



# THE UPDATE

The Captain's Blog

## Wildlife populations on the increase

The southern right whale cavorting in the harbour for nearly a fortnight earlier this month captivated Wellingtonians.

People find these great creatures, once hunted to the verge of extinction, endlessly fascinating.

And whales in our coastal waters and harbours are likely to become much more common sights.

The number of humpbacks migrating from Antarctic waters through Cook Strait to their breeding grounds in the South Pacific has increased dramatically.

The Department of Conservation and a group of former whalers have recorded an increase from 25 just over a decade ago to 187 last year.

Commercial whaling ended in New Zealand in 1964 when it was deemed no longer economic.

Humpbacks and right whales were the major species killed.

Fur seals are also on the comeback in a big way.

Commercial sealing was banned in 1894. The estimated population around the country at numerous colonies has now grown to at least 50,000 but perhaps double that.

Gannets – spectacular hunters that plunge into the sea like missiles – were nearly wiped out on the mainland in the late 19th century, their eggs a delicacy to Maori.

Cape Kidnappers was the sole refuge for about 50 surviving birds but is now home to about 5000. At least another 12 nesting sites have become established from Northland to Farewell Spit in the last century, home to an estimated 100,000 birds.

We commonly hear hundreds of New Zealand animal species are in danger of extinction but some natives are clearly headed the other way, becoming more numerous.

Former DSIR scientist, cartoonist and current Dominion Post columnist Bob Brockie is among those who believe some conservationists sounding alarms overstate their case.

He has assiduously counted roadkill for nearly 60 years as one means of assessing populations.

In the 1950s he rarely saw a squashed pukeko.

“These days some roads look like pukeko bowling alleys,” he says.

The last creature to be recorded as becoming extinct in New Zealand was the bush wren in 1972, according to Brockie.

No marine species have been listed as being lost.

The only known fish species to disappear is the freshwater grayling, last seen in the early 1930s, which succumbed to destruction of its lowland river habitat.

Tui birdsong, absent for decades, is now common in places like Hamilton thanks to determined pest control and more planting of food trees.

The Zealandia reserve in Wellington has had a profound effect on birdlife.

A national count last year of our handsome native pigeon, the kereru, put numbers at 15,459. Their distinctive heavy wingbeat is again being heard in some city margins.

In the marine environment the fishing industry is a popular whipping boy but the often alarmist claims of its impacts do not withstand scientific scrutiny.

That is not to deny there is some small endangered species bycatch but the industry is taking numerous steps to reduce or eliminate that.

The yellow-eyed penguin (hoiho), a sub-Antarctic species, has recolonised on the mainland, as have sea lions.

That has brought the problem of one threatened species harming another.

Mammal scientists studying prey remains on the Otago peninsula believe female sea lions may be eating as many as 20-30 penguins a year.

Sharks, barracouta and fur seals are also penguin predators.

Seabird numbers are generally stable, although there is real concern about the Antipodean albatross, which forages as far as Chile.

Ornithologist Colin Miskelly was quoted in last Saturday's Dominion Post that “Asian fishing fleet crews are so starving we think they're deliberately catching albatross to eat... that is probably the greatest threat to New Zealand albatross”.

Overall, there is no cause for complacency but the fact remains a number of our species are doing relatively well, decline is not inevitable.



Southern right whale, Wellington.

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## NZ Seafood Industry Conference

### Just over a week until conference.

New Zealand Seafood Industry Conference and Technical Day will be held on the 1st and 2nd August at Te Papa. [Registrations](#) will close on 31 July.

The programme for the technical day on 1 August and the conference on 2 August has been finalised. It is a packed agenda on both days, including an excellent line up of local and international speakers. [View the full programme here.](#)

Minister of Fisheries, Hon Stuart Nash, has been confirmed to open the Conference and Hon Shane Jones will be highlighting the importance of the seafood industry to regional economic growth.

The NIWA technical day will feature topics from ocean acidification and plastics pollution to protecting the safety of our seafood and digital monitoring.

Our Sustainable Seafood session at the conference will feature Volker Kuntzsch, chief executive of Sanford, Grant Rosewarne, chief executive of New Zealand King Salmon, and Doug Paulin, general manager of group operations at Sealord, who will outline their companies' contribution to an innovative and sustainable industry.

