



WWF

MAGAZINE

ISSUE 08

2013

Living Planet

EXCLUSIVE FOR WWF SUPPORTERS



**LATE NIGHTS FOR
LITTLE BLUES**

Penguin monitoring paying off.

MAUI'S DOLPHINS

Milena and Maui's.

VIRUNGA

Protecting Africa's
oldest national park.

KIWI COAST

Connecting
conservation.



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WELCOME FROM CHRIS HOWE



Welcome to your latest issue of Living Planet. In this edition, we bring you news from people defending nature in all corners of the world. In Tauranga, Karin Sievwright and a team of volunteers have been diligently monitoring little blue penguins for the last two years following the *Rena* oil spill, and the results are very promising.

In our conservation news round-up, you can read about Nelson community group Friends of Flora and their recent kiwi translocation success, and about the campaign to end whaling in the Southern Ocean as it reaches the International Court of Justice.

As this edition goes to press, our New Zealand campaigns team has just released the second of two new reports revealing how Government and public funds are invested in the fossil fuel industry. The reports are part of a global WWF campaign to move our world to clean, renewable energy – vital for the health and wellbeing of people and nature.

On page 9, you can read about the campaign to protect Virunga, Africa's oldest national park, from the threat of exploitation for oil. Remarkably, the company that is targeting this unique haven for wildlife is one in which New Zealand's pension fund has investments. You can sign our pledge to show you draw the line at exploiting our world's most precious places, at wwf.org.nz.

Everyone has a role to play in protecting our world, so future generations inherit a living planet – thanks for making your mark as part of WWF.

**Executive Director,
WWF-New Zealand**

LATE NIGHTS HELP LITTLE BLUES



Karin's research involves monitoring around 700 penguins – 360 of which were rehabilitated after the oil spill.

For most students, late nights are often the result of a last minute cram-session before a big test the next day. But for Massey University student Karin Sievwright, they're the best time to be out working with some of our most vulnerable birds.

Karin, a Conservation Biology Masters student, has been studying the long-term effects of the *Rena* disaster on Tauranga's little blue penguin species. "Night time is definitely the best time to study them," she says.

When the *Rena* ran aground off the Tauranga coast in October 2011, thousands of birds were affected by the toxic oil that poured from the ship's wrecked hull.

Karin's research involves monitoring a large group of about 700 penguins – 360 that needed rehabilitation following the disaster, and a similar number that escaped the devastation. "By comparing the two groups, we can see if the rehabilitated birds are doing as well as the unaffected birds," she says. To make the task of locating them a little easier,

Karin is armed with a sensor that picks up unique tags on the penguins.

"Often they can be pretty hard to locate, even with the sensor," she adds. And although a head torch helps, the fact that Tauranga's penguins love to travel makes monitoring a challenge. They are spread from Moturiki Island right down the coast.

But it's rewarding work. The results of last year's monitoring during the breeding season discovered that rehabilitated birds only had a slightly lower chance of producing chicks than unaffected birds.

For Karin, who had expected the results to be worse, it was a relief. "By monitoring the upcoming season we'll be able to see if the oil had longer term effects on reproductive success or if things are getting back to normal."

Her research is also investigating whether rehabilitation processes do make a considerable difference to the recovery of animal species. This research could directly influence the response to future disasters.

Following the *Rena* disaster, generous supporters from across New Zealand and around the world gave \$60,000 to WWF's Bay of Plenty appeal.

\$20,000 was granted to Massey University's veterinary school, Wildbase, to support monitoring activities. Lee Barry, WWF Head of Conservation Projects, says Karin and other volunteers' work on the long-term rehabilitation of wildlife is exactly what the fundraising was intended to support.

"Massey's Oiled Wildlife Recovery team were at the coalface during the *Rena* disaster, rescuing many stricken birds. When we heard the University wanted to monitor the progress of the little blue penguins they had de-oiled, we jumped at the chance to fund them."

Monitoring is set to continue well into next year, so before she submits her thesis in January, Karin is in for a few more late nights. "Although I'm from Tauranga, I wasn't here when the disaster occurred," she says. "So although I couldn't help at first, I hope my work will contribute to our responses to similar disasters in the future."

For more about this project, have a look at our website: wwf.org.nz/rena



Blue Penguin, *Rena* Oil Spill, New Zealand, 2011.

MILENA AND THE MAUI'S

Ahead of the Government's announcement on measures to protect Maui's dolphins, we talk to Milena Palka, WWF Marine Species Advocate, about why these amazing creatures must be protected, and what you can do to help.

