councillor Coffey has explained that the committee's role will be 'to have greater governance oversight on how our policies and practice as a council are aligning with our core strategic focus on the harbour'.

We are pleased to note this formation of a sub-committee whose sole task is to make sure that nothing the council does is in conflict with its focus on the harbour.

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## PAUATAHANUI - A LOCAL HISTORY: IT'S HERE AT LAST

One of our stated objectives is to 'foster the natural, historic and cultural values of Pauatahanui Inlet'. In line with this aim we are very excited to report that, in recent weeks, two books members of GOPI may be interested in have been published covering the history of two communities on the edges of the Inlet.

The first of these is the pictorial history book that we have referred to in past issues of *The Inlet*. *Pauatahanui - A Local History* was successfully launched at Pataka on 24 October with a big crowd in attendance. This has been written by Helen Reilly in association with the Pauatahanui History Group and has been several years in the making. It's a fabulous hard-backed book with over 300 photographs and illustrations from the beginnings of the settlement to the present day. We highly recommend it.

On page 222 of the book, in the chapter entitled 'Modern Times', the Guardians are featured in a section on Pauatahanui Inlet. It explains our origins and aims as an organisation concerned with the health of the inlet.

*Pauatahanui - A Local History* can be bought on line at <http://www.pauatahanuihistorybook.co.nz>.

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A second historical book recently launched and equally worthwhile owning is *Gone Forever*, the story of Paremata's Hobson Street by Bob Maysmor of Pataka. The book is based on an exhibition at Pataka in 2000 and is full of photographs and quotes from people who grew up or spent time in the community. In common with the Pauatahanui book it features two poems by Sam Hunt.

*Gone Forever* is available from Pataka information desk.

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## AT THE BEACH

Another book our members may be interested in is the recently released publication *At the Beach* by Ned Barraud and Gillian Candler. *At the Beach* is a delightful introduction to the natural history of the New Zealand seashore. Aimed at children 5–8 years old, but with appeal for anyone curious about New Zealand's natural environment, it uses factually correct illustrations (including detailed cross-sections) of three familiar habitats - the sandy beach, rockpools and mudflats.

Published by Craig Potton Publishing, *At the Beach* is available from bookshops and libraries nationwide and online at <http://www.craigpotton.co.nz/store/books/nature-environment/at-the-beach-hardback>.



## FEATURE ARTICLE

*Up to now we have only featured animals in this section of The Inlet. So let's change that and look at a very important part of the Inlet ecology with a plant that is vital to the survival of many organisms.*

### ***Zostera muelleri* (Eelgrass)**

What really is eelgrass? It lives in the sea but is not seaweed; it forms 'meadows' underwater but is not a grass; nevertheless it does have flowers. *Zostera muelleri* is in fact the one New Zealand representative of a widespread genus of marine flowering plants that belong to the order *Alismatales*. This is the only group of flowering plants that contains species that grow in the sea. Other members of the order include freshwater aquatic plants such as water plantain, Canadian pondweed and potamogeton, but there are also the arum lilies, such as the peace lily, in the same group.

New Zealand eelgrass, sometimes called seagrass, is a fast growing perennial species that rapidly colonises estuarine soft sediments. It forms extensive branching rhizomes that spread far and wide binding sand and mud particles together and thus preserving the sediments from erosion by strong currents. Being intertidal it is tolerant to brief exposure to air but is also found as much as 2m deep where submersion is constant.



*Eelgrass bed at low tide.*

Evolved from terrestrial plants, *Zostera* has become adapted to a permanent life under water with pollination, seed formation and germination all taking place in its aquatic home. Long, bright green, ribbon-like leaves grow 10 to 60cm long but are only 3mm wide. Shoots, with 3-5 leaves each, arise from nodes along the rhizomes and air canals within the leaves convey oxygen from photosynthesis down to the roots where this is often lacking. Flowering takes place from October to February with male anthers and female stigma arranged together on a sheathed structure known as a spadix. Familiarity with arum lilies will help to visualise this. Pollination occurs within the sheath with fruits developing in situ until fully formed as bladders that drift away on tides and currents.

Reproduction can also occur vegetatively via growth of sprigs (small plantlets) that form on the stems and break off to be dispersed just like the fruits. General spreading of the rhizome network also results in the eelgrass community increasing in size.

*Zostera* is an ecologically important habitat-producing species in Pauatahanui Inlet. It provides food and shelter for numerous fish and invertebrate species while being a substrate itself for epiphytic algae and various micro-organisms. It is environmentally important in the control of sedimentation and substrate stabilisation and it is a very important food for the black swan.

***PTO....***

*Continued from Page 6.....*

The Inlet contains extensive areas of eelgrass but in recent times various studies have indicated a decline in the size of eelgrass communities. Threats to its survival include agricultural run-off and rapid siltation. The role of excess epiphytic macro algal or phytoplankton growth in smothering leaves and negatively affecting eelgrass health is generally agreed to be a prevalent mechanism in its decline worldwide. Excessive nutrients from farming and fertiliser use alter the nitrogen content of the water, causing increased concentration of algal and fungal growth. Also, while eelgrass communities are only found in areas of sand and mud, increased rates of sediment deposition can result in smothering of the meadows.

