



The Inlet

Newsletter for Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet

APRIL

2023

The Inlet is a newsletter that brings together local and regional news affecting the Pāuatahanui 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 CHAIR

Stormwater and its effective management is of critical importance to the health of the Inlet. Stormwater comes from direct sources such as culverts and streams, and also from diffuse over-the-ground sources. It carries, and then deposits, all the sediment, mud and related pollutants that are progressively degrading the water quality and ecosystem health of this estuary. The Inlet currently receives some 4mm or more of sediment and mud-deposition each year but this figure needs to be less than 1mm/yr for sustainable Inlet health.

Recently, the Government announced version two of its 'Three Waters' reform bill called, euphemistically perhaps, 'Affordable Waters Reform'. Ten water authorities will be created and in the Wellington region this will mean that the area covered by the Greater Wellington Regional Council (Wellington and Wairarapa) will be the area of our Water Authority. Even so, 'affordable' means that by 2054 Porirua households are estimated to be paying an extra \$2,280 per year, in 2023 dollars, for water supply, sewerage and stormwater disposal. The difference from the current Wellington Water organisation will, apparently, be a complete financial (balance sheet) separation from local authorities thus enabling greater borrowing capability and, presumably, operational independence.

The good news in version two of the reform is that stormwater management can be much more directly linked to land use and land-use planning. This linkage is critical as stormwater pollutants are all sourced from land use in its various forms. The health of the Inlet depends on this direct linkage. The Government's resource management reforms (The Natural and Built Environment and Spatial Planning Acts) postulate land use and natural resource plans being developed at the regional scale, so it should be possible for the regional planning and water management agencies to work together — hopefully seamlessly. This would have been much more difficult with version one of the water reforms with much larger water units covering multiple regional areas.

Wellington Water is currently developing a Stormwater Management Strategy. It is a long-term approach to reducing contamination from its stormwater networks. This will provide and implement a new and, from GOPI's point of view, much more desirable focus on stream and harbour health rather than flood management. It will be a multi-agency approach working across and with councils, roading authorities and parks agencies.



From the Chair cont....

The Stormwater Management Strategy will work on large sub-catchments with the Inlet being mostly an entire sub-catchment. These units are yet to be fully defined and prioritized but GOPI will be involved in the consultation process for this work.

By the middle of this year Wellington Water will submit applications for consents. The consent process is expected to take two years or more. Wellington Water estimates the stormwater project will cost \$1 billion over the 35 years they plan for.

So, with version two of the water reforms, and Wellington Water's current plans, the trajectory for stormwater management looks positive and appropriately connected to all forms of land use. And the focus on harbour health is a really important initiative.

However, on the down-side of the ledger, the bad news for the water reform, including Wellington Water's plan, is that they do nothing about non-urban (rural) sources of stormwater and related pollution. The key inflows into the Inlet — the Kakaho, Horokiri and Pāuatahanui streams — all drain rural catchments. It will probably only be when some further parts of these catchments are urbanized, including perhaps cluster type rural/residential living, that they might become part of the water authority's mandate. Until then water management is entirely in the hands of the property owners, helped as resources allow by city and regional council advisors and the rules imposed by license requirements and water-discharge regulations related to sewage treatment and disposal.

Over the last few years the record of poorly managed non-urban pollution has resulted in thousands of tonnes of sediment and mud and related contaminants being dumped into the Inlet. Transmission Gully Motorway construction was a major source of this contamination with well over three hundred incidents exceeding the resource consent limits. A prosecution decision in the Environment Court in 2021 found that the TGM CPD-HEB Joint Venture had taken no action for nearly a month to stop sediment entering streams and the Inlet via Duck Creek. Another major source of contamination is urban development, which these days seems to require huge volumes of earthworks. This contributes to the sediment and mud load prior to water systems being established. Forestry clearance practices also pose risks from sediment.

On the plus side, the work of Porirua City with its streamside (riparian) planting project will certainly help rural water management. And GOPI's Inlet Planting Project has helped by revegetating saltmarsh on the shoreline of the intertidal area.

