



ROKARE
SCENIC RESERVE TRUST

Annual Report 2022-2023



Our Vision

Rotokare will be a thriving natural ecosystem that benefits & inspires wider conservation efforts within the community & throughout the region

Our Mission

We will achieve the highest level of restoration, protection & enhancement of the indigenous ecosystem at the Rotokare Scenic Reserve & beyond

We will actively involve the community & provide the best opportunities for education, recreation, inspiration, & environmental sustainability

Source: Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust Strategic Plan 2017-2027

Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust is a conservation-based community-led charitable organisation formed in 2004. The Rotokare Scenic Reserve was gazetted in 1887 and is a stunning 230 ha forested hill-country catchment including extensive wetlands and a 17.8 ha natural lake. Since 2008, a specially designed 8.2km long pest-proof fence has been erected surrounding the reserve along with eradication of 12 mammalian pests including mice. Ongoing biosecurity management has resulted in flourishing biodiversity at Rotokare, with flora and fauna thriving including some previously regionally extinct, threatened, or at risk, native birds. The biodiversity outcomes of this project continue to benefit the whole Taranaki region and deliver important conservation outcomes of national importance.

This is our ongoing story of community, inspiration, determination, passion, aspiration and fun!

All information presented in this Annual Report covers the year July 2022 to June 2023, except for the Financials which are April 2022 to March 2023.

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust Annual Report for the year 2022-2023. This report serves as a valuable medium for our trust to showcase our accomplishments and contributions to the community.

Over the past year, we witnessed several changes in our staff. Sophie Tucker left her position as General Manager to join her partner in Wanaka. Fortunately, in February 2023, we welcomed Bradley Schroder as her successor. Our Environmental Educator, Ash Muralidhar, relocated to Wellington in July 2022, and we were fortunate to have Sophie Herlihy join our team in the same month. On the Taranaki Kōhanga Kiwi at Rotokare (TKKR) front, Chris Dodd (Doddy), our Kiwi Ranger, moved to Te Anau to take in a role with the Department of Conservation looking after kiwi in remote Fiordland. Jess Fancy, who has been a part of the Rotokare, TKKR and Taranaki Kiwi Trust teams for several years, stepped into Doddy's shoes. Our staff, all with substantial experience, continue to make invaluable contributions to the trust's mission.

Our dedicated trustees persistently volunteer their time and expertise in their governance roles, engaging in rigorous discussions during meetings to make well-informed decisions for the reserve. Thank you for your continued commitment, expertise, and regular in-kind contributions.

A report like this would not be complete without recognizing the tremendous support and hard work of our volunteers. Many of them dedicate as much time at the reserve as full-time employees, assisting with technically demanding projects such as the installation of a radio repeater network, upgraded surveillance dialler boxes, solar panels, and various routine tasks. To all our volunteers, we acknowledge your outstanding contributions and offer our heartfelt thanks.

Throughout the year, we've benefited from corporate working bees, where supporting companies bring out their staff for team-building events, resulting in significant work being accomplished - a true win-win!

We're proud to report the completion of several key projects during the year, including the completion of the new Bush Classroom, an idea conceived over a decade ago, which is now in regular use. We're actively working on other infrastructure projects, such as walkway upgrades, IT enhancements, entry gate refurbishment, and water supply upgrades. Despite severe weather events, our fence has remained intact thanks to ongoing pre-emptive maintenance and management.

The biosecurity the Halo trapping programme surrounding the reserve is currently under review to maximize the effectiveness of our available resources. Biodiversity gains continue to be realized, with the addition of our 40th kiwi founder bird in the reserve. We've successfully released numerous pāteke, and hihi populations are thriving. Plans are in progress for introducing new threatened and regionally significant plant species.

Our education program continues to garner recognition at both the provincial and national levels, with outstanding reviews and feedback from attendees.

Lastly, we express our deepest gratitude to the numerous funders and charities that have generously supported us through donations and grants, ranging from personal contributions to significant donations from individuals, bequests, and corporate support.

As we approach the 20th anniversary of the trust later this year, we eagerly anticipate the exciting projects, species translocations, and enjoyable experiences the coming year will bring.

Mike Weren Trust Chairman October 2023

Our year in numbers...



80
Current adult
hihi population



12 mice
caught in sanctuary
Maintaining the
complete pest free
status of the site



230 ha
pest-free
Sanctuary

129
pāteke
released
at Rotokare



93
feral cats
caught in
the Halo



4,500 ha
intensively
trapped Halo



298
Current kiwi
population

32
kiwi translocated
to other sites



31,000
visitors



7283
volunteer
hours



Celebrating 135 years!

On 15th December 2022 the Trust celebrated the 135th anniversary of the Rotokare Scenic Reserve. To recognise this milestone, our community came together to run a total of 135 laps around the lake – one lap for each year since it was officially gazetted as a reserve. Everyone's efforts on the day symbolize the dedication and energy that local activists and conservationists have put into preserving this special place for decades.

Visitors say...

This year we have started to notice the return of international visitors. So lovely to read their comments in our visitor book again.

"What an amazing place! If only every Reserve could be like Rotokare! Thank you!"

- Visitor from Kauai, Hawaii

"Keep up the great work, Absolute treasure. Thank you."

- visitor from Melbourne

"What a wonderful experience to see (and hear), a place teeming with bird life. A real testament to all the hard work – thank you 😊"

"Such a privilege to stay 😊"

- visitor from Dorset, Finland.

"Amazing place! & we saw our 1st kiwi! We love it here. A perfect place for bird lovers. Thank you for all of your hard work."

"Wonderful project, thank you to share with campers. All be keep this place safe & happy to participate as we can."

- Visitor from France



Biosecurity at Rotokare



Rotokare is Aotearoa's only essentially mouse-free sanctuary, a significant achievement allowing vulnerable species to thrive in the Sanctuary for the benefit of the region. The team is committed to this vision and work hard to ensure any invaders are quickly found and removed. The team at Rotokare use a suite of tools to ensure to detect and swiftly address any invading pests that manage to sneak in.

