



Great Barrier Island Charitable Trust

ANNUAL REPORT - GREAT BARRIER ISLAND TRUST

April 2009 – March 2010

Throughout 2009 the Trustees worked away researching and writing the Great Barrier State of Environment Report (SOER). By the close of the year, and especially in early 2010, the Trust had made great progress on several of its key objectives.

During the year we published and distributed four issues of Environmental News, in which most of the activities mentioned in this report are discussed in greater detail. This Newsletter continues to be our main outlet for information and is widely read on the island.

The Trustees met formally for trust business six times during the year, but we had numerous less formal meetings.

In April the 'final' bird count report was delivered to Biodiversity Advice Fund (DOC), and a Great Barrier Island bird checklist compiled.

In May we held an open day at the Morton Families Palmer's Beach Farm property, where we had speakers covering farming within a conservation context, especially aspects of funding and pest management, this workshop was titled "Farming in Transition" and had a good turnout of participants.

This was followed in June by a meeting at the Motairehe Marae, where the Trust explained its vision to Ngati Rehua. This was the first of a series of successful discussions with local Iwi which we regard as a very significant step for the Trust.

In June Sue Daly organised a mid-winter bird count and a kaka count in conjunction with Suzi Phillips in Auckland.

By late July we had received reviews of the full SOER, and deadlines for its revision and completion were set at the August Trust meeting. Arrangements for publication of two versions (an abridged and a full version) and for the 'launch', in combination with the Hauraki Gulf Forum in February 2010, were also initiated.

In September the Trust participated in an evening of lectures and film at Tryphena Club, organised by Des Casey for DOC to mark Conservation Week. This cooperation with DOC was continued in November, when the Department hosted a very successful Forum for all the Conservation Trusts on the island and in February 2010, when the Trust chairperson gave a talk at Okiwi Station about GBI wetlands, to mark World Wetlands Week.

November also marked the start of a new relationship with the Great Barrier Island Community Board. Although our first meetings did not produce the funding support we had hoped for (to pay for the publication and distribution of the abridged version of the SOER to all GBI residents), never-the-less a dialogue was started, which continued through the ‘poisoning paradise’ debate and the more recent ‘schedule 4 – mining Te Ahumata’ issue. “Poisoning Paradise” is the name of a film purporting to show the negative aspects of the aerial application of 1080 for possum and rodent control in New Zealand. This film was shown twice (November and January), and a follow-up film and discussion was hosted by DOC in February. These meetings generated some vigorous discussion, but were well chaired by the Community Board (Paul Downie and Richard Somerville-Ryan), and the Trust probably clarified its position in the minds of some members of the community. The feedback we received, both positive and negative, will be useful to the Trust as we move ahead to consider the practicalities and feasibility of pest eradication in more detail in 2010.

In December 2009 we had our first meeting with Rawiri Wharemate, the new chairperson of the Ngati Rehua Trust Board, we presented the Trust’s ‘Environmental Awards’ to the selected pupils at all the island’s Schools, and Fenella and Liz manned a stall advertising our work at the Santa Parade. The “RAT Car” stayed in the garage this year!

Most of January and February 2010 we were flat out with the last minute collation and publishing of the abridged, then the full, versions of the SOER. The technical aspects of this were quite considerable, but we were helped by skilled staff at Auckland Regional Council.

John Ogden and Judy Gilbert also worked on a paper for the conference: “Island Invasives: Eradication and Management”. This was an International Conference with over 200 delegates from all over the world (23 countries!) hosted by the Centre for Biodiversity and Biosecurity at the Tamaki campus of Auckland University in February. John presented a paper entitled “Running the gauntlet – promoting eradication of rats and feral cats on an inhabited island”, which described some of the trials and tribulations of the Trust in its first seven years! This was a great opportunity to discuss our vision with scientists and administrators who are also concerned with loss of island biodiversity all over the world. We are not alone in attempting eradication on an inhabited island, and there are lessons to be learned from the experiences of others.

February and March 2010 saw a marked increase in the Trust’s profile in the Auckland Region, and also on Great Barrier Island. The full version of the State of Environment Report was launched at the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, which was attended by Tangata Whenua, the Minister of Conservation (Kate Wilkinson), the Regional Conservator (Sean Goddard) and the chair of the Auckland Regional Council (Mike Lee) to name but a few of the large gathering of local dignitaries! Later (March 30th) John gave a presentation about the SOER and Great Barrier Island to a Symposium on the Hauraki Gulf hosted by the Auckland War Memorial Museum and the Hauraki Gulf Forum at the Museum in Auckland. This meeting was also very well attended (c. 300) and John’s presentation was well received.

Also in March John and Sue Daly presented a full copy of the SOER to the Great Barrier Community Board, while Judy Gilbert and Liz Westbrooke were invited to give a PowerPoint presentation of our vision to a full meeting of the Hauraki Gulf Forum. Liz also gave a similar presentation to the Auckland Conservation Board. These presentations resulted in both bodies endorsing our SOER recommendation for a full-scale technical feasibility study of rat and feral cat eradication on Great Barrier. We are now moving ahead in negotiations, while recognising the absolute requirement for community consultation and involvement of all stakeholders.

The final twist in the year was the announcement by the Government of a review of Schedule 4 conservation land with a view to opening it to mining. The Trust spoke out against this at several meetings, and became involved in the wider campaign to stop mining, especially on Great Barrier Island. It was in fact quite heartening to see the extent to which, when it is obviously put at risk, the majority of people on Great Barrier Island will stand up and speak out for their environment. It is perhaps a pity that the effects of rats and cats are not as obvious, but what with 'Poisoning Paradise', the DOC 'down-size', and the mining issue, the relevance of having the SOER should be apparent to all!

As in previous years we have been very well supported by sponsors and granting agencies and our financial position is stable.

Thank you to all, especially to Biodiversity Advice Fund (DOC), Robert Jones, Natural Habitats, Raeburn Bequest, the Graham Hirst Kitney Charitable Trust and the ASB Community Trust. We really appreciate all the support we have received from our funders and all our generous supporters.

We have also been well supported this year by all those individuals and agencies who contributed so much time, knowledge and other skills to assist us with the SOER. Thank you again – your support gives the document lasting value as a resource for environmental issues on Great Barrier Island.

John Odgen,
Chairperson