



The Inlet

Newsletter for Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet

AUGUST

2014

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

As the winter weather occasionally shows signs of improving we are thinking about spring activities. The annual Inlet Clean-up will be held on Sunday 30 November and we will be in touch with more details when these have been finalised. Prior to that event we again hope to have a display at the superb Pauatahanui School Lamb and Calf Day on Saturday 1 November.

In June, GOPI was nominated by Porirua City Council for the Wellington Airport 2014 Regional Community Awards. We have been advised that we are finalists in the Porirua region for the Heritage & Environment category. The other four categories are Art & Culture, Education & Child Youth Development, Health & Wellbeing and Sport & Leisure. The Porirua region prize-winning entries will be announced at a function in late August and there will be prizes in each of the five categories.

This is a substantial competition. The five Porirua category winners go through to a Wellington Regional round that will include organisations that have won the different categories in Kapiti Coast, Upper Hutt, Lower Hutt and Wellington. In addition to the five Wellington Regional category winners one group will be named as the ultimate prize-winner for Wellington. This group will then go through to a national awards ceremony to be held early in 2015.

At this stage it feels very premature to think about the possibility of us winning an award but just to have reached this point is a satisfying recognition of the work that all of you do to celebrate and protect the Inlet.

Tony Shaw

2014 PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

The 2014 photographic competition prize-giving ceremony took place on 11 May and marked another successful event for many entrants, both seasoned and new. This popular competition has grown significantly in recent times and this year's event was amazing. It is inspiring to think that, of 60 entrants this time, 36 were making their first attempt to have their skills recognised and, in total, 327 prints were entered.

We are all very grateful for the continued support of our judge Geoff Marshall who gives up his own time to examine all these images and pick out the best. He commented: *"Each year the quality of the images entered in this competition is higher than the last and this year was no exception."* He also noted: *"It is pleasing to see a high number of Junior and Youth entries, and these were of high quality – in some categories equal [to] or better than the adult entries."*

As in previous years, our prize-giving ceremony was held at the Helen Smith Room at Pataka, Porirua. This, however, was no ordinary gathering as the attendance was so great that one council member expressed astonishment at the near-capacity crowd. All staff and council representatives were absolutely delighted with the turnout.

This year each winner was called in turn to accept the awards for all categories at the same time which helped towards a very fluid ceremony. It also meant several winners received two or more certificates at the same time, highlighting their abilities as photographers.

There was special admiration for 12-year-old Kian Mortimer, who not only won Best Junior in the Artistic, Human Impact and Recreation categories, but beat all comers to take 1st prize in Open Artistic. His photo



1st Artistic. Kian Mortimer: Glowing boathouses

'Glowing Boathouses' brought the very beautiful sunset light of the Inlet right into the heart of the Helen Smith Room.



Highly commended Nature. Gaela Crothers: Fish and ghost chips

Also taking out a first prize in the Open section was 17-year-old Laura Murray, with a lovely photo of her sister on horseback, while another Youth entrant, Joe Love, won third prize in the Human Impact section with *'Walking on Water'*.



Highly commended Human Impact. Fiona Foxall: Smile for the camera

A new feature of the competition this year was asking people to title their photographs, and this added an extra layer of interest and amusement. Gaela Crothers' *'Fish and Ghost Chips'* raised many a smile with its reference to last year's TV ad, while *'Smile for the Camera'*, Fiona Foxall's witty caption for a photo of a cockle, had everyone chuckling.

We are delighted that the photo competition, now in its 14th year, is attracting more and more attention and are already planning next year's 'snappy' celebration of the Inlet.