Pest-Proof Fence

The 8.2km pest proof fence surrounding the sanctuary is the number-one asset in the Trust's biosecurity armoury. While pest incursions will happen via vehicles and avian predators (i.e. harrier, falcon, ruru – dropping live prey inside the sanctuary), the fence removes permanent pest-animal pressure on the taonga within. On call staff monitor fence integrity 24/7 through our fence surveillance system which monitors for breaches such as tree falls or slips. Fence-checks are undertaken weekly on foot by staff and volunteers. Regular maintenance is undertaken seasonally (such as platform spraying to allow for thorough visual inspections of the base of the fence and surrounding earth), and repairs undertaken as required (such as replacing rivets, staples and screws



Slips

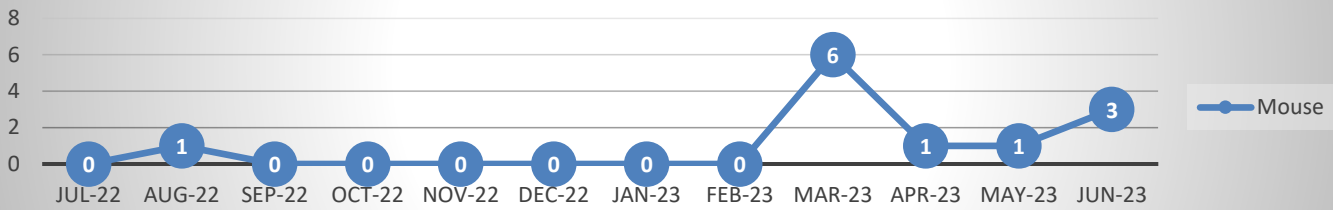
In August 2022, after 160mm rain over a 48 hour period, staff and volunteers quickly responded delivering a full fence check to ensure the fence was not compromised. While there were no breaches of the fence itself, a 200m+ long and 12m wide slip was discovered only 1m from the fence outside the sanctuary along the eastern boundary. Water channels were dug immediately to divert water away from the slip to prevent further slipping.

A further 10m wide slip occurred in December 2022 along the Northern fence. This was also very close to the fence but did not compromise it.

Additional slip detectors were added to these sites to detect further movement or nearby new slips which may potentially compromise the fence. Manuka, grass, and Lotus major seed was spread across the slip faces to help stabilise the area.



Sanctuary Pest catches - July 2022 - June 2023



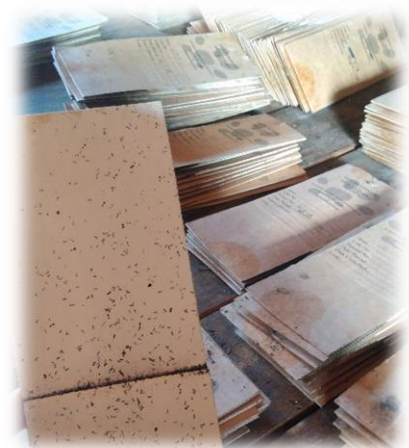
Sanctuary Trap Network

Over 500 of traps are permanently set within the sanctuary as a first line of defence but also as a monitoring tool. These are checked once a week (and some twice a week over summer). This past year we caught twelve mice within the sanctuary. All of these were in known high risk areas in and around the car park. Response trapping was rolled out immediately following all these detections to ensure invaders were quickly found and removed.

Tracking Card Audits

One of our primary pest monitoring tools are inked tracking cards, baited with peanut butter and rabbit meat. Up to 1200 cards are deployed across 42km of monitoring lines throughout the Sanctuary as a passive monitoring tool to help us to pick up any animals which may not be interacting with our existing trap network. These cards are placed around the sanctuary 5 times a year and are scheduled to line up with high-risk times of year when pests are on the move, and to pick up any animals which may not be interacting with our existing traps. We have not had any pest detections in our routine audits over the past year. A great result.

In autumn, a few mice were caught around the carpark. Extra tracking cards were used around all catches to help us find and swiftly remove any other mice present.



Pest Dog Audits

Each year the trust benefits from the incredible support of the Conservation Dogs team (humans and dogs). Normally, two rodent audits and one mustelid audit are undertaken each year with dogs and handlers searching the entire sanctuary for any indication of pest animal presence over 3-4 days each visit. These provide critical information, highlighting any areas of concern which are followed-up on immediately. Rodent audits were undertaken in December 2022 and May 2023. No detection was reported during either audit.

There is currently a shortage of mustelid dog handlers across the country so it was decided to defer our mustelid audit this year. Our last audit was undertaken in January 2021. No mustelids have been detected in the Sanctuary since the initial pest eradication in 2009.



Rodent dogs Will and Ahu searching in some challenging conditions for little legs



Lake & Wetlands

Manaaki Whenua is currently undertaking research looking at Laragrosiphon (oxygen weed) and possible methods of control for this aquatic weed. Laragrosiphon is present on the fringes of Lake Rotokare and we have been supporting Manaaki Whenua's research with samples of this weed being collected from the lake for the past four years.

In November 2022, DOC undertook a macrophyte survey to further our understanding of aquatic life at Lake Rotokare

Willow Control

Controlling willows around the wetlands has been an on-going battle for years. The only time of year that willow control can effectively be done is summer (optimal time to kill the plants but also to access them while the lake level is lower), making it an often very unpleasant task - not only the lack of shade and heat, but also the regular issue of wasps in the area. Over recent years good progress has been made, killing larger trees, then more recently an annual programme of sapling control - the goal being to restore the wetlands to indigenous species dominance.

Funding from OMV allowed us to engage contractors from Tree Machine to springboard our willow control efforts this season, with a 120 hour contractor delivered grid sweep being undertaken in the wetland fringe of the lake's north eastern corner.



Arborists

In December 2022 we had the team from Tree Machine out again to trim or remove trees that were threatening the fence. Any trees which were leaning towards the fence, or branches hanging this were removed by skilled arborists. Trees or branches that fall over or on the fence can create a pathway in for pests to get in or potentially cause significant damage to the fence if not pre-emptively removed.

Biodiversity at Rotokare



With the absence of mammalian pests native biodiversity has been able to recover and thrive within the sanctuary. Increasing numbers of our native species are beginning to spill out of the sanctuary and establish themselves in our wider community. Since 2010 the Trust has worked in partnership with other groups to return nine species to Rotokare which had been lost at Rotokare, and in some cases the Taranaki region, for decades, including rare and vulnerable species like hihi, tīeke/Saddleback, and pāteke. The Trust is committed to restoring the ecological community at Rotokare and to support wider conservation outcomes and are working towards further species reintroductions to the site.

Hihi / Stitchbird

Hihi are classified as nationally vulnerable in DOC's 'Threat of Extinction' system. As members of the Hihi Recovery Group, working alongside the Hihi Conservation Charitable Trust, Rotokare is proud to support the recovery of this unique manu taonga.

Hihi are only found at 7 sites: 1 natural population and 6 reintroduced populations. All reintroduced populations are actively managed through tools such as pest control, supplementary feeding, provision of nest boxes, treatment of parasites, banding and population monitoring.

