

2024 Impact Report

Contents

Our vision	3
Foreword	4
2024 highlights	6
2030 goals	7
Restoring landscapes	8
Restoring the marine environment	14
How we work	20
How you can help	25

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a global environmental non-governmental organisation (eNGO) dedicated to addressing the climate and biodiversity crises to ensure a future where both people and nature thrive. For over 70 years, TNC has been working with communities, Indigenous groups, governments, companies and other NGOs to implement nature-based solutions that restore nature and build ecosystem resilience. TNC is a leader in scientific research, policy and innovative finance. Our achievements include the first mangrove mapping for carbon value and pioneering the first blue carbon seagrass projects.

The Nature Conservancy has been working in New Zealand since 2018.

Cover: Reducing soil erosion by planting natives will help keep the water of rivers like the Waipawa flowing clearly © Brena Smith, Hawke's Bay Regional Council;
This page: Restoring landscapes by planting natives and other regenerative practices can sustain rural communities like the Hawke's Bay, affected by Cyclone Gabrielle in 2023 © Hawke's Bay Regional Council





Our vision

Better for nature, better for us.

Toitū te marae a Tāne-mahuta,

Toitū te marae a Tangaroa,

Toitū te tangata.

If the land is well and the sea is well, the people will thrive.

We have adopted this whakataukī (proverb) as our vision for the The Nature Conservancy Aotearoa New Zealand (TNC NZ). We combine the power of science, our global knowledge and the wisdom of local partners to support deeper change to restore land and waters to benefit both people and nature.

KIA ORA



Dear Friends,

Aotearoa New Zealand evolved in isolation for over 80 million years, creating a global hotspot of biodiversity and a home for a huge array of species and ecosystems found nowhere else on Earth. This includes the record-breaking kākākāpō—the heaviest, only nocturnal and only flightless parrot in the world, a taonga (treasure) of the Māori people. New Zealand is also known as the seabird capital of the world, with a third of the world's seabirds found here. And over 80% of our plants are found nowhere else on the planet, such as the tanekaha, a relative of the rimu, that has flattened branchlets that look like leaves—making it among the most pre-historic of trees. However, this biodiversity is under threat.



New Zealand landscapes have been heavily modified since the arrival of humans: invasive species have been introduced; forests and wetlands have been widely cleared; agriculture, horticulture and forestry have intensified; tourism and the population have grown, causing the spread of residential and commercial development; more sediment from land use has clouded waterways and increased stress on shellfish beds; and ill-considered use of natural resources has contributed to a stark decline in biodiversity and an increasing vulnerability to climate change impacts, as well as social and cultural decline. Entire ecosystems have been lost.

Since 2018, The Nature Conservancy in Aotearoa New Zealand has been developing its approach to make the most impact at scale.

Our focus is on changing the way we use land and waters to be better for nature and people, incorporating restorative practices led by science.

Highlights for this year include the release of 11 million kūtai (green-lipped mussels) into the Hauraki Gulf / Tīkapa Moana / Te Moananui-ā-Toi, publishing two reports on different aspects of how blue carbon credits can help restore coastal wetlands, publishing a major research report on aquaculture, and completing a three-year project for 20,000 hectares of extensive weed eradication as a key first step in landscape-scale native forest restoration at the top of the South Island.

This year, we have also driven ways of infusing more sustainable financing into conservation in New Zealand, whether through philanthropy, impact investing or government funding. For example, we have advanced blue/teal carbon credits, built the Hauraki Gulf Challenge Fund and achieved government funding for the next phase of Land for Life.

A big thank you to all the donors and funders who recognise the value of these projects and have made the work possible.

We strive to make our relationship with tangata whenua (the Indigenous people of New Zealand) an integral part of how we work. We collaborate with and support iwi (tribal) priorities for the moana (sea) and whenua (land). We seek to build enduring relationships with iwi as part of their responsibilities as kaitiaki (guardians) and conservation leaders.

In 2024, we were honoured to support a visit from 18 Xwémalkwu (Homalco) First Nation people from British Columbia, who visited iwi and hapū (subtribes) in New Zealand to discuss conservation and create support networks. This was an opportunity for cross-cultural exchange to support Indigenous leadership in conservation, and for our team it reinforced both the privilege and responsibility that comes from more deeply understanding Māori aspirations for mana motuhake (self-determination) in New Zealand, and the power those aspirations have beyond our shores.