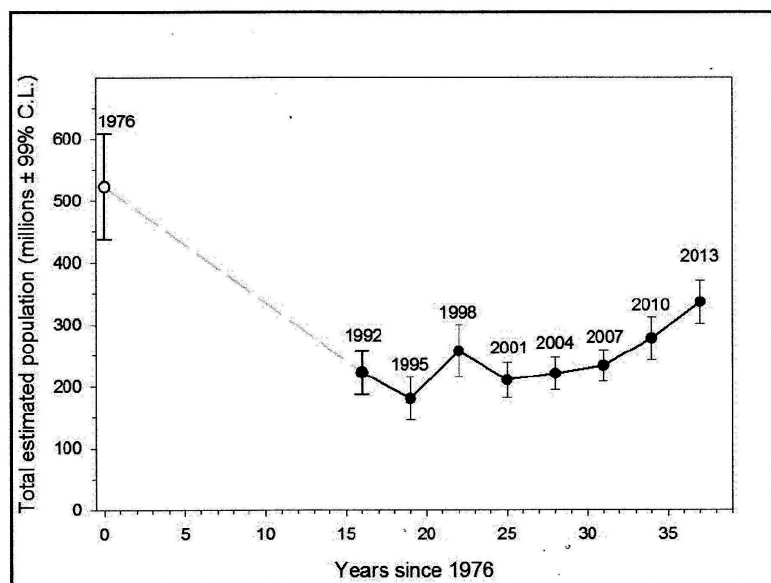
2013 COCKLE SURVEY - A GREAT RESULT

Following the December 2013 Cockle Survey we reported in the April issue of *The Inlet* that a draft report on the results of the survey had been released by NIWA giving us some hope for a positive outcome. We thought then we would be publishing the finalised report shortly after but, as sometimes happens, a change of plan delayed its publication until June. This delay however was for a very good reason which we are really happy to explain.

Last year's survey marked the eighth such analysis of the cockle population since 1992 and with this important time-series set of data NIWA decided it should re-visit all survey results and apply a different set of criteria to the analysis. Previously it could not be said for certain that the cockles were recovering from their 1995 low because application of the statistical rules used then gave results showing that probabilities were not mathematically significant over previous analyses. Now, however, the outcome is definite: the long time-series data we have clearly shows that the intertidal cockle population of Pauatahanui Inlet is rapidly recovering from the severe downturn noted between 1976 and 1995.

The significance of this conclusion is clear: the general ecological health of the Inlet is improving, a fact that is good for the cockles and, by inference, for the aquatic Inlet environment as a whole.

It is probably of interest to include again the graphed survey results since 1976. What is really exciting in this graph is the exponential increase shown by the estimated number of cockles since 2001. The rising population of these sensitive, filter-feeding molluscs that we survey every three years cannot be but extremely positive for the future because, although the Inlet cannot be considered fully healthy at the present time, the evidence indicates that conditions in the estuarine environment are continuously getting better.



And that is something to shout about!

The full NIWA report can be viewed on our website by following this link: [Cockle Report](#).

Many of our readers may also have seen that this achievement has been reported in both the Dominion Post (4 July) and the Whitby Newsbrief (July issue) in separate ways. If you haven't read these articles or would like to see them again, they can be found by following these two links:

[Dominion Post - Cockle Survey](#).

[Whitby Newsbrief - Cockle Survey](#)

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's AGM was held at the Mana Cruising Club on 26 July.

Wendy Edwards decided not to stand for re-election to the committee. Wendy, who joined the committee in 2009, has been an extremely valuable member. She undertook the significant task of updating and revamping some of the educational material originally prepared for us by Neil Bellingham. (Many of you will remember Neil's comprehensive pack of material that covered a wide range of Inlet-related topics and was highly sought after by teachers). Wendy's achievement was to bring much of this material into a form that could be downloaded for both teacher-directed and independent learning. We will very much miss Wendy's straightforward and positive contribution to committee meetings and wish her all the very best.

All the other current members were re-elected to the committee. Unfortunately the position of Secretary remains vacant. Following the meeting Denis Fairfax agreed to once more temporarily fill the gap as Acting Secretary until the end of the year. We are extremely grateful to Denis but this a temporary arrangement only and we are very keen to hear from anybody who is or might be interested in joining the committee and taking up this role.

Following the formal part of the meeting Keith Calder, Porirua Harbour Strategy Coordinator, gave an entertaining and informative talk about progress on the Porirua Harbour and Catchment Strategy and Action Plan.

YOUR NEW COMMITTEE 2014/2015

The following officers and committee members were elected at our 2014 AGM.