"In this photo, I was feeding the dolphin with a bottle. You have to be careful that it doesn't go down the wrong way," says Milena. She's showing me photos of her with a rescued bottlenose dolphin calf that had been separated from its mother. "For the calf to survive without its mother, it needs lots of help," she adds.

Help. If you've followed any of the news about our dolphins in recent years, you will have noticed the word cropping up with alarming regularity.

Just as the bottlenose calf will need help if it is ever to survive in the wild, so too do our other dolphin species. Of these, our precious and critically endangered Maui's dolphins need it the most. There are estimated to be just 55 left.

Maui's dolphins are tiny, rarely reaching lengths over 1.5m, and

fast. Only rivalled in size by the vaquita, a porpoise in the Gulf of California, they are considered the smallest marine dolphin in the world.

"We've known for over 30 years that Maui's and Hector's dolphins are at risk from net fishing," says Milena.

"Shortly after the introduction of fine nylon mesh gillnets in the late 1960s, dolphins began washing up on our beaches in noticeable numbers. Despite this, the Government didn't act."

Scientists had also raised concerns that the Maui's population was being depleted at an unsustainable rate. It wasn't until 2003 that protection measures for Maui's were finally initiated.

In 2012, the Government sought public feedback on a draft document called the Threat Management Plan,

which contained proposed options for how to manage human-caused threats to Maui's. A final version of the TMP is expected to be released shortly.

It's long overdue. An estimated five Maui's have died in fishing nets over the past year.

"We fear that the final Government plan isn't going to do enough," says Milena. "I would encourage everyone to write to politicians, especially if you are in the electorates of Ministers Nathan Guy or Nick Smith, to tell them how important it is we get this right."

Read more about what WWF is doing to help save Maui's dolphins here: wwf.org.nz/dolphin



1960s
SAW THE INTRODUCTION OF FINE NYLON MESH GILLNETS. SOON AFTER DOLPHINS BEGAN WASHING UP ON OUR BEACHES



55
MAUI'S ESTIMATED TO SURVIVE TODAY



Milena Palka and a bottlenose dolphin calf at a marine rescue centre in Florida.



FISHING RESTRICTIONS

- Set net prohibition (7 nautical miles)
- Trawl prohibition (2nm or 4nm)
- Interim set net prohibition (2nm)
- Interim set net monitoring (7nm)

DOLPHIN HABITAT

- Maui's habitat (coastal water up to 100m deep)

YOU CAN HELP BY

PUTTING PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE MAUI'S TOTAL PROTECTION. DOWNLOAD OUR LETTER-WRITING KIT AT WWF.ORG.NZ OR HEAD TO FACEBOOK.COM/WWFNEWZEALAND TO EMAIL THE PRIME MINISTER.



Maui's dolphins.

"We fear that the final government plan isn't going to do enough... I would encourage everyone to write to politicians."
Milena Palka, WWF Marine Species Advocate

VIRUNGA

Virunga is Africa's oldest National Park, home to over 200 species of mammals and 700 types of birds.

Read more about how you can get involved in WWF's campaign to protect the park on page 9.



Hippopotamus fighting, Virunga National Park, Rutchuru river, Democratic Republic of Congo, Africa.

NEW REPORTS SHED LIGHT ON SUBSIDIES

Two new WWF reports have found that the New Zealand Government is spending more than \$46 million a year subsidizing oil and gas exploration, and investing over \$1 billion of taxpayers' money in the fossil fuel industry.

Two new WWF reports have found that the New Zealand Government is spending more than \$46 million a year subsidizing oil and gas exploration, and investing over \$1 billion of taxpayers' money in the fossil fuel industry.

"We are calling on the Government to invest this money in clean energy instead," says Peter Hardstaff, WWF-New Zealand's Head of Campaigns.

The first report analysed subsidies in the form of tax breaks and support to the oil and gas industry, and revealed \$46 million a year was being spent on exploration.

The second report investigated the New Zealand Superannuation Fund and the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC). WWF analysed the fossil fuel investments of these

organisations and found over \$1 billion of taxpayer's money is invested in the fossil fuel industry.

"We believe the financial sector has a role to play in moving us towards low-carbon clean economies, and we are calling on these institutions to transition away from fossil fuel investments."

Worldwide, the fossil fuel industry already has more than four times as much coal, oil and gas in proven reserves than can be safely used, and remain within agreed safe limits for global warming. Over three-quarters of existing reserves must remain unburned if we are to ensure a climate safe future.

