



Home Page

Tū Mai Taonga, restoring people and place on Aotea (Great Barrier Island)

Restoring People and Place On Aotea, we are re-indigenising conservation by bringing whānau home to reclaim our Māori language and culture, to heal the land with our own hands. [Read more]	[Image: Kaimahi in the field]
[Image: Ngāti Rehua at marae]	Te Mahi Tahi - Working Together Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea is working with the crown, the community and world-class experts to make a way for our people and taonga species to thrive on the island. [Read more]
Aotea and Beyond, Together Aotea is home to species that are found nowhere else in the world. As we make a safe haven for them we also expand a network of restored Hauraki Gulf Islands and ecosystems across the Auckland region. [Read more]	[image] Aotea map
	How we’re tackling the job We’re removing feral cats in zones from the north to the south of the island while trialling tools and methods to remove rats and mice too. [Read more]

We couldn't do it without you

Our funders support our iwi to build a conservation workforce and lead landscape-scale restoration that impacts our whenua and our mokopuna for generations to come.



[Trustboard logo]

[Trustboard contact info/links]

[Project contact info/links]

Project Lead

makere@ngatirehua.iwi.nz

Feral Cat Specialist

Rodent Specialist

Kairaranga

Accounts

Social engagement Specialist AD

[facebook] [instagram]

Restoring People and Place

Link from: Home

Link to: ‘How we’re tackling the job’ and ‘Kairaranga’

Intro text from home page

Restoring People and Place

On Aotea, we are re-indigenising conservation by bringing whānau home to reclaim our Māori language and culture, to heal the land with our own hands.

Tū Mai Taonga is a Māori-led conservation project on Aotea (Great Barrier Island). Led by the Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea iwi (tribe), the project is underpinned by indigenous Te Ao Māori principles that connect people and place.

The project involves removing rodents and undertaking one of the world’s largest-ever feral cat eradications on an inhabited island. It forms part of Aotearoa New Zealand’s wider goal to become Predator Free by 2050.

[Find out how we’re making Aotea predator free](#)

Tū Mai Taonga not only gives the people of Aotea the opportunity to return home and restore the island through science and tikanga-based (traditional) conservation - it also uplifts and empowers its whānau to reclaim what has been lost: language, culture, economic sustainability, and the health of the environment.

[Find out how we’re reclaiming our language and culture](#)

By expanding mātauranga (Māori knowledge) and working together to restore these treasures, the iwi project sets a course for generational change for mokopuna (descendents). Ultimately, Tū Mai Taonga is making a way for both people and place to thrive as one connected taiāo (natural environment).

[Watch our people talk about the Tū Mai Taonga mission](#)

Vacancies

The Tū Mai Taonga Project is proceeding under the leadership, guiding vision and tikanga of Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea. It aims to prove landscape-scale operational methodologies and build community support that will open pathways to a predator free Aotea.

Vacancies for Tū Mai Taonga Field Personnel Vacancies are now closed. For all future job listings with Tū Mai Taonga, please visit:

www.ngatirehua.iwi.nz/nga-mahi

FAQ's

Frequently Asked Questions

[Why is the Tū Mai Taonga project needed?](#)

[Why are feral cats a problem?](#)

[Why are rats a problem?](#)

[What is Tū Mai Taonga's plan?](#)

[Can I work for Tū Mai Taonga?](#)

[How can I support Tū Mai Taonga?](#)

[How can I be a responsible cat owner?](#)

[Submit a question](#)

Why is the Tū Mai Taonga project needed?

Unfortunately, current efforts to manage feral cats and rats on Aotea are not enough to protect our most vulnerable species.

In 1994 the last two male kōkako on Aotea were removed to Hautūru, Little Barrier Island with the hope that their offspring may one-day return.

Other species lost to the island since European settlement include the tūturuatu (shore plover), hihi (stitchbird), tīeke (saddleback), koitareke (marsh crake), popokatea (whitehead), pipipi (brown creeper), tītipounamu (rifleman), yellow-crowned kākārīki, tītī (sooty shearwater), kuaka (common diving petrel), tuatara, pekapeka (short-tailed bat) and pūpūharakeke (giant land snails).

Although Aotea is free of possums, mustelids and Norway rats, some species are only just hanging on despite widespread efforts to trap ship rats, kiore and feral cats - like the oi (grey-faced petrels) which are still scattered around cliffs, the reintroduced toutouwai (North Island robins), and rare miromiro (tomtit), the vagrant korimako (bellbird), red-crowned kākārīki, matuku (bittern, māātātā (fernbird), mioweka (banded rail), pāteke (brown teal), tītī (Cook's petrel), tūturiwhatu (New Zealand dotterel) tākoketai (black petrel), pepeketua

(Hochstetter's frog), Duvaucel's gecko, moko kākārīki (Auckland green gecko) and the niho taniwha (chevron skink).