For me, the incredible beauty of our country was highlighted with The Nature Conservancy's 2024 Oceania Photo Contest. Nearly 400 entries came from New Zealand, highlighting our special relationship with nature in this part of the world. Congratulations to all the winners—you will see some of the entries and winners by New Zealanders throughout this report.

Finally, I would like to thank our staff and partners, who have worked tirelessly during the year to help us achieve success. We could not do it without you.

Abbie Reynolds
New Zealand Country Director
The Nature Conservancy

Previous page: Unfurling fern frond © VMJones/iStock; Abbie Reynolds headshot © Lisa Duncan; This page (clockwise from left): Waves rolling to shore near Raglan © Katie Pickering/TNC Oceania Photo Contest 2024; Chief Darren Blaney, Xwémalkwu at Whai Maia, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei © James Rua/Hood and Co.; Fungi growing in Eves Valley, Brightwater © Crystal Richardson/2024 TNC Oceania Photo Contest; Kākāpō being released into Sanctuary Mountain / Maungatautari © Stuart Attwood/2024 TNC Oceania Photo Contest



2024 Highlights



- Completed a three-year project for invasive weed control, delivering over 20,000 hectares.
- Planted over 65,000 native plants.
- Released hoverflies for an invasive wasps biocontrol pilot.
- Developed a new operational plan to achieve the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance (KMTT) strategic vision for 3.4 million hectares.
- Received NZ\$995,000 of government funding for Land for Life.
- Released 11 million kūtai into the Hauraki Gulf / Tikapa Moana / Te Moananui-ā-Toi.
- Reached NZ\$1.1 million raised for the Hauraki Gulf Challenge Fund.
- Released two blue carbon reports on policy frameworks and insights from the sector.
- Published an aquaculture research report demonstrating the habitat value of kelp and shellfish farming.
- Supported 18 Xwémalhwu First Nation people to visit iwi and hapū across New Zealand.
- Trained 32 Conservation Leaders.



2030 Goals

A rainbow peeks through the clouds and ocean spray near Kaikōura © Lauryn Wachs/TNC

Our work in New Zealand contributes to The Nature Conservancy's 2030 global goals.

NEW ZEALAND CONSERVATION RESTORATION PRIORITIES:

Landscapes



Forests



Waterways



Natives



Wetlands

Marine



Marine



Aquaculture



Shellfish

The Nature Conservancy's 2030 Global Goals



3 billion

Avoid or sequester 3 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide annually.



100 million

Help 100 million people at severe risk of climate-related emergencies by safeguarding habitats that protect communities.



1 million + 30 million

Conserve 1 million kilometres of rivers, plus 30 million hectares of lakes and wetlands.



650 million

Conserve 650 million hectares of biodiverse habitats such as forests, grasslands and desert.



45 million

Support the leadership of 45 million people from Indigenous and local communities in stewarding their environment and securing rights.



4 billion

Conserve 4 billion hectares of marine habitat through protected areas, sustainable fishing and more.



Restoring Landscapes

Working at a large scale, accelerating the planting of native species, managing threats and supporting local leadership.

Connected, thriving landscapes improve our natural environment and the wellbeing of communities.

In some parts of the country, less than 1% of lowlands are covered in native ecosystems. We are working to increase this to 15% by 2050 to reach a positive tipping point at which ecosystems can thrive. As well as being a critical priority for iwi partners, the native ecosystems will protect unique species and habitats, reduce pollution and sediment threats to fresh and marine waters and build resilience in the face of climate change.

Agricultural land is essential for Aotearoa New Zealand's economy and food security. Climate change makes this land more vulnerable to erosion, and increased soil loss leads to sediment build-up in waterways. Planting native species on marginal farmland to complement existing food production can increase climate resilience, improve water quality and provide valuable habitat for birds, insects and other species.

Lily helping move plants at a Kawatiri planting day on the West Coast © Richard Rossiter





RESTORING: FORESTS AND WATERWAYS

Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance

Supporting farming, forestry and horticultural land to reconnect lowland habitats, including protecting waterways and the coastal edge.



The Miromiro or New Zealand tomtit lives in forest or shrubland © Deb Corbett/2024 TNC Oceania Photo Contest

The top of the South Island has many rare ecosystems that are increasingly at risk due to biodiversity loss and climate impacts. We are working to restore critical lowland forest and habitats at the water's edge through our partnership with the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance (KMTT). This is the nation's largest collaborative conservation effort, now working across 3.4 million hectares of land and ocean.