"We discovered that the NZ Superannuation Fund has investments in many of the top 100 oil, gas and coal companies,

including SOCO International PLC, the UK company preparing to prospect in Africa's Virunga National Park," adds Peter.

The reports are part of WWF's global campaign to increase investment in clean, renewable energy and decrease investment in polluting fossil fuels. "As the easier to find, and cheaper, oil and gas gets used up, companies are moving to ever more fragile, extreme and hazardous environments to seek new reserves," says Peter.

"Moving New Zealand, and the world, to clean, safe, renewable energy is vital for people and nature. A clean energy future is 100% possible."

You can read Peter's blog about Virunga and clean energy at wwf.org.nz

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

New Zealand could be a powerhouse of clean energy – using the sun, wind, wood and underground heat we have in abundance to meet our energy needs into the future.

If we harness these resources, we'll make progress on reducing our emissions, make good on international promises and meet our moral need to act on climate change. We can't do it without big actions from Government, but it's up to us to support the ideas that will get us back on track:

- 1 Support a national switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy; get behind clean energy proposals in your local area too.
- 2 Save energy at home, and at work. The more careful we are with our energy use, the easier it is to meet our needs from clean, green, energy.
- 3 Share your vision for New Zealand's future with your family and friends. Spread the word online, get writing to your local newspaper, your MP and even the Prime Minister.

For more ways to support a clean, green future for New Zealand go to wwf.org.nz



Twilight view of oil rig off coast of Alaska, United States.



Mountain gorilla baby, Virunga NP, DRC.



Sunrise behind Mount Mikeno, Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo, Africa.

VIRUNGA NATIONAL PARK: DRAW THE LINE

The plans of an international oil exploration company to prospect in Africa's Virunga National Park could be disastrous for wildlife and for thousands of people who rely on the park's ecosystem.

Located in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Virunga is Africa's oldest National Park, and has the most diverse habitat of any park in Africa. It is home to critically endangered mountain gorillas, and over 200 species of mammals, including 22 types of primates and over 700 kinds of birds.

Although Virunga's wilderness has been granted protections under Congolese and international law, companies from Europe and elsewhere are pursuing plans for oil extraction in and around the park.

Raymond Lumbuenamo, WWF Country Director Congo, believes the effects on the park could be disastrous: "There is a real risk that major oil exploitation could

involve disruptive seismic tests, as well as forest clearing, deep underground drilling, or the laying of vulnerable oil pipelines."

Allowing oil operations to be conducted in the park fundamentally undermines the authority of park managers, and will make it difficult for them to guard against intrusion by others seeking to exploit its land, trees and animals.

"It also sets a dangerous precedent for the future protection of wildlife, and threatens the livelihoods of those who live in and around the park," says Raymond.

It is estimated about 30,000 people benefit economically from fishing within the park, and another

20,000 benefit from commercial activities related to the fishing industry. These livelihoods depend on the park remaining healthy.

In May 2013, following a WWF campaign, Total SA pledged to not explore for oil inside the boundaries of the park. However British oil company SOCO International PLC has so far refused to abandon exploration plans in Virunga.

"This is where we draw the line. Oil companies are standing on the doorstep of one of the world's most precious and fragile places, but we will not rest until Virunga is safe from this potential environment disaster," says Lasse Gustavsson, Executive Director, Conservation, of WWF International.

"Virunga has snow fields and lava fields, but it should not have oil fields."

Help draw the line and ask SOCO to abandon its plans to explore for oil in Virunga. Visit wwf.org.nz

30,000
PEOPLE BENEFIT
ECONOMICALLY
FROM FISHING
WITHIN THE PARK





© Brian J. Sherry/National Geographic Stock/WWF
Shortfin Mako Shark California, USA.

Air New Zealand vows to stop shark fin transport

We're delighted to hear that Air New Zealand has joined a growing list of international airlines that have agreed to ban shark fin cargo. Air New Zealand, Qantas, Korean Air, and Seoul-based Asiana Airlines have all announced blanket bans on the carriage of shark fin.

New Zealand is one of the top twenty exporters of shark fins to Hong Kong, which holds 50-80% of all shark fin trade. In New Zealand it is still legal to kill a shark just for its fins and then dump the body back into the ocean. Halting this wasteful practice is vital for sharks' survival.

Sign the petition banning shark finning in New Zealand waters at nzsharkalliance.org.nz



© WWF-New Zealand
New Zealand's native woodpigeon, the Kererū.