The good news is that the benefits of sustained predator control are being seen in island sanctuaries at Windy Hill (where more than 60,000 rats and nearly 400 feral cats have been removed over 23 years), Glenfern and Motu Kaikoura. Bird counts at Windy Hill show increasing abundance of kererū, tūī and kākā.

Tū Mai Taonga is an opportunity to build on these success stories, initially the Aotea Conservation Park and north of Aotea. Once techniques and methodologies are proven and the community is ready, the project will look to extend operations across the whole of Aotea.

Why are feral cats a problem?

Feral cats are expert hunters and have a diverse diet often heavily focussed on native species. This is because our native species evolved in the absence of predators like feral cats and so have few natural defences. Feral cats eat adult birds, chicks, eggs, geckos and skinks. In Aotearoa, feral cats have contributed to the extinction of 9 native bird species and impact on 33 now endangered species.

They are quite different animals from the average domestic cat, which maintains a small core area of home range, often as exclusive property. Feral cats on the other hand, have much larger home ranges which may overlap with those of other cats. Range size can be anywhere from 48 to 700 hectares, but even up to 2000ha on Rakiura/Stewart Island. It all depends on habitat, food availability and, for males, where females are.

Feral cats, particularly kittens, have a shorter life span than domestic cats. House cats commonly live for 15+ years whereas feral cats may only live for about 6 years. It's a hard life in the wild, despite the presence of easy food. Most kittens are born between spring and summer which is often when we see them on Aotea.

Because they range widely and need a lot of energy to survive in the wild, feral cats can do significant damage. Like most predators, they are tuned into 'easy wins' in their environment such as where colonies or gatherings of their prey species are. On Aotea this includes tākoketai, black petrels on Hirakimatā, pāteke at Okiwi and elsewhere, oi (grey-faced petrels) on the coast, and tūturiwhatu, dotterel at Whangapoua. Kākā and kākārīki chicks fledge out of nests and onto the ground and are also very vulnerable to cats when young.

While feral cats are known to eat rats, rat breeding rates and densities are so high in the Aotea bush that feral cats are unlikely to have any more than a limited effect on overall rat numbers.

Why are rats a problem?

Rats are far more numerous than feral cats because they are so well adapted to our conditions. Rats have a short lifespan (about 17 months) and are fast breeders (every 6 to 8 weeks in summer and autumn). They can breed more quickly when there is more food, and in ideal conditions rats can produce up to 10 offspring at a time. In temperate northern environments like Aotea, rats may breed all year round, where there is abundant food and shelter.

There are two rat species on Aotea: kiore, the Pacific or Polynesian rat (*Rattus exulans*) which arrived with Polynesian voyagers, and the more damaging ship rat, or black rat (*Rattus rattus*) which arrived in the mid-1800s. These invasive rats pose a greater threat to island wildlife than any other at the present time.

Ship rats are found from the coast to the treeline and spend a lot of time in trees, so as well as damaging your orchard and crops, wiring and buildings they can strip forest trees of berries and nests of chicks and eggs.

Kiore numbers are often influenced by where ship rats are not. Ship rats are their competitors and can keep kiore numbers down. Therefore it's important to control both species at the same time.

Rats are damaging because they reduce bird numbers directly by eating both chicks and eggs, herpetofauna (frogs, geckos and lizards) and invertebrates.

Rats also compete with birds for food and damage the forest by eating seeds and seedlings. This means there are fewer birds spreading seeds to regenerate the forest. The cumulative effect of rats doing this damage is that the forest is less able to recover and is less resilient to fire and other stressors.

What is Tū Mai Taonga's plan?

Tū Mai Taonga's operational plan draws on an independently authored [feasibility study](#) and is informed technical and cultural advisors.

The first stage of the project is focussed in Te Paparahi, the rugged forested north of the island, where the project is currently establishing a network of around 500 traps for feral cats across 4,500ha.

With ship rats and kiore, initial focus will be on small offshore islands and trialling new methodologies and tools that can effectively remove all animals and defend for reinvasion.

Tū Mai Taonga aims to build a skilled conservation workforce on the island.

With growing capacity and proof of concept it aims to inspire and unite community and agency effort to achieve a predator free Aotea, anchored by the tikanga of mana whenua.

Can I work for Tū Mai Taonga?

Tū Mai Taonga is recruiting for a range of junior and senior field-based roles and support work. See <https://www.tumaitaonga.nz/vacancies> for more details.

