

Biodiversity Hawke's Bay: Our Work and Our Value

Purpose

Biodiversity Hawke's Bay (Bio HB) advocates for biodiversity in Hawke's Bay, and for the many benefits a healthy environment provides for the people of our region. Despite the enormous challenges of a pandemic and two natural disasters since 2019, our work to connect, facilitate and enable community action for biodiversity enhancement has continued to grow.

Our Mandate

In 2012 *The Land and Water Forum* noted the perilous state of biodiversity in Hawke's Bay. Acknowledging this finding, a working group was formed with representatives of 18 major bodies in our region - the HBRC, territorial local authorities (TLAs), tangata whenua, environmental NGOs, and industry bodies. This group subsequently agreed and launched the *Hawke's Bay Biodiversity Strategy 2015 - 2050*. An implementation plan was agreed, and in 2018 Biodiversity Hawke's Bay was launched.

The Need

The term *biodiversity* encompasses all life - individual organisms, species, ecosystems. As part of nature, humans are dependent on biodiversity, and yet the many impacts of humans on nature in Hawke's Bay undermine and threaten our wealth and our way of life. Over 75% of indigenous vegetation has been cleared, only 2% of our wetlands remain, and many dozens of species have become extinct.

The importance of biodiversity conservation cannot be overstated, particularly in a region as ecologically diverse as Hawke's Bay. The depletion of indigenous vegetation, loss of wetlands, and extinction of numerous species underscore the urgent need for action. Biodiversity is not only essential for the health of our ecosystems but also for supporting key economic sectors such as agriculture and tourism. Additionally, restoring biodiversity is crucial for recovery from recent disasters like Cyclone Gabrielle and for mitigating the long-term effects of climate change.

How We Work

Biodiversity Hawke's Bay is the community-based umbrella organisation arising from the Hawke's Bay Biodiversity Strategy and reflects the commitment made in that to (1) restore and secure the future of biodiversity in our region, and (2) realise the benefits of a healthy nature to the people of Hawke's Bay.

Local councils and Central Government can't solve the biodiversity and climate change crises by themselves. The many aspects are far too big; a multi-stakeholder approach is required. Bio HB works across the variety of stakeholders, connects people and projects, and enables a coordinated community approach in a cost-effective, non-political, independent way. We are the *network of networks*, connecting and supporting community conservation groups, assisting Government and councils in ways that only a community-based group can.

The Value We Bring

We add value to Hawke's Bay by supporting and enabling community groups and individuals to "do the doing". We maximise the environmental benefits by providing, as needed, direct financial support through small grants, administrative, financial and project management, enabling community groups to focus on doing the on-the-ground work. Examples include:

- 1. Providing contestable small grants for biodiversity:** For the past four years we have allocated over \$50,000 in support of 17 projects to advance biodiversity with the support of Hawke's Bay Regional Council and the Department of Conservation. These projects have included plantings and restoration of ecological communities, pest eradication/control, environmental education and more. Funds are

provided by other organisations, and we are seen as a credible, independent manager. HBRC have partnered with Bio HB to fund the Environmental Enhancement Contestable Fund with the fund available to support community groups to advance biodiversity in the region.

2. **Attracting funds to support regional projects:** We assist groups to apply for external funds, develop project plans, and sometimes write applications for those groups. Successes include Te Uru Rākau funding for a Des Ratima Memorial Planting, bat research in Central Hawke's Bay, and lake restoration near Wairoa.
3. **Securing additional resources to increase project scope and impact:** As a recognised regional biodiversity champion, we are approached by entities wishing to partner with, or donate to, regional projects. Examples include negotiating a 3-year partnership between BUPA and Pirimai Residents' Association to super-size the Cross-Country Drain plantings in Pirimai and securing the products and services of a major nursery and retail operation to redevelop a community productive garden at Waiohiki.
4. **As the 'go-to' source for biodiversity information, harnessing community resources and volunteers to support projects:** Our recently established Project Portal is becoming the single source of information for connecting the conservation community, promoting collaboration, and coordinating biodiversity activities. Through Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and our website, we provide expert advice and use our networks to connect conservation workers to a range of experts. Our work in connecting Cape Sanctuary to the NZ GIS in Conservation Network will likely revolutionise management of Sanctuary operations and provide information of value to many.
5. **Building partnerships that enhance and protect the environment:** For example, our Te Taha project to restore a gravel beach ecosystem is being done in partnership with Te Taiwhenua o Te Whanganui ā Orotu, with sponsorship from Hawke's Bay Airport Ltd, supported by Napier City Council and Hastings District Council with input from the Westshore Residents and Development Association, Napier Forest & Bird, the Rotary Club of Ahuriri Sunrise and their Interact Groups from local secondary schools.
6. **Promoting environmental protection as an intergenerational commitment via education and participation:** We hold community action events such as the recent HB Biodiversity Forum, encourage connection with nature through the Beautiful Bay in May campaign (a collaboration with the National Aquarium of New Zealand) and run education sessions.
7. **Celebrating successes to grow the conservation community:** We use our social media presence, regular newsletters, and media contacts to recognise and celebrate success. Through our advice and encouragement, the Maraetotara Tree Trust won second place in the Supreme Award at the 2021 Cawthron New Zealand River Awards.
8. **Maintaining an oversight of progress toward achievement of the goals of the Strategy, updating periodically as required:** The ongoing work recommended by the *Strategy* is long-term and requires regular consultation with the wider Hawke's Bay community, especially the original signatories.

Our Funding Requirements

At present, our operational costs are paid by donations from the Hawke's Bay Biodiversity Trust Endowment Fund. This situation is not sustainable. To continue operations from the end of 2025 we need to secure ongoing operational funding. We are making requests to the Hawke's Bay Regional Council and Napier and Hastings Councils as part of their Three-Year and Long Term plan consultations this year. We are and have been committed to seeking funding from other sources including philanthropic on an ongoing basis and will continue to do so.