The 2022-23 Rotokare breeding season began with 80 known hihi (as an absolute minimum based on pre-breeding survey). At least 10 females bred this season.

Excitingly we found our first natural nest this season, with the distinctive call of a hihi nestling being heard during a routine 5-minute bird count station nearby. Using a bit of creativity and contortion we were able to access the nest and band the 3 chicks inside. While around two thirds of our hihi females choose to nest naturally, this is the first time a natural nest has been found while in use!

We had a great breeding season this year with 33 chicks being banded in nest boxes, and an additional 19 being caught as juveniles from natural nests. There are still more unbanded birds being spotted so there are likely even more chicks from this season. It is believed there were at least 7 successful natural nests this season.

While still relatively new and establishing, Rotokare is the currently fastest growing hihi population and continues to steadily increase year after year.



Unbanded hihi juvenile at Rotokare



Investigating a natural hihi nest to band the chicks within





Taranaki Kōhanga Kiwi at Rotokare

Established in 2012, the Taranaki Kōhanga Kiwi at Rotokare (TKKR) is a collaborative partnership between the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust and the Taranaki Kiwi Trust. Over the past decade, a genetically diverse founding population of North Island western brown kiwi have been released at the TKKR kōhanga at Rotokare, with the ultimate purpose of growing kiwi numbers throughout Taranaki and beyond, by releasing offspring of founding kiwi from the kōhanga to suitable protected sites.

This year, the partnership reached one of its original goals, with the 40th founder kiwi, Toa, being released into the kōhanga this year! The population at the kōhanga is flourishing with recent surveys and populations assessments suggest a population of 298 kiwi within the sanctuary.

Since 2020, TKKR has been undertaking annual translocations from the kohanga to other approved sites. A total of **140** kiwi have now been translocated to other sites, helping to re-establish kiwi across the region.

Between March and May of 2023, 32 kiwi were translocated from the TKKR kōhanga at Rotokare to other sites: 11 to the Kaitake Ranges and 10 to Mounga Taranaki both managed by Taranaki Mounga Project, and 11 to Omoana, a block managed by the 800 Trust, TKT, and other landowners.

In November 2022, the TKKR partnership was delighted to be recognised with a Taranaki Regional Council Environmental Award for 'Environmental Action in the Community'.

TKKR has partnered with the Conservation Dogs Program (CDP) for the past 4 years to undertake population assessments within the kohanga, and to catch and tag kiwi in preparation for translocations out of the reserve as part of that process, while supporting the mentoring and accreditation of CDP dog handlers (handlers need to have a certain number of encounters under supervision to be certified/recertified, something which is easier to achieve in a densely populated site like Rotokare) and training and development within the TKKR team, taking the opportunity for team members to work alongside dog handlers who have trainer status in some competencies. We are immensely grateful for the ongoing support and collaboration with the CDP to do great things for kiwi in Taranaki and beyond.



Pāteke / Brown Teal

Pāteke were listed as nationally endangered until 2008 when their conservation status was changed to 'at risk-increasing'. This status change was driven by considerable effort to halt the extinction of pāteke by the Pāteke Recovery Group, captive breeders across the country, and recipient sites. While numbers are slowly increasing, and the recovery programme has been effective, pāteke are still vulnerable. They could again become at risk of extinction if threats are not managed.

Pāteke have been periodically released into Rotokare since 2019. During the past year 129 pāteke were released at Rotokare: 16 in August 2022, 34 in December 2022, 15 in February 2022, and 64 in May 2023 further boosting the existing population.

Pāteke ducklings have been spotted around the reserve and on a couple of neighbouring farms! Our resident pāteke and their young are doing well and continue to explore their environs inside and outside Rotokare. A promising sign for the population's recovery.



Flowering Dactylanthus



Sowing Dactylanthus seed at Rotokare

Pua o te reinga / Dactylanthus taylorii

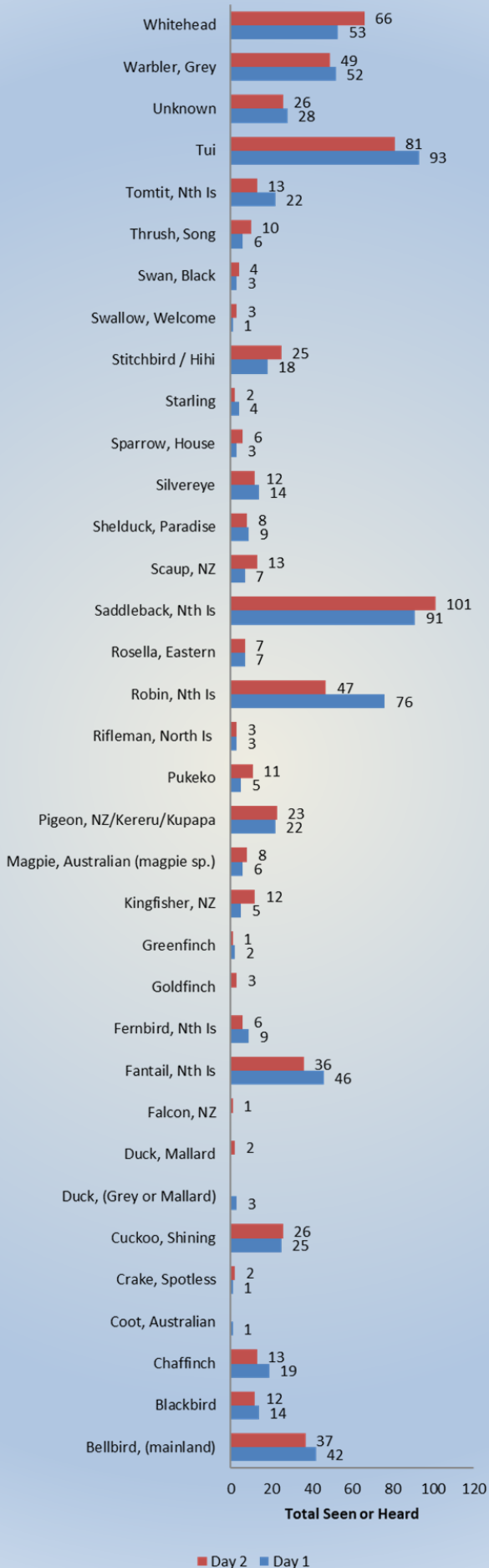
Dactylanthus is Aotearoa's only fully parasitic flowering plant. Since 2014, the Trust has been working with DOC, collecting seed from the Waitaanga conservation area, and sowing these at Rotokare, in an attempt to establish this unique plant at Rotokare.