How can I support Tū Mai Taonga?

Tū Mai Taonga is designed to support the efforts of community groups around the island by proving methods that can eradicate feral cats and rats across large landscape areas.

The Ecology Vision [website](#) contains links to the groups you can [get involved](#) with to help the mahi.

How can I be a responsible cat owner?

Auckland Council has produced a guide to responsible cat ownership and offers free microchipping and desexing of domestic cats and an online register, the Cat-alogue. For more information see [here](#).

That's on their homepage





Links from: ‘Restoring People and Place’

Links to: Kairaranga video

Intro text from ‘Restoring People and Place’

Find out how we’re reclaiming our language and culture

Through the Tū Mai Taonga project, Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea is helping our people to reclaim Te Reo Māori and the practices of Karanga and Whaikōrero on the marae. We hope that in the future, we will have an abundance of speakers and callers to preserve our traditional practices for our future generations.

[add images and testimonials - pull from the Tū Mai Taonga part of the Kairaranga video]

This is part of a wider *Kairaranga* pilot, now funded by the Department of Conservation, that aims to enable Māori to re-indigenise conservation by bringing traditional Māori knowledge, language and practices into conservation work.

[Add image and link to the Kairaranga video]

 **Te Mahi Tahī |
Working Together**

Links from: Home page

Links to: Ngāti Rehua, agencies, community groups, Islands of Hope, Tāmaki Taiāo Alliance

Intro text from home page

Te Mahi Tahi - Working Together

Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea is working with the crown, the community and world-class experts to make a way for our people and taonga species to thrive on the island.

[image - ecology groups at the marae] *the one that you had on the home page*

As Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea, we have a duty to care for our ancestral homeland, Aotea. Through the Tū Mai Taonga project, we are working with the local community to restore our island to a thriving state.

This work builds on deep roots. For generations, our iwi and the local community have lived side by side, supporting and relying on each other. As local agencies and community members honor our self-determination, or Tino Rangatiratanga, we acknowledge the hard work they have put into caring for Aotea over many years.

The Tū Mai Taonga project unites us around this history of mutual respect. Together, we are working toward a shared goal to ensure Aotea thrives for generations to come.

[logos of all stakeholders - see 2024 impact report]

NEW SECTION

Pou Whenua Steering Group

[photos of steering group members and advisors with brief descriptions underneath]

Te Kauri Wihongi - Chair, Pou Whenua, Dep. Chair, Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea Trustboard | Teacher

Paula Williams - Committee Member, Pou Whenua | Ecologist

Jason Wii - Committee Member, Pou Whenua | Construction Contractor

James Wii - Committee Member, Pou Whenua | Civil Contractor

Rodney Ngawaka - Committee Member, Pou Whenua | Cultural Ambassador

Phoebe Ngawaka - Committee Member, Pou Whenua | Rongoā (Traditional Medicine) Practitioner

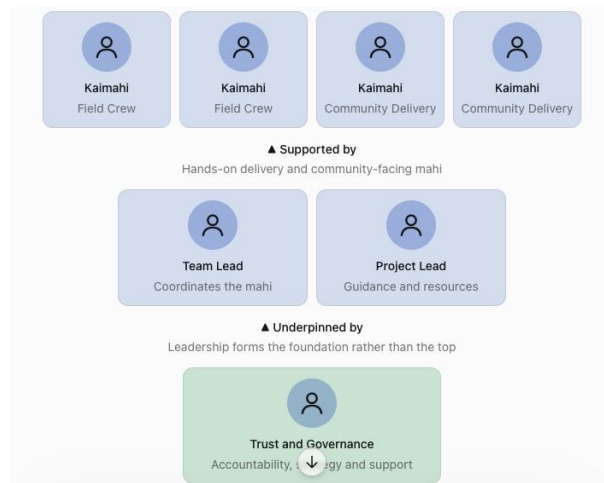
Izzy Fordham - Committee Advisor, Pou Whenua | Chair, Aotea Great Barrier Local Board

Kate Waterhouse - Committee Advisor, Pou Whenua | Chair, Aotea Great Barrier Environmental Trust

NEW SECTION

Project Team

[photos of team members with their names and job titles underneath. Can you think how to show this as a bottom-up, rather than top-down structure?? Invert it?]



NEW SECTION

Technical Advisory Group

A Technical Advisory Group made up of eradication and technology experts, provides expert advice and peer review of the project's operational plans.