We now await the implementation of the water and resource management reforms. The current models may not survive if different arrangements in this politically-charged area of policy lead to further changes.

Let's hope in the next year we get some stability that leads to the better outcomes that are sorely needed for the health of the Inlet.

Lindsay Gow



A TREASURER IS NEEDED

First and foremost we need a new treasurer.

For the last few years we have been supported by the admirable skills of Stephen O'Neil, keeping our books in good order while at the same time holding down a job, a family and several other extra-mural activities. Unfortunately the demands on his time have become such that he, reluctantly, has admitted that he needs to relinquish his role with GOPI.

Stephen will be stepping down at our AGM in June and at that point we will need someone new to take his place.

If you, or someone you know, would like to take on the role, which is not demanding but supports a great team and our important mission for the Inlet, then please let us know before the AGM and we will be happy to nominate that person during election of the committee for the coming year.

To express interest please contact Lindsay Gow, 235 5052 or 021 159 2384, or via pauainlet@gmail.com.

ON THE HORIZON

AGM

Talking of the AGM, our 2023 Annual General Meeting is scheduled for 29 June. This will take place in the evening, the details of time, venue and guest speaker to be notified via email and our website when they are confirmed. However, we always hope each year that a good number of our members will come to the meeting so this is by way of advance notice to give you a chance to plan ahead.

Hope to see you there.

New GOPI Website

The new website is progressing well and is expected to go live in the next month or two.

On the site will be features that help users to read this newsletter on-screen in a full page format, without downloading or printing. The site also includes an easy way to become a member of our charity by applying purely on line, and a form for submitting comments and recommendations that we hope will encourage any visitor to the site to suggest updates and improvements.

A lot of the content from our current site will be incorporated into the new one, updated to provide an improved source of information about the Inlet and the wildlife that can be found there. However, the appearance will be quite different from the current site and will better enable users of mobiles and tablets to view the website in greater clarity than currently possible.

We really hope that the site will be well received by all who visit it and we look forward to receiving your feedback.



YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKSHOP

Last year we cancelled the photographic competition and with it, the Youth Workshop. The year before, 2021, we had too few applicants to run a workshop and the year before that.....well, Covid-19 was a major disruptor of all events.

So, it was with eager anticipation that this year's workshop would go ahead and be a success. But a week before the due date of Sunday 5 March we only had one — just one — applicant. By Thursday there were still only two. Then, with just two days to go, another seven applicants registered their interest and suddenly we had a workshop to run!

It has become obvious that we are missing the exposure that the Whitby Newsbrief used to give us, along with that of the Kapi-Mana News which has changed its viewpoint on advertising. Our website and Facebook page would appear to give us little exposure unless we point the public directly to them. That is in fact what happened when a Facebook user re-posted our Facebook notice onto the Whitby Community Page and alerted local families. Then we got the audience we needed.

So, in the end we had nine enthusiastic local youngsters turn up to the Wildlife Reserve with a mixture of real cameras and mobile phones, to take photos of the Reserve and its surroundings.

Keith Harrison of Porirua Photography Club took the class for the first time, focussing on different aspects of the visual art that photography encompasses, supported by Destina Munro who has run the workshop in previous years.

After the classroom session Keith gathered the young photographers outside and selected a few locations around the Reserve to give advice on putting the classroom lessons into practice.

It's unfortunate that this particular day was more overcast than in previous years tending to make images a little flat in contrast and therefore not so dynamic. However a lot was achieved in the failing light and the youngsters made good use of the time with some exciting images created by many of them.



These three adventurous individuals climbed a tree to get a better view. (Photo: Keith Harrison).



Getting down to ground level. (Photo: Michael Waldron)

There were some adventurous individuals who took that extra step to capture the surroundings with flair and others that got down low to get some close-up detail.

YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKSHOP cont....

