



# The Inlet

Newsletter for Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet

DECEMBER

2021

*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

It's been an unpredictable year, with the spread of Covid-19 introducing restrictions to all. But, despite this, it has been a successful year for GOPI as we have managed to carry out all of our planned commitments.

We held the photographic competition which had to be cancelled last year. There were fewer participants this time and, unfortunately, the workshop for younger photographers had to be cancelled due to a lack of participants. Even so, several stunning photos were submitted. These are available on our website.

The Inlet Planting Project got underway in August along parts of Motukaraka Point. There was a useful turn out of some 40 to 50 volunteers who planted approximately 800 Sea Rush (*Juncus kraussii*) along selected parts of the foreshore. Another event was scheduled for Ivey Bay in November but that had to be cancelled owing to bad weather. For the New Year we have planned another event in February, probably in Browns Bay.

We ran the annual Inlet Clean-Up in November, again with markedly fewer numbers than usual. Instead of the average of 50, we had only 18 volunteers but we managed to clean up most parts of the Inlet. (See the article on page 4)

The long awaited Transmission Gully Motorway was scheduled to be completed by the end of September this year. As the article on page 6 points out, there is as yet no sign of it opening. From an environmental viewpoint it has been a sad sequence of non-compliance with too much sediment escaping from the construction areas. When it is operational, with the important resource consent sign-offs approved, its impact on the Inlet should start to improve.

On a more positive note, our submissions on plans and consents have resulted in several successes:

- The development at 39A Paekakariki Road (on the corner of Grays Road in Pauatahanui Village) is now underway. It contains a number of measures that will help reduce, and better manage, stormwater run-off.
- The Regional Parks Plan provides for the removal of grazing from regional parks, Belmont Park in particular. Native vegetation will gradually be developed, especially in riparian areas, with positive benefits to the landscape and the Inlet.
- Porirua City has budgeted \$600,000 annually to engage in a significant riparian planting programme. This will complement the constructive >>>



### *From the Chair - cont....*

relationship we have with Porirua City Council on Inlet planting.

- Greater Wellington has finally committed resources towards the important Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Implementation programme. It sets out outcomes and measures that will lead to marked improvements in water quality and the health of the Inlet. Our submissions helped achieve this result.
- The Plimmerton Farm Plan Change is now operative. It contains several provisions that will help protect the on-site and downstream environments – provisions that were strongly advocated by GOPI and other submitters.
- The Proposed District Plan hearings are now underway. The related council officers' *Section 42A* reports have recommended the adoption of a number of our submission points.
- Porirua City is now planning work on Climate Change adaptation – something we have advocated for during the year.

Next year, in addition to our regular activities, we have the triennial cockle count – the longest running citizen science programme in New Zealand. It will be held some time in November.

Porirua City is developing a major programme, involving community organisations in activities to support and complement its riparian and foreshore planting projects. This is likely to involve environmental monitoring of streams and the harbour. We will find out more about this in the New Year, along with the release of a major report on stream and catchment quality.

So, 2022 looks promising in terms of meaningful and practical activities that will help improve water and ecological quality in the catchments and the harbour.

I would like to thank the Committee for their consistent and valuable contribution to all the GOPI activities, and to our members for their support. Finally, I wish you all an enjoyable, healthy and safe Christmas and New Year.

*Lindsay Gow (Chair)*

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## FIRST UP—ANOTHER NEW SECRETARY PLEASE!

This sounds like a recent article from April. It is however a new request. Marion Rosner, whom we were so happy to welcome aboard at the AGM this year, has had to resign her position of Secretary after only a few months. It goes without saying that we are sad to see her leave after such a short time. Marion's contribution had already been significant and we were looking forward to future input. Her legacy will live on in various ways.

So, we now of course need to find a replacement to continue our work and we are, again, sending out this request to our membership, and the wider

community, for expressions of interest for the position of Secretary.