When visited in November 2021, the source site was found in a damaged state, with some host trees dying, and some covered by felled pine trees making it impossible to safely access those areas. Seeds were found at the sites which were still accessible, which were sown at Rotokare in winter 2022.

In November 2022 a broader search was undertaken to look for new Dactylanthus specimens. No new plants were found but some seed was recovered from a known plant which was sown at Rotokare in late Autumn 2023.

It can take 7+ years for these plants to become visible! While no evidence of establishment has been seen yet at Rotokare we are hopeful that this will appear in years to come.

5MBC Nov 2022



Sanctuary Five-Minute Bird Counts

Sanctuary five-minute bird counts (5MBC) were previously undertaken on a 5-yearly cycle at Rotokare. Since 2018 these counts have been delivered annually, in part as a training and development opportunity for the Rotokare whānau, but also give a more in depth understanding of changes at site.

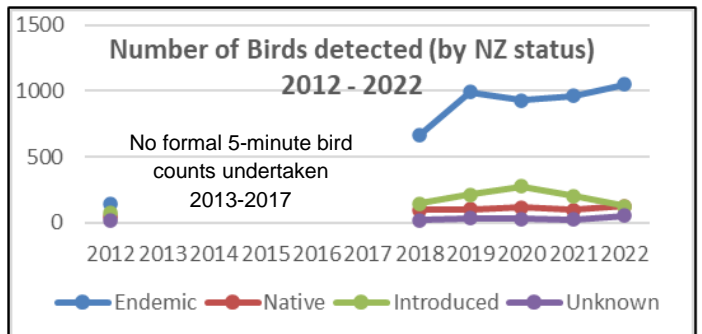
Our 5MBC surveys take place over two fine days at the same 34 stations across the reserve in late November.

Overall, the number of birds detected during this years' survey increased slightly when compared with the previous years surveys, with 1,359 birds detected overall in this survey session.

Numbers for native species that are not endemic have remained reasonably constant since 2018, whereas there has been a continual increase in numbers of endemic birds species detected. This is in large part due to the reintroduction of several vulnerable bird species to the site such as tīeke/saddleback, popokatea/whitehead, hihi, robin, and titipounamu/riflemen), many of these species having become regionally extinct, or absent in the vicinity in the past. There have been significant increases in all of these species, and many others (such as North Island fantail, grey warbler, and tui) in sanctuary 5MBC, a great indication that these species are thriving here at Rotokare!

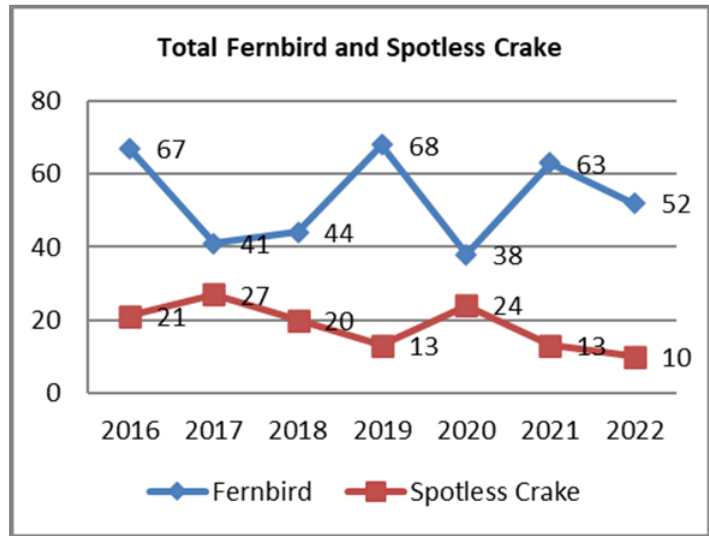
At least 44 distinct species have been detected in the sanctuary, a marked increase from the 25 species detected in this first survey session in 2012, with new species being picked up in counts year to year as some species are returned to the site, some begin to return to Rotokare on their own, and others increase to more detectable levels.

These findings paint a hopeful picture for the recovery of some of our native species both within the sanctuary, and in time, into the wider community.



Mātātā / Fernbird and Pūweto / Spotless Crake

Both mātātā/fernbird and pūweto/spotless crake were present at Rotokare prior to the pest-proof fence being built, and pest animals removed. Both species (and many others) have flourished in the sanctuary following on from this. Rotokare is now one of the few (potentially the only) north island population large enough to be used as a source for translocation. There have been 3 translocations mātātā, from Rotokare to other sites, in 2017, 2018 and 2019, of 100 birds in total.



Rotokare has undertaken annual surveys for both mātātā and pūweto since 2016 to better understand both populations, the impacts of translocation on the resident population, and in readiness for future requests to translocate. Our 2022 survey showed both populations are in good shape, with mātātā being detected in reasonable numbers and pūweto remaining consistent with recent years.

20x20 Veg plots

In 2008, around the time that construction of our pest-proof fence was beginning, 8 vegetation survey plots were established within the Rotokare Scenic Reserve, 7 of these falling within the fence, and one outside of it. These survey plots are 20m by 20m in size and help us to monitor how the plant community is changing – including the growth of existing plants, changes in species detected, forest recruitment - looking at seeding presence and abundance, and seeing recovery of rare and vulnerable species. Over the past year the team have begun revisiting sites to see how these spaces have changed, with support from the Department of Conservation. We still have a few to go but the results are looking promising so far with some great seeding abundance and recruitment being detected in several plots.



Lizards



Ornate skink



Mokopirirakau/Forest gecko



Goldstripe gecko

This year we entered the second season of delivery for Rotokare's new lizard monitoring program. In 2021 we embarked on a new monitoring programme with hundreds of monitoring devices rolled out across the reserve to track the recovery, density, and distribution of lizard species here at Rotokare, and in time to help us learn which species are absent which we could look to return to the sanctuary.

At least four species of indigenous lizards are known to be present at Rotokare, including ornate skink (*Oligosoma ornatum*), brown skink (*O. zelandicum*), forest gecko (*Mokopirirakau granulatus*), and goldstripe gecko (*Woodworthia chrysosiretica*). The team were delighted to find all 4 of these species, and in good numbers! While it's still early days, detections of all 4 species have increased this year, painting an encouraging picture for the future.