- ⇒ Tony Shaw Chairman
- ⇒ Dick Fernyhough Treasurer
- ⇒ Beverly Fairfax Webmaster
- ⇒ Michael Waldron Newsletter Editor
- ⇒ John Wells
- ⇒ Janet Ryan

As a candidate for the position of Secretary was not forthcoming Denis Fairfax has since been co-opted onto the committee as Acting Secretary

GOPI RULES ON THE NET

As the AGM has recently passed, and a change in our rules has been approved by the membership, you may be interested to view the complete set of rules first hand to see how our organisation is governed. If you visit our website you will find one page dedicated to the rules of our Incorporated society and, to help, a link to this page is offered here: <http://www.gopi.org.nz/official-rules/>



TRANSMISSION GULLY MOTORWAY GETS GREEN LIGHT

Featured on the front page of the Dominion Post 29 July was the news that Transmission Gully Motorway has finally got the green light, with construction set to begin later this year. Some will be thrilled to bits to learn of this development while others are not so convinced of the value to the region.

GOPI has been involved in some of the planning for this long-awaited major roading project. With the route of the highway planned to intersect SH58 and cross several of the streams that flow into Pauatahanui Inlet, GOPI has made submissions to New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) voicing our concerns about the effects construction of the motorway may have on the Inlet and its associated tributaries. It is also well known that, on balance, GOPI supports this important addition to Wellington region's road network. (See our TGM Policy on page 10). We believe that, once complete, traffic will be diverted away from the Inlet thereby reducing its effect on the health of the Inlet.

During construction however it is expected that an increase in sediment is highly likely, particularly in storm events, and with that potential outcome in mind we have repeatedly stressed how important it is that controls be put in place to minimise the run-off from excavation and exposure of land with the aim of having an absolute minimum, or even zero, effect on the Inlet.

Part of the resource consent for the project requires that the construction companies involved should demonstrate the inclusion of controls to mitigate the effects of run-off and consequent sedimentation build-up.

The challenge now for GOPI, the local authorities and NZTA is to monitor the effectiveness of these controls in minimising the amount of extra sediment released into the streams that flow into the Inlet. It is also vital that the construction companies comply with the resource management conditions and that the authorities monitor this compliance.

ON THE HORIZON

Wellington Airport Regional Community Awards - Porirua winners announced: 25 August

Lamb and Calf Day: 1 November

Inlet Clean-up Day: 30 November



OUR CHANGING WORLD - RADIO BROADCAST

If you've been keeping an eye on our website you'll know that our activities were featured on Radio New Zealand National during the month of May. A short item about December 2013's cockle survey was aired on Tuesday 6 May during *Afternoons with Jim Mora* followed by a full story on Thursday 8 May after the 9pm news on an episode of *Our Changing World*. The story was recorded by Alison Ballance and included interviews with Keith Michael from NIWA and our very own John Wells.

Interestingly, none of the Guardians members we

have spoken to can remember a previous time when we featured on Radio New Zealand but we'd certainly be interested to hear from those with longer memories.

We hope you were able to listen to this feature when it was broadcast in May but if you did miss either of the airings they are accessible by going to the following site and listening online or downloading the podcast:

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ourchangingworld/20140508>.

TE ARA PIKO OPENING DAY

May 28 this year was a significant day for the whole community living in the Pauatahanui catchment. It was opening day for Te Ara Piko - The Meandering Path.

This walkway has been under construction, stage by stage, since 2005 and still has a long way to go before the vision of a complete walkway encircling the Inlet becomes a reality. However a milestone was reached in May of this year when the section between Motukaraka Point and the Pauatahanui village was finally completed and an official celebration could be held.

Opening Day was organised by Plimmerton Rotary to celebrate this achievement. The function was at the Lighthouse Cinema, Pauatahanui. John Wells and Tony Shaw were invited as representatives of GOPI and the pathway was formally opened by Mayor Nick Leggett and Ron Lucas, President of Plimmerton Rotary.

The function included the screening of two short videos. The first was the winning entry in a contest for local schools organised as part of the celebration. It was made by pupils from Samuel Marsden Collegiate, Whitby. The second video was an aerial view of the walkway filmed using a helicopter drone designed and flown by



Photo: Part of **Laura Murray's** highly commended entry in the Artistic category in this year's photo competition.

Pauatahanui resident Michael Thomson. If you haven't had the chance to see this second stunning video it can be viewed by going to the [Te Ara Piko](#) website and looking at the bottom of the page.

The pathway project is a joint development by Plimmerton Rotary and Porirua City Council and GOPI has a policy of supporting the project providing it doesn't affect the Inlet ecology. The completion of this stage is significant and the result of a great deal of work by Rotary members and Porirua City Council staff.