Made up of nine iwi, five councils, the Department of Conservation, and the Ministry for the Environment and Fisheries New Zealand, KMTT advances projects that protect and restore forests, wetlands and waterways—Ki Uta ki Tai / from coast to coast and from the mountains to the sea. It aims to bring back habitats for native species through establishing and connecting weed- and pest-free areas.

Our achievements in 2024:

- Completed a three-year project for invasive weed control, delivering over 20,000 hectares.
- Planted over 65,000 native plants at 15 sites to fill gaps left by dense weed removal and to buffer precious remnant ecosystems.
- Released hoverflies for an invasive wasp biocontrol pilot at three sites.
- Paid over 132,000 hours of labour in restoration work (84 FTEs) – staff received conservation training on the job, opening up career pathways in the sector.
- Developed and started implementing a new operational plan to achieve the KMTT strategic vision for 3.4 million hectares.
- Advanced preparations to control problem browsing animals across 840,000 hectares in Northwest Nelson and to conduct predator control over 100,000 hectares on the West Coast/ Kahurangi National Park.
- Supported seabird restoration work at Farewell Spit / Onetāhua.
- Established the Reforestation Accelerator Initiative to explore carbon market opportunities, and started pilot work at selected sites.
- Supported the development of a native plant nursery with a local iwi partner.
- Hosted Conservation Standards training for 32 participants.
- Supported 21 KMTT strategy-related projects to achieve their goals, including an additional four projects throughout the year.
- Set up Te Kāhui Tangaroa – a steering group to enable Indigenous leadership, with our iwi partners.

 [LEARN MORE](#)

Land for Life

Supporting farmers to establish regenerative practices.

Planting trees on pastoral lands can stabilise the soil, capture carbon, enhance biodiversity, provide forestry revenue and support alternative sources of income such as honey production and credits for carbon sequestration.

This joint project with Hawke's Bay Regional Council and the Ministry for Primary Industries supports farmers to plant trees and use regenerative practices that reduce waterway pollution, restore nature and fight climate change to build a sustainable future.

Following a pilot on 12 farms, in December 2024 Land for Life was awarded a NZ\$995,000 funding grant from the New Zealand Government's Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures (SFF Futures) fund. This funding will allow the initiative to expand to 100 farms across Hawke's Bay, with the potential to scale across the whole region over time. If the model proves to be successful at the regional level, it could be scaled to other areas.

Our achievements in 2024:

- Received NZ\$995,000 of government funding, which allows the trial to expand to 100 farms from 2025.
- Prepared detailed planning and the public launch for Stage 3 of the project.
- Started engaging finance and delivery partners.

 [LEARN MORE](#)



Clockwise from top left: Planting natives near waterways can help prevent nitrogen and other run-off entering the water; Planting natives on the hillsides of Evan and Linda Potter's farm; Recent plantings are visible on erosion-prone land © Hawke's Bay Regional Council; Next page: Hinepango Wetland Restoration Group volunteers - David Wilson (front), with Blair, Roseanne and Adam Kibblewhite (L-R) - planting natives after clearing invasive weeds near Rangiri, Marlborough © Leticia Dodson/Hinepango Wetland Restoration Group



Restoring Coastal Wetlands

Building the evidence base for New Zealand projects to participate in blue carbon credits markets.

Coastal wetlands have enormous potential to store CO₂ emissions and protect communities against flooding and storm surges, which can preserve the unique habitats of native species. New Zealand has 15,000 kilometres of coastline, making it the ninth longest in the world. Despite their benefits, over 90% of New Zealand's wetlands have been altered through a change in land use.

Data collected from seven sites across 300 hectares in New Zealand in 2024 will contribute to the evidence base and economic assessment for landowners to participate in blue carbon credit markets.

The insights obtained over the year have shaped a policy report, Coastal Wetland Blue Carbon Policy Research in Aotearoa, with the Ministry for the Environment. It outlines the policy, legal and market frameworks needed to issue blue carbon credits for coastal wetland projects.

The report Coastal Wetland Blue Carbon in Aotearoa New Zealand, with the Department of Conservation, combined insights from the sector and identified current projects, reflections and recommendations for a Community of Practice, for those involved in coastal wetlands.

