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## RECORD BREAKING MANTA COUNT IN THE HAURAKI GULF

Manta Watch NZ had high hopes for this summer and it has not disappointed. It's been the biggest season yet in every regard and we are only a couple of months in.

Project lead Lydia Green says, "In our fourth year of dedicated research on oceanic manta rays, El Niño has meant settled weather and the citizen science traction has been astounding."

Over 100 sightings have been submitted between 1 January and 13 January, with a total of 325 manta sightings thus far. The weather has also enabled our team to maximise research outputs with several multiday expeditions and more on the way.

"We have now satellite tagged 11 manta rays, eight of which were deployed in one day. Getting the tags out nice and early in the season has yielded some fantastic results so far."

Here are the tag pings from one particular manta, given the name 'David' after the expedition captain. This manta has been utilising the inner gulf, spending the last month foraging very close to the mainland and throughout popular boating areas and shipping lanes.

All this information is critical for establishing greater protections around such productive areas that support a wide range of species, including the globally endangered oceanic manta ray.

Lydia states, "Currently the biggest threat to Aotearoa's manta rays is the lack of data. People can help by submitting their sightings to Manta Watch NZ, directly contributing to our national research and conservation efforts."

Your best chance of spotting mantas is between December - March. Everyone can support this research effort by sharing their manta sightings.

**Submit your sightings, photos and videos by visiting our website [www.mantawatchnz.org](http://www.mantawatchnz.org) or email Lydia on [mantawatchnewzealand@gmail.com](mailto:mantawatchnewzealand@gmail.com)**



## EVENTS CALENDAR

2  
MARCH

**Growers & Makers Market**  
From 10am  
Claris Conference Centre

4  
MARCH

**Island Screens**  
The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry  
Kitchen from 6pm | Movie at 7:15pm  
Entry \$10 | \$15 for non members  
Tryphena Social Club

4 & 8  
MARCH

**Playcentre Open Week**  
9:15am - 1:15pm  
A chance for new families to see what Playcentre is all about

5 & 12  
MARCH

**Yoga for Presence**  
With Lucia  
Every Tuesday at Claris Art Gallery  
5:30 - 7pm

6  
MARCH

**CandyShell's Kitchen Opening Night**  
Michelle Hartley-Scott's  
kitchen launch at Claris Club

9, 13, 16  
& 23 MAR

**Grow Food Aotea Workshops**  
Fermentation, Seed Saving, Raised Garden Beds & Autumn Gardens  
Details within

11  
MARCH

**Island Screens**  
Polite Society  
Kitchen from 6pm | Movie at 7:15pm  
Entry \$10 | \$15 for non members  
Tryphena Social Club

12  
MARCH

**Visiting Parrot Expert**  
Dr Luis Ortiz-Catedral will walk us through Okiwi Park Reserve birdlife  
10am - 12pm  
All welcome | Details within

22 & 23  
MARCH

**Tropical Fruit Workshops**  
with Hugh Rose, Chair of NZ Tropical Fruit Growers  
Email [peteaoraki@gmail.com](mailto:peteaoraki@gmail.com)

28 FEB -  
18 MARCH

**Art Gallery Exhibitions**  
'Presence Amid Chaos' - An exhibition of new painted works by Fenella Christian  
'Tane Mahuta & Te Whare Pora' - An exhibition of carved and painted works by Peter Edmonds and woven works by Margaret Rose Ngawaka

All events can be found online at [www.greatbarrier.co.nz/events](http://www.greatbarrier.co.nz/events)

## HAERE MAI KI AOTEA ADVOCATE

We are a new community news outlet focused on what's happening on Aotea. Our vision is to inform, engage and support our community, businesses, groups and projects that make the motu tick.

The Aotea Advocate will be bringing you free community news and notices every other week. All issues will be available in print and online.

### Available in print

You'll find printed copies at local pick-up points: Mulberry Grove Store, Stonewall Store, Aotea Brewing, Baked on Barrier, Auckland Council Service Centre, The Rocks, My Fat Puku and Port Fitzroy Store.

### Available online

To access all issues and articles online visit: [www.greatbarrier.co.nz/AoteaAdvocate](http://www.greatbarrier.co.nz/AoteaAdvocate)

You can receive each issue of the Aotea Advocate straight to your email inbox.