The pathway has been a major undertaking and our community is very fortunate that Plimmerton Rotary members are so passionate about the Inlet and its environs.

TE ARA PIKO PROGRESS ON FURTHER EXTENSION

Te Ara Piko currently runs from Motukaraka Point to Pauatahanui village now that Porirua City Council, aided by Plimmerton Rotary, have completed the extension of the pathway from Ration Point. If you haven't done so already, we really encourage you to walk or cycle this new part as it gives stunning views over the eastern end of the Inlet and a close view of the breeding ponds in the Wildlife Reserve.

What we would now all like to know is how long it will take to build the section from Motukaraka Point to Camborne. To find out we asked Andrew Gray, PCC's landscape architect, three basic questions:

How long will the project take?

This is very difficult, if not impossible to predict. The major factor is funding. *"The last stage ended up costing around a million dollars, and the next stage is anticipated as being more expensive. So essentially the issue is funds – we can only go as fast and as far as the funding allows"* says Andrew. The other timing issue is how long it will take to consult with residents and community groups and to get resource consent for what will be a complex project.

Why is it so expensive?

"It is expensive to build a pathway between the road and the inlet. Construction time is often limited to 4 hours a day due to the tides and the

available timeslot keeps changing daily. Traffic control and safety is costly due to the proximity to a busy arterial road. The style of construction also has a large impact on cost. For example, boardwalk costs approx. \$1000 per metre, so if we had to build a boardwalk all the way from Motukaraka to Camborne then the costs will amount to \$1.8 million and at current funding levels would take about 18 years to build."

When will the project start?

Consultation and design planning is expected to begin in September. PCC and Rotary *"are mindful of the importance of the Inlet and the ecological values. Taking care takes more time and costs money."*

This is a very important point for us. Our policy is clear – we are in favour of the project providing that construction and maintenance does not impact negatively on the ecology of the Inlet or its terrestrial margin. This means that a thorough consultation process is vital even though it will add significantly to the time it takes for the project to start and is an expensive process in itself.



FEATURE ARTICLE

New Zealand has around 40 native freshwater fish species and about half of them spend part of their lives at sea. Most NZ species, 25 according to some sources, belong to just one group known as the galaxiids. These fish have no scales and are so named because of the markings on their skin which have been likened to a galaxy of stars. All but five galaxiid species do not migrate but those that do develop as larvae in the ocean as part of the zooplankton, returning to rivers to spend all of their adult life in fresh water. The juveniles of these five galaxiid species are what make up New Zealand's whitebait catch.

Whitebait

During the months of August to November visitors to the streams around Pauatahanui Inlet will see the occasional person perched on the bank, eyes focussed on the water. What they are keenly hoping for is a large catch of small freshwater fish carried upstream in shoals on the incoming tide. These are the young of several species of fish which are treated as a delicacy by culinary aficionados and ordinary people alike. Known collectively as whitebait they are cooked in various recipes, the best known of these being fritters.

While the five species that make up whitebait are all found in New Zealand waters only three species have been recorded in Pauatahanui Inlet streams. The majority of the catch consists of the very widely distributed *Galaxias maculatus* or inanga, with a much smaller percentage of *Galaxias argenteus* (the endangered giant kōkopu) and *Galaxias fasciatus* (the banded kōkopu). Inanga are the smallest of the species, rarely exceeding 110mm in length, but the one whose life cycle is most fully understood.



Galaxias maculatus - adult
Photo: Stephen Moore

Found in places as far flung as Chile, Argentina and Australia, *G maculatus* is the most widely distributed native freshwater fish in the world. It is also the shortest lived of the whitebait species. Inanga, the New Zealand name, inhabit lowland slow-moving streams within a short distance of the sea and are poor climbers, avoiding waterfalls or steep gradients. Swimming together in shoals the adults feed on aquatic and terrestrial insects and crustaceans. Together they migrate downstream to the estuaries during the extra-high spring tides of autumn and spawn on overhanging fringing vegetation within the estuarine boundary. Many adults die after spawning and those that survive the first year will die after the second.

The eggs develop out of water, above the normal high tide limit, until the next spring tide occurs, two to four weeks later. On re-submersion the eggs hatch and the larvae are carried out to sea. Here they spend 5-6 months as plankton feeders before returning during spring, not always to the same river, as shoals of 50mm long whitebait. The translucent juveniles swim against the river's flow keeping near the edge where the current is weakest. The rest of their lives are spent maturing into adults higher up the river before the migration begins again the following autumn.