The salt marshes branch out across the Wairau Lagoons near Blenheim and attract thousands of breeding migratory birds each year. The area is an example of an environment where blue carbon revenue could help restore wetlands, providing a buffer against sea-level rise and protecting communities as well as species. © Ricky Wilson

Looking ahead, the programme will lead the way for a pilot restoration initiative. This will showcase how a blue carbon project is developed, together with restoration efforts and carbon documentation. TNC NZ will also explore whether peatland restoration projects could also access sustainable financing for nature restoration via teal carbon credits.

Our achievements in 2024:

- Collected data at seven sites across 300 hectares to help build the case for landowners to participate in blue carbon credit markets.
- Monitored each site quarterly for soil carbon stocks, greenhouse gas emissions and sediment build-up.
- Reported on policy, legal and market conditions for blue carbon credits.
- Reported on recommendations from the sector on the way forward.
- Co-hosted two Community of Practice meetings and participated in two focus group workshops on a blue carbon roadmap.

 [LEARN MORE](#)





Restoring the Marine Environment

Restoring ocean health,
and supporting economic
development and food
production in coastal
communities.

Conserving and restoring our marine areas plays a vital role in protecting communities against climate change. Aquaculture, when done properly, can provide impressive benefits to coastal ecosystems.

Kūtai (green-lipped mussels) being harvested from commercial aquaculture farms near Coromandel for distribution further north in the Hauraki Gulf © Shaun Lee







RESTORATIVE AQUACULTURE

Nature-smart Seafood

Finding new operating models for regenerative or low-impact economic activity.

Aquaculture is not only the fastest-growing form of food production—it can also be one of the most environmentally efficient ways of producing food. This is especially true for shellfish and seaweed, which require almost no feed, fresh water or land, and result in minimal greenhouse gas emissions.

A growing body of research conducted by TNC's scientists and partners demonstrates that aquaculture can help restore ocean health, as well as support economic development and food production in coastal communities—if the right practices are deployed in the right places. The next step will be to measure how aquaculture is interacting positively with the environment, climate change and society.

In May 2024, new research from the University of Auckland and the University of New England (supported by TNC) showed that mussel and seaweed farming in New Zealand can increase wild fish populations and bolster biodiversity.

Our achievements in 2024:

- Published a research report: *Exploring the Habitat Value of Kelp Aquaculture and Kelp-Shellfish Co-Culture*.
- Presented to the Aquaculture New Zealand and Aotearoa New Zealand Seaweed Association industry conferences.

 [LEARN MORE](#)

Yellowtail kingfish swimming among mussel aquaculture lines in New Zealand © Lucy Underwood/University of Auckland; Australasian snapper feeding on biofouling organisms on a line of farmed mussels in New Zealand © Rebecca Stobart/University of Auckland

Top of the South

Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance (KMTT) projects

Mai i Whangamoa ki Horoirangi, mai i uta ki tai: Extensive mapping work with KMTT partners (Department of Conservation, Nelson City Council and Ngāti Tama), the Ministry for Primary Industries and the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA)—alongside camera observations in Wakapuaka Taiapure and the Horoirangi Marine Reserve—to support future restoration.

Te Tauihu Kūtai restoration project: Supporting the University of Auckland mussel reef restoration project across Te Tauihu, including Pelorus Sound / Te Hoiere, Golden Bay / Mohua and Delaware Bay / Whakapuaka.

“Abundance creates abundance”: NIWA-led research project using cutting-edge science to identify the best ways to rehabilitate and restore shellfish beds in Golden Bay / Mohua and Tasman Bay / Te Tai-o-Aorere.

Alternative blue economy – fisheries project: In support of KMTT, TNC NZ undertook research with industry to support fishers, create economic and environmental resiliency, and to protect and support the restoration of native ecosystems.



Restoring the Mauri of the Hauraki Gulf

Collaborating to actively
restore the coastal marine environment.

The Hauraki Gulf / Tikapa Moana / Te Moananui-ā-Toi is a taonga (treasure) of national importance for both people and nature. But the ecosystem has been degraded by changing land use, overfishing, sedimentation, agricultural run-off and untreated sewage, and the kūtai (green-lipped mussels) that used to carpet the Gulf have dwindled to a fraction of what they were.

Shellfish play a key role in filtering the water, providing protection against climate-related storm surges and rising seas, and providing food and habitat for diverse species as well as kaimoana (seafood) for communities.

Through the Revive Our Gulf project, we are collaborating with The Mussel Reef Restoration Trust, University of Auckland and iwi organisations Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, Ngāti Manuhiri Settlement Trust and Ngāi Tai ki Tamaki. In 2024, Revive Our Gulf deployed 11 million kūtai into the Hauraki Gulf across two project areas, and is now monitoring the results.