Feedback from several parents was very positive and it is likely that some of the photographs taken during the field excursion will be submitted as entries to the forthcoming photographic competition, under the Youth or Junior categories.

We wish them the best of luck.



The workshop attendees at the Estuary Hide — minus one. Includes Keith Harrison, rear far left and Destina Munro, middle row second from the right. Two parents also attended and are at the rear.

And the missing one? Can you see that arm off the to very left of image above?

(Photo: Michael Waldron)



Yes, it's that same girl as before, aiming for some low down shots!

(Photo: Michael Waldron)

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITIONS

GOPI decided that it would run our own photographic competition again this year, aware of course that the Porirua Harbour Trust, in conjunction with Porirua Photography Club, is already organizing a harbour-wide competition due to take place late in 2023.

All details of our competition can be found on our website on the [Competition Page](#). If you weren't already aware of this initiative there is still time as closing date is not until 10 May. All our rules and terms of entry are the same as in previous years but can still be found on the above page if you need to review them. Sponsorship for the competition awards and venues is all organized and the judge will be Geoff Marshall who has been the mainstay of the competition for many years.

At this stage it is uncertain whether we will be continuing with this event in coming years in view of the more expansive competition focused on Te Awarua o Porirua and catchment. Our Chair, Lindsay Gow, circulated the membership by email earlier this year with an explanation of this new initiative but in case you missed it, the details are as follows:

The Porirua Photography Club, The Porirua Harbour Trust, Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet, and Mountains to the Sea Trust are collaborating on a proposal to foster awareness of Te Awarua o Porirua (both arms and their waterways) through a photographic competition and exhibition in the Bottle Creek Gallery at Pataka.

We want to celebrate what is special about our harbour and its waterways, to confront the challenges it faces, and honour the work people are doing to nurture a resilient harbour. We also want to increase visibility of the community group partners hosting the competition and exhibition.

The competition is aimed at photographers of all levels, from beginners to expert. All forms of photography will be encouraged, including cellphone photos. We will include open and under-18 categories.

The competition themes will build on the Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet competition categories and include:

- *Scenic;*
- *Nature, including underwater;*
- *Recreation;*
- *Artistic;*
- *Challenges to the health of the harbour;*
- *Lending a hand to look after the harbour.*

Entries will be digital (with a limit of 6 photos per person), with just the finalist photos printed. At the moment the organisers think that the entries would open on 13 October and close on 19 November, with the Bottle Creek exhibition of the photos running 1 February to 31 March 2024.

The organisers also say that, in common with photographic competition rules, only photos that have not won prizes/awards in other competitions (such as the GOPI Inlet competition) would be eligible. However, if unsuccessful in the current GOPI competition, the image(s) can also be submitted into this wider event.

So, there is a lot to think about in the next six months for keen photographers to get to grips with.

THE ANNUAL INLET CLEAN-UP



Registration at Browns Bay November 2021

Once a year we organise this community supported clean-up of all the shores circling the Pāuatahanui Inlet, an event normally held on a Sunday towards the end of the year. We select a day when the tide cycle is at its ebb, giving the best access to the shore, and in 2022 the scheduled date was 27 November. We always advertise that this event will go ahead come rain or shine and have never before had to cancel. But, on the day in question, the weather decided to exert itself to such a degree that it would have been very uncomfortable and generally impractical to go ahead with the event this time. In fact, at the appointed start time of 10:30 there was a deluge!

So at the last minute we cancelled the exercise, attempting to notify everyone where possible by website, emails and phone calls. For those who had not heard of the cancellation, and were determined to 'weather' the event at all costs, a couple of us from GOPI hung around Browns Bay, advising any arrivals of the last minute change of plan.

A postponed date was eventually chosen to be 12 March this year, although in this case it was well after low tide and the waters were chasing some people up the shores. This time however, the weather played ball. Dry, hazy sunshine and only a slight breeze. Ideal conditions in fact.