Galaxias maculatus - juvenile
Photo: Stephen Moore

FEATURE ARTICLE cont....

Of the other two species adult banded kōkopu have numerous pale stripes across the body and can grow up to 26cm long. They are good climbers and make their way well up-river until they find small forest streams with plenty of cover and shade. Like other galaxiids banded kōkopu have sensors on their heads to detect when and where something hits the water, enabling them to feed on insects that fall from overhanging plants.

The giant kōkopu is a secretive species and loves having plenty of cover to hide under, preferring gently flowing overgrown streams, swampy lagoons and lake edges. They are skulking predators, lurking under cover and making speedy dashes to nab their prey.

Both banded kōkopu and giant kōkopu are also incorrectly called native or Māori trout.

Each species of whitebait have particular areas for spawning and inanga are no exception. A survey of all inanga spawning grounds by Wellington Regional Council in July 2001 identified, at that time, several such locations in the rivers and streams entering Pauatahanui Inlet. In Duck Creek it was an area of tall fescue, toetoe and flax overhanging the stream. At Pauatahanui a new bridge was being constructed over the stream and two nearby areas were identified with tall fescue, toetoe, blackberry and mint. The Horokiri stream was found to be an unlikely spawning area due to grazing and removal of riparian vegetation, and there was no likely area on the Kakaho stream due to mechanical grading of the riverbanks. So locations for spawning were seen to be limited and an education programme was set up to help improve the situation. A lot has happened since then in most locations, with the exception of Duck Creek, but we are not aware of any new surveys undertaken to establish the current condition of these spawning sites.

Whitebaiting in New Zealand is a seasonal activity with a fixed and limited, legally enforced, period of time when the whitebait normally migrate up-river. The strict control over net sizes, and rules against blocking the river to channel the fish into the net, aim to allow sufficient quantity of whitebait to reach the adult habitat and maintain stock levels.

The term 'whitebait' is not just a New Zealand term but one used in other parts of the world as a general name for the immature fry of many important food fish such as herring, sprat, sardines, mackerel, bass and others. In England whitebait is mostly fully marine Clupeidae fish, mainly herring. They are normally coated in batter and deep-fried until crisp, then served hot with a drizzle of lemon juice. Does that sound tasty!



THE POLICIES OF GOPI

Roads ring much of the Inlet shoreline. These roads have considerably damaged the natural character and ecology of the Inlet. The loss of wetlands around the Inlet margin over the years has had a significant impact on the ecology of the Inlet and an even greater impact on the Onepoto Arm of the harbour.

Storm water run-off from roads in the Inlet catchment is a source of pollution because it contains residues from oil and other spillages and from tyre and brake wear and incompletely burnt hydrocarbons.

The ever-increasing volume of traffic on SH58 and Grays Road poses potentially severe safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists and thus reduces the attractiveness of the Inlet as a place for recreation.

The Transmission Gully Motorway (TGM) will be the main route from the Kapiti Coast to Porirua, Wellington and the Hutt Valley. It will direct traffic away from the immediate environs of the Inlet. We believe that TGM has greater potential for reducing the negative impact of roads on the environment of the Inlet than the upgrading of the coastal route. Therefore one of our policies was formulated to give our opinion on the forthcoming new highway development.

As part of our newsletter feature on the policies of the Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet we have also included this new policy here for your information.

GUARDIANS OF PAUATAHANUI INLET

Roading Policy

The Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet (GOPI) opposes the upgrading of the coastal route and supports the building of the Transmission Gully Motorway as soon as is possible.

Policy formulated March 2000, amended August 2009



FAMILY CORNER

Colouring in Exercise

Here's a different exercise to test your skills. For those of you who have an artistic bent with paint or crayon, or perhaps felt-tipped pens, we have reduced the photograph of these kayakers playing on the Inlet down to a black-and-white image that can be re-coloured with a bit of imagination. We thank Merryn Giblin for the original print which won the Best Junior in the Recreation category in last year's photo competition.



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.qopi.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.



Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet

www.gopi.org.nz
pauainlet@gmail.com

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 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:		

(e-banking only)

We'd like to send you newsletters and notices via email. May we do this?

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 THE FORM. THANK YOU AND WELCOME