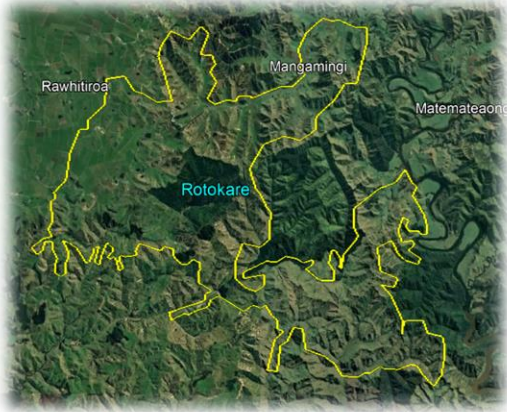
Our native lizards are very vulnerable to rodent predation and are flourishing in the completely rodent free environment at Rotokare. The Rotokare team is committed to remaining free of all pests, including mice, to support the continued recovery of lizards at the site.

Ongoing cause for celebration

Tīeke are incredibly vulnerable to all mammalian predators and can only be found in completely pest free environments. 59 Tīeke were released at Rotokare in 2014 (sourced from 2 different sites - Hauturu o Toi/Little Barrier Island and Tarapuruhi/Bushy Park), after a regional extinction of 150 years, and are most certainly flourishing now at Rotokare! The last formal tīeke focused survey was undertaken in 2016 where over 300 were detected across the sanctuary. Tīeke are now one of the more common species detected in 5 minute bird counts within the sanctuary with numbers increasing year after year. A great symbol of success!



Rotokare Halo



The Rotokare Halo

One of the ultimate goals of the Trust is to return some of our special native and endemic species to the wider Taranaki region, allowing our community to live alongside our native fauna once more. The Rotokare Halo Trapping programme was initiated in 2015 to support this goal, by reducing pest numbers in the area surrounding the sanctuary, reducing pressure on the pest-proof fence and making it safer for native wildlife to disperse from the sanctuary and into the surrounding landscape. Relationships with Halo landowners and volunteers are vital in achieving delivery of the extensive Halo trapping network.

Halo Trapping

The Halo currently has over 1,200 traps of various types including DOC 250's, DOC 200's, A12's, A24's, Steve Allen's, and live capture cage traps.

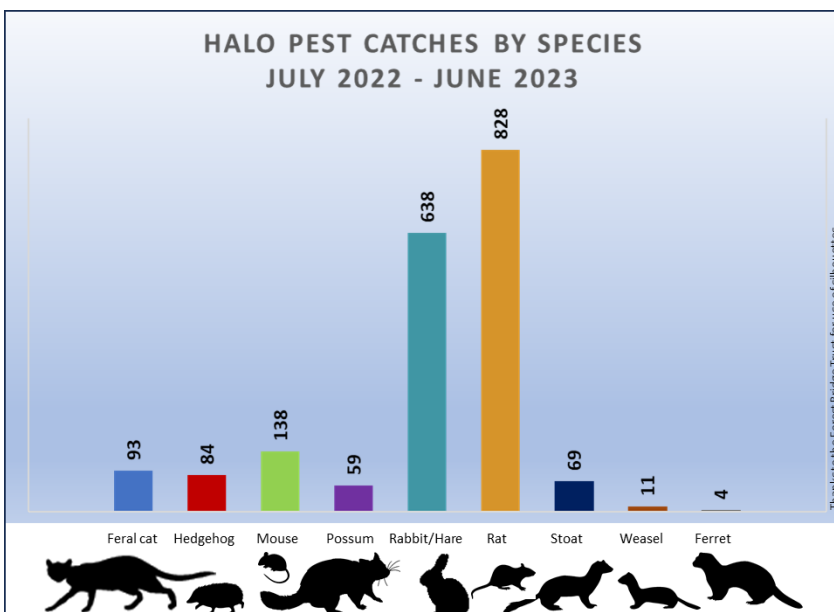
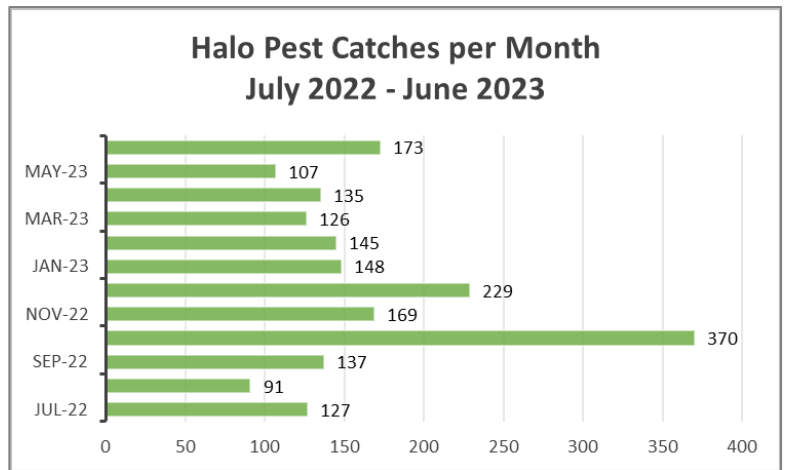
Over the past year a full review of the programme was undertaken, and the decision made to employ an additional full-time trapper.

The Halo has offered opportunities to rangatahi starting their careers in conservation with students from Hawera High School, and trainees from the NMIT trainee ranger programme and the Mayor's Task Force, working alongside Rotokare's Site Manager, learning about pest management while servicing traps in the Halo.

In addition to trapping, 2 dedicated volunteers are helping to tackle rabbit populations with active hunting. This approach not only assists in reducing the rabbit populations but also provides fresh bait for trapping other pest species such as

feral cats. Rabbit control is essential to keeping ferret and feral cat numbers down in the greater Halo area.

Trapping in the Halo has been adjusted to meet our needs. A prominent example being a redistribution and increase in live feral cat traps near wetland areas, and possum traps around potential biodiversity corridors. Targeted trapping was undertaken following pāteke releases to better protect new arrivals as they disperse into the surrounding landscape. Pāteke are extremely vulnerable to feline predation. Traps were deployed to target areas where pāteke were detected, to ensure the birds are protected to the best of our ability.