Eelgrass also has a narrow thermal range and may be threatened by sea water warming with climate change.

Finally, destruction by swans as they pull up leaves and rhizomes has been known to leave some areas completely denuded of eelgrass. Despite *Zostera muelleri's* ability to quickly re-colonize an area, extreme attacks of this nature can overwhelm a community and it may not recover.

More can be read on our website at <http://www.gopi.org.nz/eel-grass/>

*Note: Zostera muelleri should not be confused with the similar looking non-native freshwater eelgrass species, Vallisneria australis, which is considered an invasive plant in New Zealand.*

## THE POLICIES OF GOPI

Over the years GOPI has developed various policies that reflect the committee's and our members' beliefs on how Pauatahanui Inlet should be managed to maintain the key principles on which the Guardian of Pauatahanui Inlet was established.

In this and the next three newsletters we publish one of these policies to remind our members of these principles. The first one is on Walkways.

### GUARDIANS OF PAUATAHANUI Inlet Walkway Policy

The Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet (GOPI) supports the ability of the public to access the Inlet because the Inlet is a community asset and people's enjoyment of it will increase their appreciation of the environment.

For these reasons we support the completion of a Walkway around the shores of the Inlet with the following two provisos.

- Construction and maintenance of the Walkway does not impact negatively on the ecology of the Inlet or its terrestrial margin.
- Every effort is made to ensure that people enjoying the Walkway can do so in safety.

*Policy formulated March 2003, amended August 2009*

Since 2005 the Inlet pathway, Te Ara Piko, has been built in stages between Pauatahanui village to Ration Creek, and, as noted on page 4 under 'On The Horizon', the next stage of its development has just been announced.

## FAMILY CORNER

### BLACK SWAN MAZE

Having read the feature article in this issue of *The Inlet* you will now be aware of the relationship between the black swan and eelgrass. So, here is this month's challenge: help the black swan find the eelgrass meadow.

See how quickly you can work your way through the different pathways of this maze. Only one route will take you all the way through to the other side, and a juicy eelgrass plant.

Good Luck.



### PLEASE SIGN UP A FRIEND OR NEIGHBOUR

Sign up a neighbour, friend, or another family member. Just explain to them that membership numbers really count in giving us a strong voice to argue for what we all value about the Inlet. Membership forms can be downloaded from our website [www.gopi.org/nz/membership-form](http://www.gopi.org/nz/membership-form) or copied from the one at the back of this newsletter. Better still, if you've received this newsletter by email, just forward it to others with a note encouraging them to join.

#### EMERGENCY NUMBERS FOR THE PAUATAHANUI INLET

**Pollution:** Discharges of contaminants to air, land, storm-water drains, streams, rivers or sea and for after hours consent enquiries: Greater Wellington 0800 496 734 (24 hours)

**Boating infringements:** Greater Wellington 384 5708 (24 hours)

**Illegal fishing activity:** Ministry for Primary Industries 0800 476 224 (24 hours)

**Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve:** Department of Conservation 0800 362 468

Let us know what you have reported so we can keep an accurate record and follow up if necessary.

**233 9391 (Chairman, GOPI) or [pauainlet@gmail.com](mailto:pauainlet@gmail.com).**





# Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet

[www.gopi.org.nz](http://www.gopi.org.nz)  
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## Membership Form: new members

To join the Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet, you can pay your subscription either online or by post. **IF YOU ARE PAYING ONLINE, PLEASE REMEMBER TO FILL IN THIS FORM WITH ALL DETAILS, AND EMAIL OR POST IT TO US.**

### Online payment

1. Pay your sub via e-banking into our Westpac account 03-1533-0009387-00. In the 'Particulars' or 'Reference' columns, **YOU MUST** write your surname **AND** initials **AND** the period of your sub (1-yr or 5-yr).
2. Then fill in this form and either email it to us at [pauainlet@gmail.com](mailto:pauainlet@gmail.com) or post it (see next column for our postal address)

### Postal payment

1. Write a cheque made payable to 'Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet'.
2. Then fill in this form and send it, along with your cheque, to: Membership Secretary, Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet, Box 57034, Mana, Porirua 5247.

Please fill in your details for our records. If you are filling in this form electronically, **click** at the beginning of a dotted line and then type.

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

E-mail: ..... Phone: .....

Please put  next to the subscription you are paying (electronic completion – **highlight** the box and type lower case x). We are also very grateful for donations. (We are a registered charity for tax purposes: registration number CC47523).

One-year individual (\$12.00)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Five-year individual (\$50.00)	<input type="checkbox"/>
One-year family (\$15.00)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Five-year family (\$60.00)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Donation: \$ .....		Do you require a receipt for your sub? <input type="checkbox"/> or your donation? <input type="checkbox"/>	
Date subs paid: .....		Reference appears as: .....	
<i>(e-banking only)</i>			
We'd like to send you newsletters and notices via email. May we do this? <input type="checkbox"/>			

Please tell us which of our activities you would like to be part of.

Annual clean-up day	<input type="checkbox"/>	Submissions to local bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Three-yearly cockle survey	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our educational programmes for schools	<input type="checkbox"/>
Website and video clips	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:	

**NOW EMAIL OR POST THIS FORM. THANK YOU AND WELCOME**