About 50 people took part, enough for us to cover all the shoreline. While many were from the Porirua localities, people from other areas such as the Hutt Valley and northern Wellington also joined in. There was a group of about ten geo-cachers, a club that regularly supports the event, and five men from Downers, led by Dean Bradley, who came from the Transmission Gully environment team. We also had members of the Pāuatahanui Eco Church and the Pāuatahanui Anglican church.

With registration starting at 10:30, Lindsay, Janet and Ray were on hand at Browns Bay to record the volunteers and direct small teams to different stretches of the shoreline to be scoured. Roni Mohan, a member of Conservation Volunteers, was there to supply rubbish bags, gloves, hi-vis vests and a welcome smile.

By midday all the teams were returning with their bags and while we don't know how many were collected, they were all gathered at one end of the Browns Bay car park for a PCC truck to collect. The amount of rubbish does seem to be slowly decreasing year-on-year since the clean-ups were started 25 years ago and this is helped by some people who go out during the year. One of our members is a very regular rubbish collector.

For all those who stayed to the end, Ray Ryan fired up the sausage sizzle on the BBQ trailer supplied by Toyota with the food donated by Paremata Auto Services.

Clean-up ...cont.

Thanks go to Toyota and Paremata Auto Services for their contribution, to Conservation Volunteers New Zealand and Roni Mohan who helped out and liaised with PCC etc. and, of course, to all the volunteers who took part on the day — a very big Thank You.

Note. We, unfortunately, don't have photos of this year's event so the one at the top is taken from the last clean-up in 2021.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Our coverage of the various birds seen in the Inlet has included the white-faced heron, oystercatcher, black swan and the different shag species. However, there is another magnificent bird that we have so far missed out. This large bird has been seen more frequently in recent times, and in growing numbers, around the estuary. This month's feature article corrects that omission by focussing on this iconic bird of New Zealand.

The Royal Spoonbill

The royal spoonbill (*Platalea regia*), or kōtuku ngutupapa, is probably the most impressive bird to be seen in the Pāuatahanui Inlet. Usually found in flocks of half a dozen individuals, a count of around 20 of these magnificent wading birds have been observed from time to time on our shores.

The royal spoonbill is easily recognisable. A large, bulky but long-legged, white bird (80cm tall) with a very long heavy-weight black bill, distinguished by its outstanding spoon-shaped tip. It can often be seen



Highly Commended-Nature 2016
Christine Jacobson: Pas de Deux

Photo taken by Christine Jacobson for the 2016 Photo Competition.

standing on one leg while, when flying, it always extends its head and neck straight out in front. During the breeding season the appearance is enhanced by long white plumes that grow from the back of the head and coloured patches that appear on the face, features that are used during the rituals used to find a mate.

Feature Article ...cont.

Unlike its appearance, the spoonbill call is unremarkable, consisting of grunts, groans and hisses, with chew and cho calls made at the nest.

Often found alongside heron colonies, the royal spoonbill is a bird more closely related to the ibis, while its nearest immediate relative is a similar East-Asian bird, the black-faced spoonbill (*Platalea minor*).

Despite being seen around much of New Zealand the royal spoonbill is not an endemic species, occurring as it does all around the south western Pacific continents of Australasia, Zealandia and Asia including Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. It is one of six spoonbill species worldwide but the only one to breed in New Zealand.

It was unknown in New Zealand before the 19th century. Then, in 1861, the first to appear was recorded at Castlepoint when an individual bird was observed. It is thought to have visited our islands from Australia, found the climate acceptable and stayed. For the next 90 years only a few casual visitors were seen but then, in 1948, the first breeding colony was observed at Okarito, South Westland. Population counts in 1977 still found that only 52 birds were estimated to be here but by 2012 (the last census taken) this number had risen to 2,360 birds.