Thanks to the Forest Bridge Trust for use of silhouettes



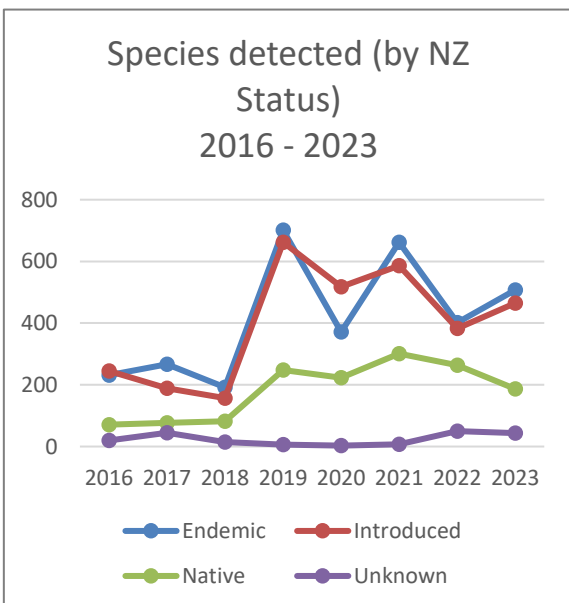
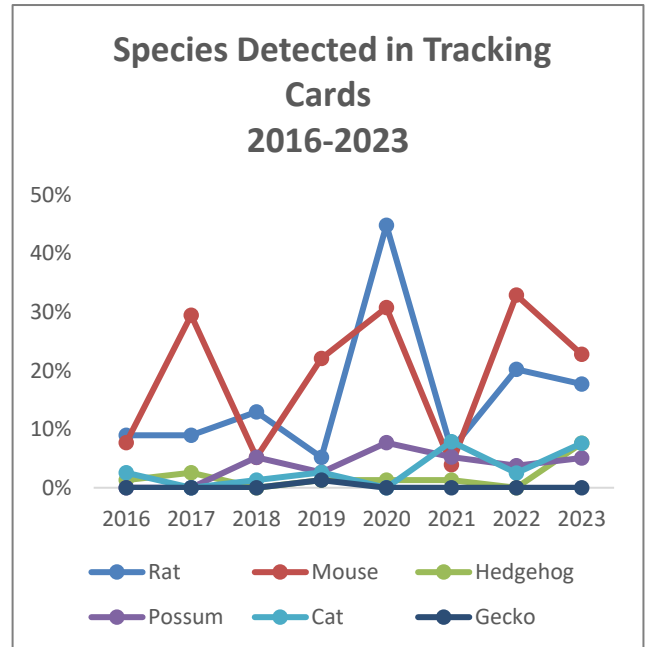
Halo Outcome Monitoring

Annual biodiversity monitoring across the halo project area was initiated in 2016 to monitor the impacts of halo trapping efforts on pest abundance and help understand changes in the diversity, abundance, and distribution of bird life in in the halo project area. Monitoring is undertaken in four study areas, over 39 permanent bird-count stations, and 79 tracking tunnel stations across the 4,500 ha halo project area.

In May 2023 a combination of skilled Rotokare staff, volunteers (both trained and trainees), and Taranaki Regional Council biodiversity officers completed this year's monitoring sessions.

Most monitored properties returned decreased pest tracking rates. This result largely reflects a decrease in detections of both rats and mice, which were both higher in the 2022 survey period. Weather conditions over the past year have been particularly favourable for rodents, with a mild winter and warm conditions persisting until later in the year, and higher rodent abundance in the halo had been anticipated at the end of 2021.

47 bird species have been detected in the halo since baseline surveys were undertaken in 2016, a marked increase from the 26 species detected in this first survey session. Some of these new detections are due to species reintroductions to Rotokare (such as tīeke/saddleback, whitehead, hihi, robin, and rifleman), these species having been absent in the vicinity in the recent past.



These species, and others (such as fantail, grey warbler, and tui) have in time begun dispersing into the halo management area as their numbers rise and reach capacity within the Sanctuary. There has been an increase in detections of some of our more vulnerable endemic species such as tīeke, whitehead, hihi, robin, and rifleman which are now being routinely recorded outside the sanctuary in the halo pest management zone, mainly in areas close to the reserve. Extra pest management has been deployed in these areas because of these findings.

Whilst it is still too early to see any discernible trends with the five-minute bird counts, raw results suggest an increase in both native and endemic species overall across the halo management area. These findings paint a hopeful picture for the recovery of some of our native species into the wider community

Education at Rotokare

Schools & Students



Rotokare's Environmental Education programme provides science and conservation-based learning experiences for students of all ages, from early childhood through to NCEA. Our modules complement classroom education with outdoor experiences that weave in the core strands of the national curriculum and 'Nature of Science' achievement aims.

The Ministry of Education has dissolved LEOTC (Learning Experience Outside of The Classroom) and Rotokare has signed a new contract with MoE based on Enriching Local Curriculum (ELC). Our programmes already lean heavily into local history and culture, but a new programme called Aotearoa New Zealand Histories has also been developed to offer a deeper dive into Rotokare's rich background and relevance to the region.

From July 2022 to June 2023 a total of 2223 students visited Rotokare. Five new schools/education groups engaged with Rotokare, four of which visited us at the reserve, the other was visited at their school, with plans for them to come out at the sanctuary in the future. This brings the total of Taranaki schools that have engaged with Rotokare's Education Program, since it was launched in 2010, to a whopping 88.6%.

Student engagement has extended beyond school trips with Rotokare hosting education focus groups of ākonga from groups such as the Kiwi Conservation Club, Sustainable Taranaki's Te Ara Taiao, WITT, Tupu ā Nuku and TOPEC.

Pathway-type programs with Tupu ā Nuku and TOPEC continue, where students get a taste of conservation careers with a hands-on trapping workshop.

2,223 ākonga through our Education Program*

5 new schools engaged with Rotokare*

88.6 % of all Taranaki Schools have engaged with Rotokare ✓

* between July 2022 and June 2023
✓ since the education program was launched

Winter Night Tours

Our winter Rotokare by Night Tours provide a unique perspective on the sanctuary. All seven public Night Tours sold out in a snap; the popularity boosted by a high reach on social media. We also held 2 private Nights Tours.

In total, 286 guests, young and old, were guided through the dark bush by outstanding volunteers and Youth Ambassadors spotting all sorts of nighttime critters including kiwi, wētā, peripatus (velvet worms), pāteke, kōura, kōkopu, ruru, and more.

Interest in these events is higher than the capacity to run them, so there's plenty of opportunity to develop the experience further.



Spotting night-time critters on our sell-out night tours

Youth Ambassadors

Initiated in 2016, Rotokare's Youth Ambassador programme now spans a 2-year period, with each year seeing new junior ambassadors, and some of the previous year's cohort continuing as senior ambassadors. Ambassadors participate in workshops covering a range of topics including: conservation field skills, tours, field trips, and principles of kaitiakitanga within a conservation context.

In October 2022, we took the ambassadors on field trips to Pūkaha National Wildlife Centre, Ngā Manu Reserve, Zealandia, and Island Bay Maine Reserve to expand their environmental conservation knowledge beyond Rotokare.