[photos of TAG members with brief descriptions underneath]

Membership

Jo Ritchie - Technical Lead & Interim TAG Chairperson - Field trained ecologist who has worked on island and mainland restoration and eradication projects in communities for the last 30 years. Has assisted projects with 9 eradications both successful and unsuccessful. Most recent experience was as Project Lead, Tū Mai Taonga - Jan 2021-Feb 2022 and prior to that Operations Manager, Te Korowai o Waiheke.

Biz Bell - Ecologist with extensive experience – particularly seabirds (including 30 years work with tākoketai/black petrels on Aotea), pest management and eradication projects in populated environments in NZ and overseas. Owner of Wildlife Management International Ltd

Judy Gilbert - More than 20 years managing Windy Hill Rosalie Bay Catchment Trust, a foundation conservation project on Aotea, Long time Aotea resident, with considerable experience with community-based conservation and animal pest management (including cats, rats).

John Parkes - Vertebrate pest ecologist. Now an independent consultant but was a Landcare Research scientist, considerable experience with feral cats. Experienced in control and eradication, has written several planning documents for programmes around the world including on islands with people.

Scott Sambell - Conservation technology and GIS specialist but also has ecology experience, has worked on several large-scale landscape projects in communities. Has designed systems for island projects, has extensive Aotea knowledge having been manager at Glenfern Sanctuary, experienced rodent dog handler. Owner of Ethos Environmental Limited.

Markus Gronwald - Formally a Rodent researcher for Te Korowai O Waiheke. Now works as a researcher in rodents and feral cats for Manaaki Whenua. Marcus has a PhD thesis on behavioural ecology, monitoring and management of invasive rats on islands and has worked on and planned for numerous conservation projects in his career. He has planned and lead invasive rat management on Te Hāwera-a-Maki/Goat Island, and conducted a successful ground-based rat eradication in French Polynesia.

Paul Jennings - Kangaroo Island Cat Eradication Project Lead (Australia). The Kangaroo Island Project is aiming to achieve feral cat eradication over a 440,000ha island (15 x times the size of Aotea). Paul has an experienced team which he can call on to provide further technical support when required.

NEW SECTION

Project Structure

[support text with a graphic]

Tū Mai Taonga sits alongside a number of other conservation projects led by the Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea Trustboard, including the iwi's *Native Plant Nursery* and *Tai Tū Moana*, which focuses on ocean conservation.

Conservation projects are divided into *Pou Whenua* (land) and *Pou Moana* (sea) portfolios, each with a steering group to lead it. The Tū Mai Taonga project is advised by the *Pou Whenua* steering group, made up of six iwi members and two community advisors. Their role is to ensure the project meets its commitments to mana whenua, nurtures partnerships with community, agencies and broader stakeholders and keeps its obligations to funders.

Aotea and Beyond

Links from: Home

Links to: Islands of Hope, Tāmaki Taiāo Alliance

How we're tackling the job

Links from: [Home](#)

Links to:

Feasibility Study

In November 2021, Kurahaupo Consulting prepared a summary of the rationale for pest management on Aotea developed by the Aotea Great Barrier Environmental Trust as a proposal for Jobs for Nature funding.

It provides a formal study of what is feasible in relation to feral cat and rat eradication or control given the current and potential tools and constraints of their use and offers background details on how the project might be implemented.

[THE TŪ MAI TAONGA PROJECT: Towards removing feral cats and rodents from Aotea, Great Barrier Island. John Parkes, Kurahaupo Consulting Contract Report: 2022/24](#)

A Pathway to Eradication

Following the review of the Kurahaupo Consulting feasibility study by the Tū Mai Taonga Technical Advisory Group and the project's funders, a Pathway to Eradication was defined. This longer-term, adaptive approach to realising a predator-free future for Aotea helped the project secure commitments from funders and is guiding operational planning.

[Tū Mai Taonga: A Pathway to Eradication, October 2022](#)

Operational Plan Summary

At the 'Pestival' event in November Operations Manager Chris Giblin introduced Tū Mai Taonga's operational approach; particularly its first phase work in the Te Paparahi area.

[Pestival Presentation October 2022](#)

Impact

Reference Documents

Tū Mai Taonga has produced a 2024 Impact Report to highlight the continued progress of the project since the end of 2023. Anchored in the Tikanga of Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea, the project has commenced operations on the pathway to the eradication of feral cats and rats across Aotea.

Read the 2024 Impact Report [here](#):

Read the 2023 Impact Report [here](#):

Read the 2022 Year in Review [here](#):

Contact

Safe Cat

Links from: Home

Links to: Ecology Vision Safe Cat page

Our Impact

Links from: Home

Links to: Individual Impact Reports, Kairaranga

Feedback from Anna

Just wanted to check - what is the text on the Nav Bar?