In February 2024, Dr Lizzie Mcleod, TNC Global Oceans Director, and Kate Kerr, TNC Director of Strategy Partnerships, Global Oceans, visited Te Mau Tohora a Manaia (Motuora Island) to experience the partnership.

Through the generosity of our donors, the Challenge Fund initiative has raised NZ\$1.1 million to date, which was matched by Foundation North to double the impact of funds for research and restoration work. We need your help to continue this vital work and access a further NZ\$900,000 in matched funding. If you can help us achieve our goal, contact our Director of Development Emma Dent at emma.dent@tnc.org.

*Mauri (Life force)



Our collective achievements in 2024:

- Deployed 11 million mussels in the Hauraki Gulf / Tikapa Moana / Te Moananui-ā-Toi through Revive Our Gulf.
- Carried out 6 monitoring surveys.
- Reached NZ\$1.1 million raised through the Challenge Fund, which was matched by Foundation North.
- Supported staff to attend the combined Australian and New Zealand marine sciences conference in nīpaluna / Hobart.

 [LEARN MORE](#)

Bags of kūtai are emptied into the Hauraki Gulf to restore shellfish beds © Shaun Lee; Next page: Deploying kūtai into the Hauraki Gulf © Shaun Lee



How We Work

Building our internal te ao Māori capacity and capability

We engage with tangata whenua (Indigenous people), communities, the government and the private sector.

We acknowledge the role of tangata whenua as kaitiaki (guardians) and decision-makers of Aotearoa New Zealand and their standing as key Treaty partners and leaders across the conservation sector. We seek to establish relationships and grow trust in our staff who are engaging with iwi across the motu (country).

Across our projects, we want to work alongside whānau (Māori families), hapū and iwi (sub-tribes and tribes) to support their priorities for the wai (water), moana (sea) and whenua (land), and enable kaitiaki aspirations to uphold the mauri (life force) and health of the taiao (environment). Our projects include increasing ecological diversity through the support of restoration work along coasts and on land, and exploring innovation such as blue/teal carbon markets. We ensure we engage with iwi to guide and support our mahi as kaitiaki and conservation leaders.

In addition to project work, we are building Māori capacity and capability internally. In 2024 we appointed a te ao Māori advisor, shared 50:50 with the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance. We are also building the capability of existing staff to ensure we are working appropriately and strategically with iwi Māori.

In 2024, we supported two wāhine Māori (Māori women) from iwi we work with to attend the Nature's Leading Women gathering in Australia—a movement of women leading conservation and climate action—and supported the Xwémalhkwi First Nation visit and cultural exchange to Aotearoa.



Clockwise from top: The Wxémalkwu group being welcomed onto Te Āwhina Marae of Ngāti Rārua and Te Atiawa iwi © Melissa Banks; L-R: Kura Stafford, Renee Love, Aneika Young, Sacha Healey and Debs Martin attending the Nature's Leading Women gathering © Nikita Pere/TNC; The weaving circle at the Nature's Leading Women gathering in December 2024 © Nikita Pere/TNC





A Meeting of Nations

Fostering Indigenous-led conservation and practices.

In March 2024, 18 Xwémalhkwu (Homalco) First Nation people from British Columbia landed in New Zealand to meet iwi and hapū representatives from Ngāpuhi, Te Roroa, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Kūia, Ngāti Rārua, Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Tama and Ngāi Tahu, from Te Tai Tokerau (Northland) in the north right down to Murihiku (Southland) in the south. The Xwémalhkwu experienced pōwhiri (welcomes) and were hosted by these iwi on their respective rohe (regions). They shared experiences and knowledge first-hand that empowered Indigenous understanding across Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa (the Pacific Ocean), with the hope of raising a future generation of leaders for conservation.

TNC NZ and our Canadian affiliate Nature United were proud to support this exchange to foster Indigenous-led conservation and practices. The learning that occurred from this cultural exchange has enabled a powerful pathway to connect, share commonalities and differences, and foster knowledge, ideas and value transfers. It has created lasting relationships and networks for shared problem-solving.

Top: The Xwémalhkwu group paddling on the Waikato river with Tainui iwi © Stuart Attwood; Inset: Raymond Smith, Ngāti Kūia and Chief Darren Blaney, Xwémalhkwu at Kahikatea Flat © Melissa Banks

 [LEARN MORE](#)



Training **Tomorrow's** Conservation Leaders

Building the skills base of the conservation sector.