At the end of 2022, 5 senior ambassadors graduated the programme, and 4 of this year's graduating juniors continuing in the programme as senior ambassadors. In early 2023, a new cohort of 12 enthusiastic junior Ambassadors began their journey of discovery, learning, and environmental conservation within the reserve.

The Ambassadors not only gain hands on field experience, learning about environmental conservation through Rotokare, but the Senior Ambassadors also develop leadership skills running their own conservation project. The project can be about anything within the environment that they like and must have some sort of impact (i.e., social change, fundraising, knowledge sharing, trapping, etc.).



*The 2022 and 2023 Youth Ambassadors:
just a few of their trips and projects!*



New Bush Classroom

On the 11th of June 2023 our new purpose-built bush classroom was officially opened by South Taranaki District Mayor Phil Nixon. This has been a long but rewarding process. This space will create an all-weather safe place for children to learn using interactive devices, whilst being emersed in the natural world. A lot of hard volunteer mahi went into realising the vision of this space. This project would not have been possible without the dedication of our volunteer team, and the belief and support of our sponsors.

We sincerely thank Betts & Bishop Landscaping and Construction, Beach Energy, Life Member Gwen Muller, Andrew & Julie Larcom for their generous donations to this project.

Projects

Water Intake Upgrade

In Feb 2023 the Reserve's water supply to the public facilities was upgraded, to improve water quality. This included adding a water tank to catch silt and other debris. A new 40mm pipe was run down towards the public facilities to improve water pressure and filters added to make it as clean as possible. As part of this project a section of the fence had to be temporarily removed to allow access to the site to get materials in. A pre-emptive biosecurity response was put in place during and after. Dogs were secured at the edges of the open fence section during works to deter pest and to alert the team should anything approach the opening. Extra trapping was deployed. This proved successful with no pests being detected after.



Lake track upgrades

As part of this year's annual track maintenance two new boardwalks were constructed on the north/east side of the lake walkway. These improvements will enable visitors to get past wet areas safely and without getting muddy. Other parts of the walkway had maintenance undertaken with track metal in a number of other wet areas.



Solar upgrade on surveillance system

In November 2022 the fence surveillance system received an upgrade. Solar panels were upsized from 60w to 120w, new solar controllers fitted, and stronger brackets installed to hold the larger panels, as these would be more impacted by wind than the old ones. Previously these sites would not get enough sunlight to power the system over winter, requiring batteries to be brought to base for charging (each weighing around 20kg). The larger panels have significantly increased our ability to charge these batteries in the field, and effectively monitor our fence.



Mobile booster

Installed by some of our clever volunteers, cell phone boosters have now been fitted at our offices. This allows us to monitor the fence surveillance system more reliably and to be able to use any cell phone to do this. Cell coverage was previously only possible using an external aerial on the roof, which was plugged into a port on the phone, a feature not found on most modern phones. This will also now allow people to call emergency services if needed.



Rotokare Whānau

The Rotokare whānau is made up of Trustees, staff, and a huge team of volunteers who are passionately committed to achieving the vision of the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust together.

Trustees



Mike Weren
Chair



Jacqui Kingsnorth
Deputy Chair



Deborah Clough
Treasurer



Graeme Pitman
Deputy Treasurer



Joe Menzies



Murray Prankerd



Allen Juffermans



Tāne Houston



Bruce Clarkson
(Co-opted)

Staff



Sophie Tucker
Sanctuary Manager
(to February 2023)



Bradley Schroeder
General Manager
(from February 2023)



Tricia Jamieson
Administrator



Fiona Gordon
Conservation Manager



Chris Dodd
TKKR Kiwi Ranger
(to July 2023)



Jess Fancy
TKKR Kiwi Ranger
(since July 2023)



Kane Bretherton
Site Manager



Sophie Herlihy
Environmental Educator

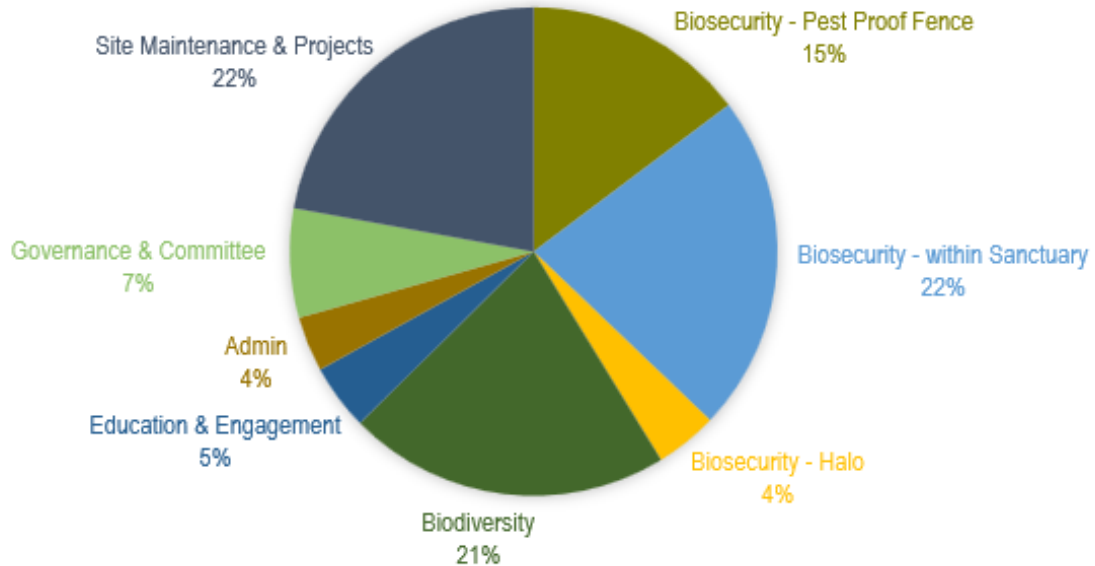


James Davies
Trainee Ranger
(Nov 2022 - Feb 2023)

Volunteers

The Rotokare project was started by passionate volunteers, and volunteers remain the critical life-force of Rotokare, fulfilling key roles throughout the organisation. This dedicated team of people from all walks of life generously donate their time throughout the year in all weathers. They are the heart and soul of Rotokare!

Volunteers contributed a whopping **7283** hours to the project covering many crucial work areas:



Volunteers are involved in a wide range of tasks including pest management, site maintenance and biodiversity monitoring.

Clockwise from L top: Noah & Takumi assist with trapping in the halo, Ray delivering maintenance of on site facilities, Jenny installing bat monitoring devise and assisting with kiwi monitoring and health checks.