As we always remind people, this is not a demanding role and basically only involves coming to our 6-weekly meetings and recording the decisions made by the 8-member committee. But it is an important role for us with which we can't really do without for long. The main requirements are an ability to listen and reasonable grammatical English writing skills. We always welcome any other talents that can be brought to the table to make life more interesting, but it is the recording of the minutes that is key. >>>

### *New Secretary cont....*

So, if you or anyone you know would like to have a go and be part of the management please contact

**Lindsay Gow**

**Tel: 235 5052; 021 159 2384;**

**Email: [ljagow@gmail.com](mailto:ljagow@gmail.com)**

## GOPI NOW HAS ITS OWN FLAG

**Y**es it's true. This is something that had been thought about in the past. The idea came up again recently and met with agreement by the current team. After some deliberation and a few iterations of the design, we settled on a teardrop flag bearing our logo, name and website address.

This is a photograph of the flag first used at our Clean-Up event on Sunday, 28 November.

Two flags are now part of the equipment we intend to bring along with us at any of the activities we take part in: clean-ups, cockle counts, restoration planting and school galas etc.

If you see this alongside the Inlet or at another location, you will know that members of GOPI are present doing their bit for the Inlet health and wellbeing. 🌿



## WEBSITE UPDATE

**F**or some years now our website has been hosted by a company called Chilliweb, headed by Eduardo Villatore. Ed has given us great service over this time and this continued even though he moved to Australia for a new career opportunity.

However, losing the advantage of a host on our doorstep was always seen as less than ideal and it was on the cards that we would at some stage find an alternative closer to home.

It is therefore really exciting to have Adam Rosner, Marion's husband, take over this role. Adam is an experienced website developer and was able to

migrate our site over from Chilliweb smoothly and seamlessly.

We are still using *Silverstripe* as the Content Management System (the CMS software that is used to lay out and write the pages for the site) but we are planning to migrate to *Wordpress* which is a more flexible and inclusive CMS platform. With that, we would like to create a new look for the website. A timeframe for this has yet to be established but we will keep you informed when progress is made towards this goal. 🌿



## 2021 INLET CLEAN-UP

This year's annual Inlet Clean-Up went according to plan but with a much reduced number of participants. We normally expect around 50 to turn up on the day. This time however there were only 18, plus the five members of the GOPI committee who came along to set up and organise the visitors. Even so we were able to take in most of the Inlet's shoreline. Conservation Volunteers were represented by Roni who supplied gloves and hi-viz jackets and also took some photos of the event. As usual, there were a number of members of the Geocaching group (one of whom came from Feilding) who enjoy visiting the Inlet for this activity as an alternative to their usual focus of attention.

This year's event was the first to display our flags (see our earlier article). These have been designed over the last few months in order to give our activities a higher visual presence wherever we are out and about. It was hoped they would be used for the restoration planting at the beginning of the month but that event was unfortunately cancelled due to the weather.



<<< Reception Desk at Browns Bay (SH58) with proudly displayed new flags.



Lindsay Gow helps Andre van Halderen sign in one of the volunteers

A good number of orange rubbish bags were filled by the different groups and individuals who scouted their allocated shoreline and by all accounts a wide variety of disposed items were collected. The usual cups, bottles and cans were common, frequently thrown from the windows of passing cars, as well as numerous cigarette butts, bottle tops, paper bags etc. Larger items included a couple of hub caps, polystyrene packaging that had been broken into multiple small pieces by a council mower, and a large plastic saucer for an indoor plant pot. Some of the more objectionable items included a used nappy left by the side of the road.



A collection of the rubbish bags filled during the morning.

We were lucky with the weather which was overcast, reducing the risk of sunburn, and with little wind early on this made the collection of rubbish easy to gather. The rain that did arrive happened after the morning collection was over and the welcomed sausage-sizzle at around midday had been enjoyed by all.