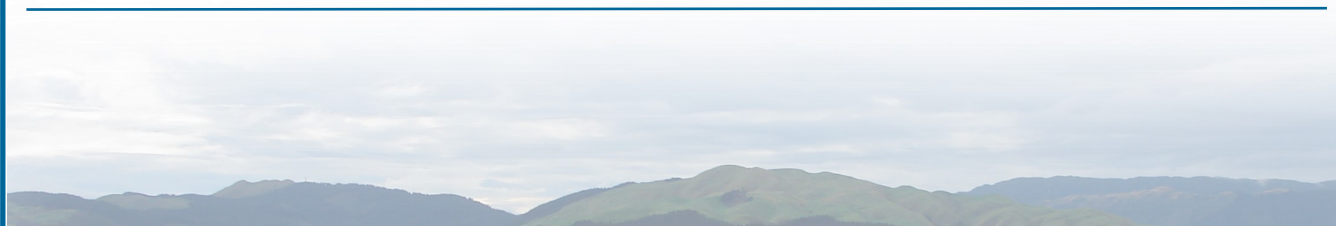
The spoonbill is a wading bird found in intertidal flats and the shallows of fresh and saltwater wetlands. It feeds and roosts in flocks. Foodwise it is a carnivore, obtaining sustenance from a mix of fish, crustaceans and small insects.

Its feeding technique is unusual and distinctive. It uses the bill, held perpendicular to the water surface and slightly open, to slowly sweep in a broad arc from side to side while slowly walking forward as it does so. The spoonbill's enlarged spoon-shaped tip of its beak forms a 'hydrofoil' — a kind of wing — flat on the bottom but convex on the top. Like an aeroplane wing, it's a shape that creates lift, causing a swirling vortex that disturbs the sediment, sucking invertebrates up and out into the water column. Then, the tip of the beak contains vibration receptors that detect the presence of prey in the water and when an item is sensed it switches to an intensive sweeping of a small area. Snapping its bill shut on a prey animal it then lifts its head and lets the morsel slide down its throat.

Breeding begins in October when birds gather to carry out complex courtship displays culminating in monogamous pairing. Bowl-shaped nests are constructed in trees overhanging water in which 2 to 4 white eggs are laid from November to February, hatching 20-25 days later. With both parents sharing the duties, the chicks fledge after seven weeks, the young birds staying in the family group until dispersing to the usual wintering sites.

Royal spoonbills are sensitive to disturbance during the breeding season and are vulnerable to urban developments and recreational activities. Thus it is important to keep your distance when viewing the birds during this time.

Back in 2019, in an article for Dominion Post, wetland bird expert Murray Williams estimated that more than 100 of these birds nest in Wellington in the springtime, with a colony on Kāpiti Island that flock to the Pāuatahanui Inlet to feed. They can often be seen there, either at the mouth of the Horokiri stream, or in the Wildlife Reserve, as a group all standing on one leg, just passing the time.





Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet

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MEMBERSHIP FORM

To join the Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet you may pay your subscription in person or on line.

TO MAKE YOUR PAYMENT	NOTE
<p>Pay your subscription at a bank branch, or on line, into our Westpac account: 03-1533-0009387-00. When on line, use the 'Particulars', 'Code' and 'Reference' columns to write your surname, initials and the period of your sub (1-yr or 5-yr).</p>	<p>We do not have a postal address so please email all correspondence.</p> <p>If you have something that cannot be delivered electronically please send a request by email and we will contact you to arrange collection.</p>

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(If you are filling in this form electronically **CLICK** at the beginning of a dotted line and then type).

Name	
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Please put 'x' next to the subscription you are paying. (For electronic completion **HIGHLIGHT** the box and type a lower case 'x').

You can also make a donation. (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"/>
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Donation \$	Do you require a receipt for your sub?	<input type="checkbox"/>	or your donation?
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We'd like to send you newsletters and notices via email. May we do this?

Please put 'x' in a box if you would like to take part in one or more of our activities.

Annual Clean Up day	<input type="checkbox"/>	Submissions to local bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Three-yearly cockle survey	<input type="checkbox"/>	Restoration Planting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Website and video clips	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Now email the form to: pauainlet@gmail.com

Thank you and welcome to the Guardians