Sign up online.

### Submissions, advertising and enquiries

Email: [AoteaAdvocate@gmail.com](mailto:AoteaAdvocate@gmail.com)

Brought to you by Bree Biederman and Lucy Dixon



## Caught a feed lately? Seen any mushy fleshed snapper?

The Hauraki Gulf Marine Park has shown to have the highest proportion of sightings of mushy fleshed fish.

It's important that we continue to monitor these fish to better understand the cause behind this serious issue.

Please take a few seconds to record your latest catch at: [legasea.co.nz/survey](http://legasea.co.nz/survey)

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## GROW FOOD AOTEA PRESENTS MARCH WORKSHOPS

**9 MARCH | 9:30AM - 2:30PM**  
Fermentation & Skill Share at  
Okiwi Passion

**13 MARCH | 9:30-11:30AM**  
Seed Saving at Community  
Garden

**16 MARCH | 9:30AM-12:30PM**  
Instant Gardens - Raised Beds,  
Container Gardens & Straw  
Bales at Anamata

**23 MARCH | 9:30AM-2:30PM**  
Roots & Shoots - Autumn Garden  
Plant & Prep at Okiwi Passion

Full details at Grow Food Aotea Facebook page  
Bookings essential, spaces limited  
Contact Caity Endt to secure spot  
Email: [info@okiwipassion.co.nz](mailto:info@okiwipassion.co.nz)  
Call or text: 021 212 7153

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## RECYCLING ON THE RISE

This summer, collection of recyclable materials from kerbside increased by 12% from Dec - Jan. Kerbside rubbish collections Dec - Jan decreased by 13% relative to the same period last year.

This is a fantastic change supporting the health of our environment and resources. Congratulations Aotea Community and thank you!

### Clear Recycling Bags

Clear recycling bags are being regularly used where required. Paper and card should not be put in a bag with other recycling as it gets contaminated and must go to landfill. Use a separate clear recycling bag for paper and card, if required.

You can purchase orange rubbish and clear recycling bags from the Auckland Council Service Centre, Stonewall, Port Fitzroy and Claris Stores.

### New Recycling Standards

Pop into Anamata for a free magnetised information sheet about what can be recycled or download a copy online from [anamata.nz](http://anamata.nz).

What you can put out at kerbside has changed. Visit [bit.ly/aotearecyclingrules](http://bit.ly/aotearecyclingrules)

### Auckland WMIF Funds Compost

Through Anamata, the island has been awarded \$11k from the Auckland Council Waste Minimisation and Innovation Fund to support composting and environmentally sustainable disposal of food waste on Aotea.

### Power at Anamata

The power system, funded by our Local Board, Auckland Council WMIF and Climate grants, among other things - has enabled two electric vehicle charging points available to the community, currently for koha. This is facilitating the move to carbon neutral, clean and quiet transportation on Aotea.

Find all information at:  
[anamata.nz](http://anamata.nz)



## LOCAL BOARD GRANTS OPEN

Aotea Great Barrier Local Board Capital and Local Grant rounds are now open and close on the 8 March. Up to \$50,000 for Capital Grants and \$25,000 for Local Grants, as a limit for a single project.

Higher priority for our Local Board:

- › Our residents' wellbeing is protected and enhanced
- › Projects or activities which have zero-waste messages and practices
- › Applications improve community resilience to climate change impact
- › Activities that support mana whenua to prosper
- › Members of the applicants' community group have completed governance training

For more information visit:

[bit.ly/localboardgrant](http://bit.ly/localboardgrant)

Dates for Aotea Great Barrier Local Board meetings:

[bit.ly/localboardmeetings](http://bit.ly/localboardmeetings)

Next meeting: 26 March - 1pm



## NAVIGATING OUR NIGHT SKY

Turn all the lights off, go outside and take 10 minutes for your eyes to adjust to the dark. Now you're ready to go!

Jupiter is glowing gold in the NW sky. Currently the brightest object in the night sky, it is sinking lower and will soon set alongside the sun and disappear from our view.