Many thanks to all who took part, in particular to Philip and Janet Reidy from Rotary who supplied the sausage sizzle, and Conservation Volunteers for their input into the activities. ☀

**Photos by Veronica (Roni) Mohan.  
(Conservation Volunteers NZ Team Leader)**

## FEATURE ARTICLE

On more than one occasion we have been asked if there are seahorses in the Inlet. They were certainly identified as being present in 1980 when a large survey was carried out for the purposes of a scientific study, co-ordinated by W.B.Healy in his book: *Pāuatahanui Inlet – an environmental study*. Since then, their occurrence has been sporadically reported and it's not known for sure if they are still present in any quantity today. In any case, this species is an interesting one and what this month's feature article is about.

### Hippocampus abdominalis (big-belly or pot-bellied seahorse)



With a global estimate of only 32 species, seahorses, while fascinating creatures, are a rare breed. This is very much so in New Zealand where, until recently, only one species has been recognised. This is the big-belly seahorse, *Hippocampus abdominalis*, one of the largest seahorse species in the world, and certainly the largest in Australasia where it can be found in both North and South Islands of New Zealand and also on Australia's south and south-east coasts.

Seahorses are fish with a bony skeleton but belong to an unusual order known as *Syngnathidae* which includes pipefish and seadragons. As the Latin name suggests, the jaws of these fish are fused together and therefore their method of feeding differs from other fish. The head of a seahorse has a long snout and is tilted forward, giving it the characteristic horse-head shape. And it has a long prehensile tail which coils to grip the aquatic plants that it attaches to. Another unusual characteristic that distinguishes seahorses in general is the presence of a bony exoskeleton which is covered in flesh, not scales. The ridged body means locomotion is solely by the fins which control movement accurately enough to

allow them to hover in one place.

Growing up to 35cm long, *H. abdominalis*' most individual feature, apart from its size, is the prominent abdomen of the male. There is a smooth, soft, pouch-like area at its base where the stomach meets the tail on the front side. In contrast, adult females have a compressed abdomen with a keel down the middle and a very obvious fin at the base. Males also have a fin there, but it is less obvious. The head of both sexes has a low triangular coronet, low rounded bumps above the eyes, and fleshy filaments.

Like chameleons, seahorses possess special pigment cells called chromatophores within the skin and they can change colour to match their surroundings. This is no different in the big-belly. The colour ranges from almost white to a mottled yellow, reddish or even brown, with irregular darker spots and blotches, and a broadly banded tail.

The natural habitat of *H. abdominalis* is normally shallow coastal and estuarine waters less than 50m deep. It is often seen clinging to seagrass but can be found associated with other marine plants such as algal seaweeds.

Because of the fused jaws, feeding is by a 'vacuum' process, sucking up small planktonic animals through the snout. Typical prey are very small crustacea or larval forms of other species. The seahorse can't >>>

### Feature Article cont....

chew its food but it is a voracious feeder, consuming up to 3,000 prey in a day. There is no stomach and only a short gut, which means that digestion is minimal, hence the need to eat so much. In search of food, it can travel daily hundreds of metres, being more active at night, stalking its prey thanks to the large dorsal fin. Keen eyesight is another feature developed for this mode of feeding and, also like chameleons, the eyes can move independently in all seahorse species.

Breeding occurs at one year old and can occur all year round but peaks during summer. It involves a courtship display initiated by the male, with significant colour changes using the chromatophores, giving both sexes a more vibrant appearance. Courtship ends with the female depositing her eggs into the male's pouch where they are fertilised and become embedded into the wall of the pouch. This, similar to the womb of mammals, contains a placental fluid. In other words, it is the male that becomes 'pregnant'. This is a major feature of seahorse biology that is different from fish in general, and why the male has a pouch at the base of the abdomen. Up to 900 young can be brood at the same time and there can be up to four broods in a summer. The eggs hatch after four weeks, usually during summer and coinciding with a full moon, and the juveniles emerge as miniature adults to become pelagic, drifting freely in the surface waters or attached to drifting seaweed, until big enough to swim on their own. In this state they are part of the zooplankton that adults rely on for their food supply.