New Zealand has many passionate people doing extraordinary work. To accelerate their impact, we worked with individuals and organisations to give them additional skills and expertise to work on large-scale and complex conservation initiatives. The Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance hosted training for 32 new conservation leaders in May 2024, before we transitioned out of this programme.

 [LEARN MORE](#)



All images: Participants in the Conservation Leaders course, Nelson, May 2024 © Tim Cuff





Working Together in Solomon Islands

Supporting conservation programmes within local communities.

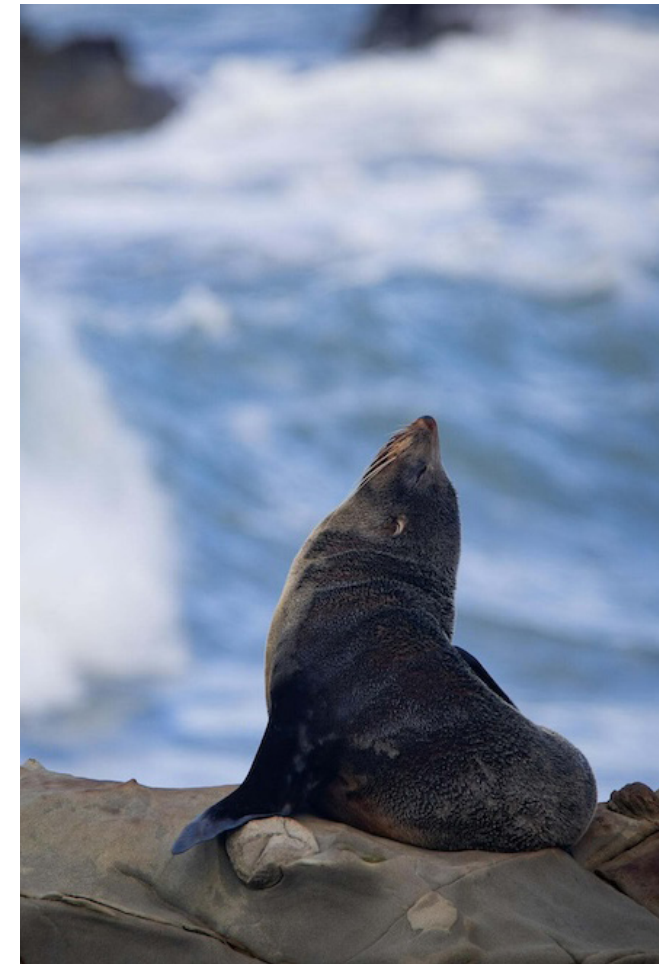
We are working with TNC Solomon Islands on two projects, supported by significant contributions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. We are contributing fundraising and knowledge towards the building of an education centre and eco-lodge accommodation within the Arnavon Community Marine Park which will strengthen local conservation initiatives and improve livelihoods. The build is expected to take place in 2025.

From mid-2024, we are exploring the feasibility of a carbon project as an alternative income source to commercial logging to protect significant biodiversity in the Barora Fa region of Isabel Province, which contains some of the last remaining un-logged forests in Solomon Islands.



A Treasury Island tree frog rests in South Malaita, Solomon Islands
© Douglas Junior Pikacha/2024 TNC Oceania Photo Contest

How You Can Help



For more information on The Nature Conservancy's Aotearoa New Zealand programme, and how your support can make a real difference, please contact:

EMMA DENT

Director of Development and Engagement
Aotearoa New Zealand
emma.dent@tnc.org
+64 2770 65927

**Sign up to receive
project updates:**

nature.org/newzealand

Clockwise from top left: Pukeko family © Roger Smith/2024 TNC Oceania Photo Contest; Native plantings protect a stream in the Hawke's Bay © Hawke's Bay Regional Council; A New Zealand fur seal (Kekeno) rests on the rocks in northern Canterbury © Lauryn Wachs/TNC; Kütai being distributed in the Hauraki Gulf © Shaun Lee

 **DONATE TODAY**

The Nature
Conservancy 
Aotearoa New Zealand

*Te Papa Ao Tūroa, Aotearoa
Manaaki Taiao, Tiaki Ora*



nature.org/newzealand



@TNCAsiaPacific



The Nature Conservancy in Aotearoa New Zealand