Moving north is a sparkling cluster of young hot stars; named Matariki in Aotearoa, Pleiades by the ancient Greeks and commonly called the Seven Sisters. If you have a pair of binoculars handy, these are a great tool for observing this open cluster. Pleiades sits on the back of Taurus the Bull. Look for Taurus' golden/orange eye, Aldebaran. It's the brightest star in this constellation being an orange giant which lies 66 light years away from our sun.

Gaze higher to Orion, his belt and sword are known as 'the pot'. Orion is upside down in our southern hemisphere sky. His bright left foot, named Rigel, sticks up towards the zenith while his orange red armpit, Betelgeuse, is closer to the ocean.

Enjoy the celestial masterpiece of stars above Aotea!

A dark sky is the best sky so please help maintain our International Dark Sky Sanctuary. Turn off any outdoor lights, or have them on a sensor. Choose warm coloured bulbs. 1800K is ideal - it's written on the bulb.

To know more about how to keep our night sky dark, and why, contact our Dark Sky Coordinator, Deb Kilgallon at [deborahkilgallon@gmail.com](mailto:deborahkilgallon@gmail.com).



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## FROM THE AIRWAVES

### Kaitoke School Goes International

Kaitoke School recently completed accreditation as an international school to enable relatives of a local family to live and study on the island for a year.

"Initially, I didn't realize the enormity of this opportunity for our school and for Aotea," says Kaitoke School Principal Leanne Eloff.

In an interview on AoteaFM this week, Leanne outlined potential solutions and her vision for the island as an educational destination, complete with high school and trades training.

### Island Inspired Art

Ashlee Tawhiti (Ngāti Porou) manager at the Aotea Community Art Gallery says the island's art community is super diverse.

"The tie that binds is upcycling and connection with the Earth. Lots of our artists talk about nature and the beautiful motu that we are on. My role as a curator is to help people over the line, and let themselves shine."

New work by weaver Margaret Rose Ngawaka, wood carver Peter Edmonds, and painter Fenella Christian, opens at the gallery on 28 February and closes 18 March.

To listen to these interviews with Leanne and Ashlee on AoteaFM visit:

[greatbarrier.co.nz/island-stories-podcast](http://greatbarrier.co.nz/island-stories-podcast)

Words by Georgie Higham, from interviews with Tim Higham,  
every Monday from 9 til noon on AoteaFM



## THE LEVI GOLABOSKI MEMORIAL PUMP TRACK

You may or may not have caught wind of an exciting project developing at Kaitoke School – a whizz-bang pump track, open to all.

A pump track is a specialised cycling track designed to enhance riders' skills and abilities. The tracks often incorporate berms, rollers, jumps and other obstacles.

Kaitoke students have long dreamed of a bike track on the school grounds and now, thanks to a big fundraising push from principal Leanne Eloff, that dream looks set to become reality.

But there's something special that sets this project apart. "With his family's support, the pump track will be built and named in honour of our dear friend and student Levi," says Leanne.

"We know he would have loved to see this happen, although he probably would have tried bringing his motorbike along too. Levi loved riding bikes and skateboards, and so do other kids on Aotea, but unfortunately there aren't many places to do this. Our roads aren't particularly bike-friendly, especially for children, and there are limited purpose-built recreational facilities for youth here. So we've kickstarted a fundraising campaign to build the Levi Golaboski Memorial Bike and Pump Track; not just for our school, but for the whole community."

It will be open to the community outside of school hours and will differ from Okiwi's,

both in terms of size and components.

"Ours will be about 10 times the size and will have both a skills and pump track element to it, with berms, rollers and jumps. It will be constructed out of concrete and compressed lime. We did investigate using asphalt, as this would be the easiest, but it's incredibly difficult to get asphalt to the island."

This type of kit doesn't come cheap – a rough figure for the completed project is \$100,000.

"We've developed a corporate sponsorship package for bigger donors," says Leanne, "and we're also about to start a local fundraising campaign, which our students will be developing. We will also be applying for grants. We have around \$30,000 committed so far, and about half of that in the bank."

Leanne hopes to have the project completed by the end of July, in time for Levi's birthday.

**If you or anyone you know would like to make a donation to the track, contact Tay in the school office ([office@kaitoke.school.nz](mailto:office@kaitoke.school.nz)). Or you can directly deposit any contributions to:**

**Kaitoke School - Levi Golaboski Pump Fund. Account 12 3011 0815735 50**

Please include your email address as a reference when making your donation, so we can properly thank you and keep you updated on the project.