We have had a great response to our call for Posters. These will be displayed throughout the technical day and conference and Seafood Innovations will be hosting a Happy Hour Poster Session at the end of the technical day. Posters will also be displayed during the catering breaks in Oceania on 2 August. Tickets are still available.

Our conference app 'Seafood 2018' is now available to download from the app store. This will be a great platform for accessing the latest updates and connecting with other delegates in the final

lead up to conference day.

Make sure you [register online now](#).

## Seafood Star Award Nominees

The 2018 conference marks the third annual Seafood Star Awards. It is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our industry people and their achievements.

This year's nominees are:

- **Group Future Development Innovation Award:** Kathleen Hofman - [Plant & Food Research](#); Andrew Stanley - [Sanford Ltd](#); Iain Hosie - [Revolution Fibres Ltd](#).
- **Longstanding Service Award:** Dave Sharp - director of [Commercial Fisheries Services](#) and director of [Seafood Innovations](#).
- **Longstanding Service Award:** Greg Bishop - chief executive officer of [Lee Fisheries](#).
- **Longstanding Service Award:** Vince Syddall - operations manager of [Moana Oysters](#) Coromandel.
- **Longstanding Service Award:** Donna Wells - [Finestkind](#).
- **Our People Award:** Hikoi ki te Ora Health and Wellness Programme - [Moana New Zealand](#).
- **Our People Award:** Justin Hough - [New Zealand King Salmon](#).
- **Young Achiever Award:** Elle Kibblewhite - [Splashzone Ltd](#).



## NEW ZEALAND SEAFOOD INDUSTRY CONFERENCE AND TECHNICAL DAY

August 1 & 2, 2018, Te Papa, Wellington

## Watchful eye for Kāpiti Reserve

A new multi-functional, solar-powered webcam has been installed on the Kāpiti Island Marine Reserve.

The Guardians of Kāpiti Marine Reserve Trust installed the webcam as an innovative way to monitor the coastal environment.

It's the first camera installed of several that are planned as part of the \$15,000 Kaitiaki Webcam Network project. It took volunteers two days to install and went live on July 6.

Guardians trust chairman Ben Knight said the core purpose of the webcam will be surveillance of the reserve. Given the webcam is located on the western section of the reserve and hidden from mainland view, it will provide discrete surveillance and aid in ensuring compliance.

Scientists and surveyors will be able to use the footage for research purposes and boaties and fishermen will be able to view real-time coastal conditions through the webcam's website. Police and coastguards will also have access.

"Despite the reserve being one of New Zealand's oldest marine reserves at 26 years old, illegal fishing is an ongoing issue," Knight said.

"The webcam is part of our solution to the problem.

"The quality of the images are fantastic, having the camera will be a game changer for compliance.

"We are expecting DoC will use the live feed to document and gather evidence that can be used in prosecution, although ideally no one will be illegally fishing there.

"The cameras on their own won't stop the fishing but hopefully in the long run they will help us to be more aware of the problem and provide more of a deterrent for illegal fishers."

The project was made possible through the collaborative efforts of DOC, the United States Embassy, GroundTruth and Kāpiti locals. The embassy was also pivotal in supporting the financial needs of the project, issuing \$12,500 through its grants scheme.

The Guardians believe the webcam has a large scope of potential and could be used for tourism, to grow the profile of the space and will be of use to many groups and organisations in the future.

"There are lots of opportunities for it, it will be really interesting to see what's going on out there — personally I'm hoping to spot a whale." Knight said.

Check out what's happening on the webcam [here](#).



Kāpiti coast.

## Celebrating primary industry employers

The Good Employer awards were launched by Associate Agriculture Minister Hon Meka Whaitiri this June, as sponsored by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and the Agricultural and Marketing Development Trust.

The new awards recognize outstanding primary industry employers and service providers who demonstrate exceptional employment practices.

“New Zealand needs to attract, develop and keep people in our primary industries,” Whaitiri said.

“An important part of this is providing great work environments where employees feel supported, safe and have the opportunity to develop and grow.

The awards will select employers from the following categories:

- Innovative employment practices
- Employee development
- Safe and healthy work environments
- Māori agribusiness
- Minister’s Award

Whaitiri will grant her Minister’s Award to an employer who has shown commitment to improving employment practices in their region.