Youth Volunteers

High school student, Adam Marsh volunteered with us for a week as part of meeting the requirements for his Gold Duke of Edinburgh and Queen's Scout awards (travelling up from Wellington over the school holidays to do so).

Travelling volunteer Natasha Price from Scotland joined us for several weeks May – June 2023 to gain work experience. Natasha is visiting New Zealand on a working holiday visa pursuing a career in conservation. Has continued on to Dunedin as part of her travels but may return later in the year.

We are grateful for their support, particularly for their help with more physically demanding tasks which are too challenging for some team members.

Volunteer Awards

Long standing Rotokare volunteer Graham Wells was recognised for his contributions to the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust (and to a number of other organisations) with a Volunteer Award from Volunteering New Plymouth in October 2022. A well deserve accolade for this hard working, community minded team member.

Trainee Ranger

For the seventh year in a row, the Trust has employed a Trainee Ranger (12 weeks over summer) through the Trainee Ranger programme run by Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology. This not only provides a well-needed capacity-boost during peak fieldwork season, but also contributes to skill-development and mentoring of a future conservation leader. This year James Davies joined the team assisting with trapping, site maintenance, fence checks, and bird surveys. James has now secured a role working with the rare kakariki karaka (orange crowned parakeet) – well done James!

Life Members



Joe, Murray, Graeme, and Mike

In December 2022 Joe Menzies, Mike Weren, Murray Prankerd, and Graeme Pitman, were awarded life memberships for their significant contributions to the project. Mike, Joe and Murray are founding trustees, with Graeme coming on-board shortly afterwards. Their hard work and dedication over the almost twenty years of the Trust has contributed directly to the success of the project. Thank you each for your mahi, we look forward to having you with us for many more years.

Our life members to date, Gwen Muller, Joan O'Connor, Alex Ballantyne, Ray Willy, Win Kerr, Don Litchfield, Barry Hartley, Jenny Kerrisk, Bill Hodges, Val Campbell, Audrey Thompson, Alan Rogers, Joe Menzies, Mike Weren, Murray Prankerd, Graeme Pitman.

Finances

Financial Position

1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

(NB Annual Report is 1.7.22 – 30.6.23)

| | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| Revenue | \$608,121 |
| Expenses | \$535,473 |
| Depreciation | \$121,420 |
| Deficit for the Year | \$ 48,772 |

Endowment Fund

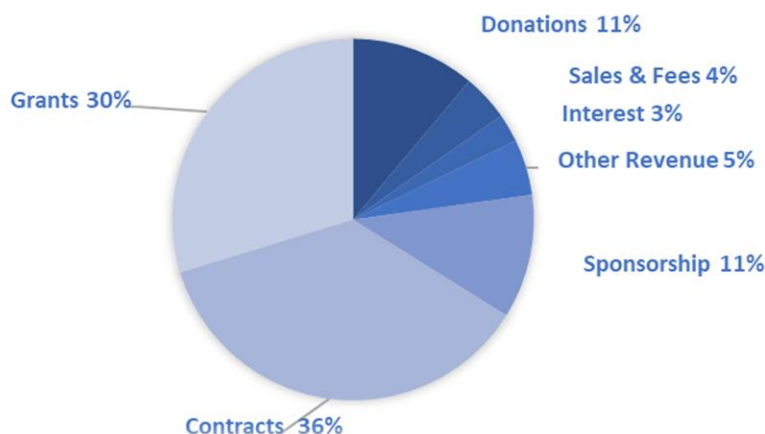
Balance on 31 March 2023

\$50,595

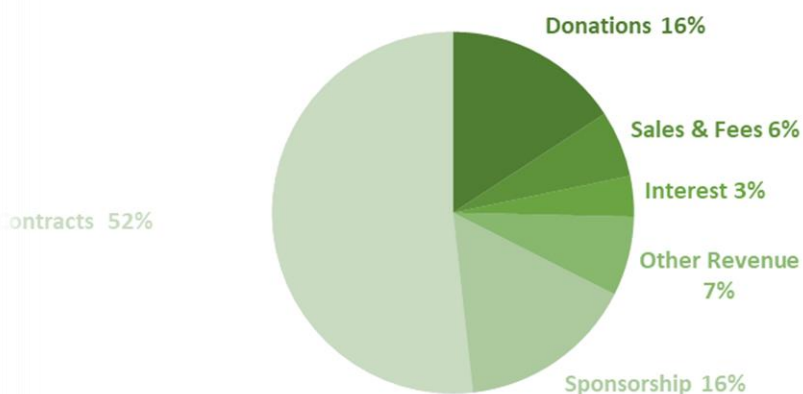
The long-term goal is to build this fund to a level that provides for a sustainable percentage of annual operational income.

Sustainable income, including self-generated income is a key goal for the Trust. Over 35 different funding sources contribute to the Trust's annual income. Realistic budgeting enables the Trust to deliver on Annual Plans. Just over 70% of all revenue is self-generated from sales & fees, interest, sponsorship, donations, and contracts.

TOTAL REVENUE



SELF GENERATED REVENUE



Self-generated Revenue

A 3-year Mahi mō te Taiao Jobs for Nature contract with DOC continued to significantly boost contract income for this period.

Public Donation Box income increased 7.5% from the previous year.

Sales & fees income from Rotokare honey, sell out winter night tours, calendars and our education programme continued to contribute to our self-generated income goal.

Sponsors & Partnerships

Everyone that contributes to, visits, or benefits from this project in any way is an important stakeholder in our community-led sanctuary project.

This includes everyone from financial contributors, partners, collaborators, volunteers, governance and committee, staff, schools, halo landowners and neighbours, the Taranaki community, visitors and campers, wider conservation community, and future generations.

The Trust express sincere gratitude to all volunteers, neighbours, and surrounding landowners, and the many 'Friends of the Lake' members for their ongoing support – Community is our purpose.

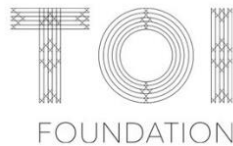
The Trust also sincerely thanks and recognises the below key partners, sponsors, donors, contributors, corporate volunteers, and collaborators.

Members of



Partnered for
Taranaki Kōhanga Kiwi at Rotokare (TKKR)
Project

Proudly Supported and Sponsored by



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



How you can help

- Become a 'Friend of the Lake' | Make a donation | Volunteer
- In-kind goods and services | Become a sponsor | Make a bequest





ROKARE
SCENIC RESERVE TRUST



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www.facebook.com/rotokare
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