Make your garden native wildlife friendly

In Wellington, native bird numbers have increased in recent years. We believe the Zealandia sanctuary, predator trapping, and regenerating native bush have all helped.

You can help too. WWF's Rosa Argent is undertaking her own project to help Kererū and other native species, by making her garden at home native wildlife-friendly.

Get inspired and follow Rosa's progress at wwf.org.nz



© Brian J. Sherry/National Geographic Stock/WWF
Southern Right Whale, New Zealand.

Public hearings close on whaling case

Public hearings have closed in a hugely important legal case over Japanese whaling in the Southern Ocean. The case, initiated by Australia with New Zealand support, alleges that so-called 'scientific' whaling by Japan is in breach of the country's international treaty obligations.

Wendy Elliott, Species Programme Manager at WWF International says, "There have been great scientific advances that allow data about whales to be obtained through non-lethal means. In this day and age there is no reason to kill whales for scientific research and WWF strongly hopes for a positive ruling by the court that will end whaling in the Southern Ocean."



© Chris Golding
Friends of flora's Maryann Ewers with a male kiwi.

Flora kiwi release

In our last issue we reported on Friends of Flora's work translocating kiwi into the remote, 4,500 hectare Flora Valley, in Kahurangi National Park. We're pleased to report 20 kiwi have been released this year.

Friends of Flora's Sandy Toy told WWF, "The speed of the kiwi's move was a surprise. Within three weeks three kiwi had travelled over 4km."

You can read updates on the kiwi's progress at fof.org.nz



© Wim Van Passel/WWF-Canon
Southern Elephant Seal, Antarctica.

Result of Ross Sea meeting

WWF is disappointed to report that after decades of scientific research and many years of preparation, negotiations to get international agreement on establishing the world's largest marine protected area in Antarctica's Ross Sea recently failed.

Bob Zuur Manager, WWF Antarctic and Southern Ocean Initiative says: "WWF is incredibly disappointed that an opportunity to protect the home of more than 10,000 species including seabirds, whales, seals and most of the world's penguins was missed."

"We will not give up the fight to save one of the most vulnerable and special places on earth." The WWF team will now focus on getting negotiations back on track ahead of the next meeting in November.



© Te Ara Kākāriki
Te Ara Kākāriki planting.

Te Ara Kākāriki planting

Calling all green fingered Cantabrians! The Te Ara Kākāriki Greenway Canterbury Trust are holding planting days on the Canterbury Plains on 7 and 21 September 2013. The Trust provides assistance to landowners in the protection of native plants and in the establishment of new areas of plantings.

If you would like to be involved, email office@kakariki.org.nz



© WWF New Zealand
View from Mt Manaia.

RECONNECTING NORTHLAND: KIWI COAST UNDERWAY

'Kiwi Coast', the first pilot project in the ambitious Reconnecting Northland programme, is underway!

Reconnecting Northland is a region-wide ecological restoration programme. It is the first of this size in New Zealand, and is being implemented through a partnership between WWF-New Zealand and NZ Landcare Trust.

Kiwi Coast aims to link community-led kiwi recovery projects involving increased predator control, advocacy and habitat restoration along the east coast of Northland, linking Whangarei Heads in the south to the Whangaroa Harbour in the north.

David Mules, WWF's Reconnecting Northland Programme Manager, says: "Through the increased protection of kiwi, many other species will benefit, including Kererū. It will support the expansion of existing predator control networks and facilitate the initiation of new community-led projects to begin. It's a great

opportunity to demonstrate the principles of connectivity in action."

Connectivity conservation uses a holistic approach to 'reconnect' the landscape – and seeks to make space for nature while including sustainable human uses of the land.

Concepts such as linking habitats and river bank planting are used to reconnect a mosaic of ecosystems so they can function more efficiently as a whole landscape. WWF-New Zealand and NZ Landcare Trust are building a strong base of local involvement through partnerships with iwi, communities, businesses, government agencies, science providers, and others. Reconnecting Northland has been made possible thanks to funding from The Tindall Foundation and ASB Community Trust.

Reconnecting Northland will continue for a number of decades – the timescale needed to see improvements in ecological systems at a landscape scale.

Visit wwf.org.nz to read more about this ambitious project.

CONTACT US

For any enquiries regarding supporting WWF

Postal address:
PO Box 6237, Marion Square,
Wellington 6141

Phone: 0800 4357 993
or 04 499 2930

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August 2013

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Minimum requirement \$10 per month or \$120 per year

Preferred start date _____
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