“The primary industries employs about one in seven New Zealanders and as many as one in three in some regions. That’s a lot of people and it’s time we start celebrating those employers who are doing an outstanding job.” Whaitiri said.

Nominations close on 10 August 2018 and the winners will be announced in November.

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## Antarctica facing change

New research has revealed that Antarctica may not be as isolated as once thought.

A report published in the Nature Climate Change journal describes how kelp from the Kerguelen Islands drifted 20,000 km, all the way to Antarctica. Another specimen was found to have drifted from South Georgia. It is the longest biological rafting event recorded.

The international team of scientists leading the research includes Professor Jon Waters from the University of Otago and former PhD student Dr Ceridwen Fraser.

Scientists once thought that the polar winds and currents were enough of a barrier to prevent new species and waste from reaching Antarctic waters.

The findings have important implications for the science of ocean drift which track plastics and other floating material across our seas. As plastics are an increasing problem in the world’s marine ecosystems, there’s growing concern such material could be capable of drifting to Antarctica.

Evidence of living plants and mammals traversing across the ocean could also mean an influx of marine species inhabiting Antarctic coastlines.

“It highlights the potential for new species to colonise Antarctica as the climate warms,” Waters said.

“We always thought plants and animals were distinct because they were isolated, but this research suggests these differences are almost entirely due to environmental extremes, not isolation.”



Getty image.

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## **Ocean Bounty - *Tokatu***

This week on Ocean Bounty, host Graeme Sinclair explores Sealord's spectacular new vessel *Tokatu*. From the build in Norway, all the way to her first fishing trip, the vessel is the face of fisheries innovation. Photographer Tamzin Henderson will also be providing some insight on seabird photography.

Watch the latest episode this Sunday, 5pm on TV3.



## News

Government plans to install cameras on commercial vessels is said to be “driven by a level of hysteria around discarding” fish, *Stuff* reports. A leaked industry letter sent to the Government this month contained concerns over the use of cameras without understanding what their purpose is. In June, Fisheries Minister Stuart Nash confirmed plans to install cameras on commercial vessels would be pushed forward. He hoped the proposal could be presented to Ministers this month, but required agreement from NZ First and the Greens. Nash said “We must work together”, however Jones and NZ First have openly expressed opposition to cameras. The letter written by Andrew Talley of Talley’s Group said the Government is “jumping to a heavy-handed solution without actually understanding the cause”. The letter further stated that discarding of fish would “continue to happen, cameras or no cameras, while the current policy settings remain unchanged.” Talley acknowledged the letter and stood by his concerns. “[Cameras] don’t recognise or address in any way why we are catching too many small fish, why the bycatch of a particular species is so unavoidable or for example, why fishers are discarding species at sea that landed are worth significant money.”

A call is being made for more to be done about the illegal collection of seafood at Maunganui Bluff. The Ministry of Primary Industries confirms that toheroa, prohibited from public gathering, have been collected, with the ministry taking action against poaching. “A lot of people are taking advantage of the abundance of tuatua on Ripiro beach, but unfortunately there has been an increase in the illegal take of toheroa, the latter being a prohibited species,” said spokesman, Stephen Rudsdale. Rudsdale said there have also been a number of cases where people are confusing juvenile toheroa with tuatua or genuinely don’t know the difference between the two.

New Zealand’s largest and rarest whitebait species received a helping hand re-establishing last week. One hundred and forty adult fish were released into Waikokohai and Mangatawhiri streams in Tāwharanui Regional Park to entice some of the 10,000 “all at sea” fingerlings released last year, to return to their tribe for spawning. Giant kōkopu disappeared from Tāwharanui around 30 years ago following the construction of a dam to create a pond in the lower reaches of Waikokowhai Stream. But restoration efforts since have seen it returned to an environment that scientists believe can now provide the habitat the fish need to thrive.

The much maligned rat is not a creature many would associate with coral reefs. However, scientists studying reefs on tropical islands say the animals directly threaten the survival of these

ecosystems. A team working on the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean found that invasive rats on the islands are a "big problem" for coral reefs. Rats cull seabird populations, in turn reducing the volume of bird droppings - a natural coral fertiliser. Scientists now advocate eradicating rats from all of the islands to protect these delicate marine habitats.



MPI fisheries officer keeping watch for seafood poaching.

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