

Annual Report of the Great Barrier Island Charitable Trust, 2010
John Ogden (Chairperson)

The year has been an important one for the governance of Great Barrier, with the formation of a Local Board with greater autonomy than the previous Community Board, and a much clearer legislative requirement to address environmental wellbeing. Much of the Trust's efforts in 2010 (and early 2011) have been to try to get community concerns over biodiversity decline into the Local Board Plan. So far the plans are still in the draft stage, but they do include a commitment to 'undertake a consultation exercise on pest management and eradication' so we celebrate the progress of our vision to this stage.

In summary the Trust submitted that in order to sustain both the ecology and the economy of Great Barrier, activity is needed in three areas:

1. Improving and protecting biodiversity. This means considering the options available for pest management and eradication. The whole island – private and public land- must be considered in this regard, which implies wide community consultation. Herein lies our proposal for an "Issues and Options" study to address (a) the ecological issues, (b) the economic implications (which are considerable), and (c) the possible effects – through employment – on GBI population growth and demography. There are tremendous opportunities for capitalising on the improved biodiversity outcomes that could be achieved if the major pests could be eliminated or effectively managed.
2. Visitor awareness. Ensuring that more visitors are aware of, and can access, what is presently available as biodiversity experience on Great Barrier. Too many visitors go away commenting on the lack of bird life. The Department of Conservation, Council and tourism agencies need to work together to promote the island and manage the resource and the infrastructure needed to access it. DoC is leading this dialogue. We recommended the appointment of a research officer to collate information, measure the annual cycle of visitor numbers and assess accommodation requirements into the future.
3. Building capacity in job skills linking biodiversity with economic growth. Here also we see the need for the appointment of someone with skills in biodiversity management, biosecurity and monitoring techniques, to grow local skills in these areas for future employment.

This submission thus emphasises the third part of our mission statement: "to work towards building an ecology-based economic framework for Great Barrier Island". While rat and feral cat eradication are still central to our mission statement, the vision has always been much wider, and our new vision statement "Bring back the Kokako" encapsulates that. Here is an iconic bird (illustrated this year on the cover of Issue 23 of the Environmental News), once frequent on the island and still present within living memory. The last pair were removed to Little Barrier in 1994, otherwise they too would have been eliminated by mammalian pests. We can work out together how to achieve our vision, if we as a community have the will to do so.

Most of the Trust's activities in 2010 have been reported in Editorials in the quarterly 'Environmental News' (Issues # 21 - 24), which is the chief means of communication with our membership. Significant events included the time consuming mining debacle and the completion of the kaka count programme. This was a particularly satisfying exercise as it involved many of our members and led to some clear factual results. We plan to instigate something similar in future.

Our membership continues to grow steadily. Member's contributions have in some cases been very generous and we are most grateful to you all. Member's contributions are not 'tied' to particular outcomes in the way that grants often are, so they provide us with a little flexibility, especially allowing us to engage with the local community in collecting base-line data through bird counts and such-like activities. Thank you all!

During the year four new trustees were appointed: Peter Edmonds, Emmy Pratt, Wayne Anderson and Kate Waterhouse. Also we are very pleased to have Kay Stowell and Karen Walker as honorary members. Sue Daly resigned to take up her role with the Local Board, and we've not yet got a replacement for Izzy Fordham from that Board. Des Casey has continued to keep us updated with the activities of DOC, and we have also had contributions from Tim Higham of the Hauraki Gulf Forum. I'd like to personally say 'thankyou' to all the trustees and representatives who make our meetings so active and inspirational! Thanks too to Fenella Christian for managing to keep the record straight and for dealing with the accounts. At Trust meetings we find that we are concerned about many 'environmental issues' on Great Barrier but we try to keep focussed on the big picture of biodiversity protection and enhancement on Great Barrier Island for now and the future.