The occurrence of this species in the Inlet has not been recorded regularly. They were identified in the 1980 survey that was part of Healy's detailed research into the Inlet, its history, geophysical and biological conditions.

However, Warrick Lyon, who conducted research into the rig shark in the Inlet for his PhD thesis when working for NIWA, had identified them on several occasions in recent times and Roni Mohan of Conservation Volunteers has seen them around Whitireia on her sub-aqua dive expeditions.

This species is likely to be facing increased threats from exploitation and habitat degradation in the future so it is hoped that this information contributes to the knowledge about *H. abdominalis*, making future conservation management easier to implement. ❀

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## TRANSMISSION GULLY MOTORWAY

As you are no doubt aware the 27km Transmission Gully Motorway is almost complete and it had been due to open in September of this year.

As with most major projects of this nature projected deadlines are rarely met and December is here already with still no sign of the grand opening. Covid-19 is cited as one of the reasons, but other factors have been at play in recent times. The *Wellington Gateway Partnership* overseeing the construction of this new road was hoping to make 18 December as the last practical date for opening in 2021. Any later in the month would have coincided with Christmas and the New Year. An opening coinciding with major calendar events with the expected influx of out-of-town traffic at the same time, Covid-19 permitting, was not considered appropriate timing.

However, on 13 December Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency announced that this deadline will not be met. While most of the construction work has been completed there is still work to be done before the road can be considered safe and legal to open. In particular, behind the hills and out of sight, work >>>



### *Transmission Gully Motorway cont....*

continues on the stormwater system which is a significant consent requirement for opening the road and one that GOPI is particularly keen to see meet high standards.

The focus for completing resurfacing work has moved to the northern end of the motorway at Paekakariki and median barriers are also being installed near Mackays Crossing.

In addition to the final construction work there are 100 safety and quality assurance tests to be met, and 45 consent tasks (their terminology) to be conducted, that the TGM contract stipulates must pass before opening can be allowed.

Of the tests, 34 had been accepted by 13 December, while 17 of the consent tasks have also been completed. These compliance issues are taking some time to work through. So, it is a case of 'don't hold your breath' because the remaining tasks are likely to stretch out well into the New Year and the date for a grand opening remains in limbo at this stage. 🌸

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## PLEASE SIGN UP A FRIEND OR NEIGHBOUR

**S**ign 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. A membership form can be downloaded from our website (click here: [New Member](#)) 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 PĀUATAHANUI INLET

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

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

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

**Pāuatahanui 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.

**235 5052 (Chair, GOPI) or [pauainlet@gmail.com](mailto:pauainlet@gmail.com).**





# Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet

[www.gopi.org.nz](http://www.gopi.org.nz)  
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## MEMBERSHIP FORM FOR NEW MEMBERS

To join the Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet you may pay your subscription in person or on-line.  
 Please fill in this form with all details then either email or post it.

### To make your payment

Pay your sub at a bank or on-line into our Westpac account: **03-1533-0009387-00**. When on-line, use the 'Particulars' and 'Reference' fields to write your **surname, initials, AND** the period of your sub (1-yr or 5-yr).

### To email the form send it to

[pauainlet@gmail.com](mailto:pauainlet@gmail.com)

### To post the form

Address the envelope to

**Membership Secretary,  
 Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet,  
 Box 57034, Mana,  
 Porirua 5247.**

**First: Please print out this form and fill in your details for our records.**

**Name:** .....  
**Address:** .....  
 .....  
**Email:** ..... **Phone:** .....

**Next: Please put '☑' next to the subscription you are paying.**

**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: .....	(for on-line banking)	
We'd like to send you newsletters and notices via email. May we do this? <input type="checkbox"/>			

**Finally: Please tell us which of our activities you would like to be part of, if any:**

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 or post the form. Thank you and welcome to the Guardians**