"We sincerely welcome any contributions."



Proposed pump track site at Kaitoke School



Similar design to the one proposed

## GET INVOLVED

Auckland Council is working towards eradicating and keeping out a number of high risk pest plant species from Aotea. We need your help to hunt these plants out.

- ✓ Visit [inaturalist.org](http://inaturalist.org)
- ✓ Join project 'Aotea High Risk Weeds'
- ✓ Identify and record your weedy find!



[aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

**Auckland Council**

## ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

### Asian Paddle Crab Monitoring Expands

Following a suspected Asian Paddle Crab sighting in Tryphena, a week of surveying was carried out at Gooseberry Flat from 19 - 23 Feb with the help of Mulberry Grove School students. Pots were also placed within Oruawharo and Kaitoke North estuaries. Permits for this important work were obtained from MPI and Fisheries.

### World Parrot Expert Visiting Okiwi

On 12 March, Dr Luis Ortiz-Catedral of the World Parrot Trust will be walking us through Okiwi Reserve, which is home to a population of kākāriki. Please join us for this exciting free event from 10am-12pm. Luis will be sharing his knowledge on breeding patterns, social behaviours, habitat and more.

### What's Happening on the Hill?

Windy Hill Sanctuary is in its 25th year, with new Field Manager Jordan Scarlett leading the team suppressing rats, mice and feral cats, monitoring threatened species and keeping 100k+ of tracks clear.

Recent highlights at the Sanctuary:

- Henry Cookson and his dog chase are working to find kākā nests with Landcare Research Kākā Dispersal Project. They aim to locate 10 accessible nests with pre-fledged birds so they can be banded with transmitters.

- Black and Grey-faced petrel are being filmed on a night cam coming and going from their burrows in the Sanctuary.

Access this Windy Hill update in full and their sponsors online.

### Not a Friendly Fern

Climbing Asparagus, also known as Asparagus fern (*Mesophyllum scandens*) is originally from South America. It is one of the North Island's worst weeds, is well established and has spread to the South Island. It smothers native vegetation, prevents seedling establishment, reduces native plant abundance and species richness, and facilitates weed invasion. It may also increase erosion through canopy loss. With Aotea's regenerating nature, this weed poses a huge threat to Aotea.



There are only three known infestations of Climbing Asparagus on the Island- Whangaparapara, Karaka Bay and Mullberry Grove (which is almost declared eradicated). Whangaparapara is the largest of the three infestations. Envirokiwi are currently completing their second annual control visit within this area.

We encourage the community to please report any findings to Auckland Council and to join the iNaturalist project 'Aotea High Risk Weeds', to find a list of the plants we need to look out for and record any weeds you might find. If confirmed, Auckland Council will arrange for pest plant control using local contractors.

Removing a seedling by hand today will reduce the need for more intensive removal methods in the future.

### PEST PLANT DRONE OPERATION NOTICE

From the 29 Feb – 2 Mar 2024, on behalf of Auckland Council, DroneZUp will be conducting a specialised pest plant mapping programme around Aotea Great Barrier Island using small drones across suspected sites.

Weather dependent, the work will form part of our ongoing pest plant control programme, to supplement the efforts contractors have already made controlling Woolly Nightshade, Boneseed, Moth Plant, Kahili Ginger and Grey Willow. All species which Auckland Council are currently trying to eradicate from Aotea/Great Barrier Island. This method can be more efficient to cover vast areas to ensure the plants haven't spread further afield, especially in areas with hard terrain and thick vegetation.

All drone work will be done maintaining careful consideration of the privacy of the residents and users of Aotea/Great Barrier Island. All DroneZUp pilots are experienced in aerial mapping operations and are fully certified by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) under Rule Part 102.

If you have any queries, please feel free to contact DroneZUp at [info@dronezup.co.nz](mailto:info@dronezup.co.nz) or give Jordan a call on 027 3649 424.

# PEOPLE & POST

NORTH TO SOUTH SHUTTLE SERVICE

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PORT FITZROY - TRYPHENA, DEPARTS - 11AM

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