

TE IPUKAREA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER TIURAI 2022



TE IPUKAREA SOCIETY

*Caring for our Environment
Taporoporo i to tatou Ao Rangi*

Kia Orana. Teia te nuti no Tiurai 2022.

Welcome to the July 2022 edition of our newsletter. Presented here is an overview of the activities that we have completed over the month, along with some upcoming fun activities you may consider being involved in.

Te Ipukarea Society 26th Annual General Meeting

TIS 26th AGM held at the Karika Palace, drew in a number of people from the general public, private and government sectors and NGO's. Attendees were able to hear more about the

work we're engaged in over the year; They were also able to sit in on the world premiere screening of the most recent Suwarrow rat eradication expedition video which showcased the various conservation work that was carried out.

The election of the executive board followed, with Teina Mackenzie continuing on as president for another term and Avaiki Aperau as Vice-President. Anna Koteka retains the treasurer role, and Inano McMurchy has taken the role of Secretary. Other board members elected were Jessie Sword, Sabine Janneck, June Hosking and Natalie Telfer.

The past year for TIS has been a year of collaboration and growth alongside current partners and new partners such as the Cook Islands Family Welfare Association. TIS will continue its collaborative efforts both nationally and internationally, working closely across its five focus areas; Youth, Biodiversity, Waste Management, Eco-sustainable management, Climate Change.



Some of the elected board members 2022-23 appointed at the most recent AGM

TE IPUKAREA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER TIURAI 2022

Suwarrow Rat Eradication Video

The short video, documenting the work carried out in Suwarrow can now be viewed on YouTube [here](#). The short film has footage from the seabird and coconut crab surveys carried out, as well as the rat eradication project.



Kotaa, Frigate bird chick posing for the camera

Red postman butterfly genetic research

The red postman butterfly was originally introduced into Rarotonga in 2016 as a biocontrol agent from Landcare Research. A biocontrol involves using a living organism such as the red postman butterfly to control the spread of weeds or pests. In this case, this butterfly helps reduce the spread of the red passion vine, by feeding on the young shoots of the vine which would otherwise out-compete native plants and kill older trees by smothering them.

This month Dr Gabriela Montejo-Kovacevich from Cambridge University in the UK was on island to conduct some monitoring work on the butterfly to assess and determine whether the butterfly has posed a threat to other plants and insects since its release in 2016.

Findings from the monitoring programme will take some time to complete. Dr Gabriela was interested however by the fact that the red postman butterfly has very few predators on Rarotonga and little competition for the red passion vine, which may change the evolutionary direction of this butterfly population on Rarotonga.

The research is funded by the Genetics Society (UK) and the Varley-Gradwell Fellowship (University of Oxford) Click [Here](#) to read more.



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Plastic Free July

Plastic Free July is a global event that draws attention to the issue of single use plastics and those simple swap solutions that reduce the amount of plastic waste our world is generating today.

Among simple swap solutions we have noticed in the community being practiced by local businesses and supported by people is the reusing of jam jars as coffee cups.



Rashnel Editor of CINEWS supporting 'reuse' initiatives as simple as reusing a jam jar for coffee

'The Cafe' based at the beachcomber Avarua has been an ongoing champion of this initiative supplying reused jam jars fitted with creatively cut wetsuits used for insulation.



The Cafe at the Beachcomber Avarua, continued champions who promote the reusable jam jars as an alternative option to disposable coffee cups

Reducing your single-use plastic consumption rate can be as simple as

- Refusing to use a plastic bag or plastic straw
- Use a reusable water bottle on a day to day basis to cut down on plastic water bottle waste

Tongareva Expedition

A team of 11 researchers from the Cook Islands left Rarotonga for Tahiti on July 2nd to board 3 research vessels for an expedition to the Cook Islands most northern Atoll, Tongareva. The expedition team was jointly led by NGO Sharks Pacific and the Ministry of Marine Resources. This expedition also included Rarotonga based NGO's Te Ipukarea Society and Moana Foundation as well as the Cook Islands Natural Heritage Trust. It also had support from the National Environment Service.

TE IPUKAREA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER TIURAI 2022



Expedition Tongareva team

Pictured Graham McDonald, Kirby Morejohn (MMR), Dr. Jess Cramp (Sharks Pacific), Marino Evans, Tom Weeks, Andrea George, Terena Koteka-Wiki (TIS), Michael Parrish (MMR), Mary McDonald (TIS), Charlee MacLean, and Jacqueline Evans.

The vessels finally left Tahiti bound for Tongareva on 21 July after several weeks of COVID isolation, training and preparation. Unfortunately, just before they reached Tongareva, one of the crew tested positive for COVID. The decision was made to abort the mission to avoid any chance of taking COVID to Tongareva.

While very disappointing for all involved, there were still many positives from the trip.

The expedition was assisted by Inkfish, a Seattle, Washington, USA based organisation that supports marine research. They provided three vessels equipped with tenders, submarines, ROV's and crew to assist our local scientists.

Mary McDonald and Terena Koteka-Wiki were the lucky ones to represent Te Ipukarea Society.

Also included among the expedition personnel were Charlee MacLean and Andrea George.

These two were interns at Te Ipukarea Society in 2019 and 2020 respectively. They are now studying Marine Science in Australia and Hawaii.

Charlee and Andrea were to assist Dr. Jess Cramp with BRUV (Baited Remote Underwater Video) deployment and video data as well as other shark analysis and recording.



Te Ipukarea Society staff member Terena Koteka-Wiki waiting to descend to 100 metres in one of the submarines.

While waiting for some of the team to complete their isolation period and a weather window in Rarotonga so that they could clear immigration and customs, the team spent time on the vessels anchored in Moorea. There they upskilled diving qualifications, had workshops on how to go about the various assigned tasks in Tongareva and getting familiarised in submarine etiquette. They also had the opportunity to swim with stingrays.

Te Ipukarea Society would like to thank Dr. Jess Cramp for including us in this great opportunity to conduct research in the Cook Islands most northern atoll.

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