



## Experiencing Marine Reserves Northland - 2022/23 Season Report

Report prepared by Ray Downing, Northland Regional Coordinator. Reviewed by Samara Nicholas, Co-director/Poutokomanawa, Mountains To Sea Conservation Trust

### Overview

The Experiencing Marine Reserves (EMR) - Te Kura Moana is a national programme of the Mountains To Sea Conservation Trust (MTSCT) that was established in Northland in 2002. Since then, the programme has expanded to a further eight regions throughout NZ!

This season we delivered 21 community events and we continued to engage taitamariki/rangatahi as snorkel guides and ran training events in both Whangarei and the Far North. EMR provided hands-on training for these guides during pool sessions in the Far North and Whangarei Pools with additional ongoing practical training in the field. This has attracted active Maori youth (including young women) engagement in our programmes, also becoming water safety ambassadors. Taitamariki helped at all of the events over the summer of 2022/23 and we are set to provide similar training opportunities with pathways into marine conservation for 2023/24.



*Oneroa Bay Snorkel Day set up*



*Croatia with participants at the Oneroa Bay Snorkel Day*

We strengthen community connection with the water through our unique and innovative events. Our events focus on improving knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in order for them to take personal responsibility for their own water safety.

In the 2022/23 summer season, EMR held 4 community guided snorkel days at Reotahi and one kayak day at Waikaraka with a total of 304 participants. Since 2002, EMR has guided 22,382 snorkel experiences in the Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve site at Reotahi. In 2022/2023, a total of 1168 participants snorkeled at Reotahi. In addition to promoting the Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve (WHMR), EMR also ran community guided snorkel days at Pataua Estuary, Whananaki, Taputaputa (Far North), Rangiputa (Far North), Whangaumu, Matapouri, Oneroa Bay and Maunganui Bay (Bay of Islands), Kai Iwi Lakes and paddle events at Whananaki and Pataua Estuary. In addition to our important marine conservation messaging, again we continued to promote marine biosecurity, the water safety code (safely connecting with the wai!) and wellness through active recreation of communities at all of our events.

**Snorkel and Kayak Day Participant numbers:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>#participants</b>
25/10/2022	Far North Aquatic Centre - Training	15
29/10/2022	Whangarei Aquatic Centre - Training	18
17/12/2022	Reotahi	46
13/01/2022	Taputaputa	91
14/01/2023	Reotahi	90
22/01/2023	Oneroa Bay	107
26/01/2023	Rangiputa	103
25/02/2023	Marine Mahi for Rangatahi Training	10
26/02/2023	Waikaraka	48
04/03/2023	Whangaumu	85
12/03/2023	Pataua Estuary	56
18/03/2023	Kai Iwi Lakes	47
26/03/2023	Reotahi	69

01/04/2023	Maunganui Bay	53
05/04/2023	Matapouri	36
12/04/2023	Whananaki	46
13/04/2023	Reotahi	51
22/04/2023	Paddle the Awa - Whananaki	8
25/04/2023	Paddle the Awa - Pataua Estuary	36
28/04/2023	Poor Knights - Underwater Lovers Competition	23
14/05/2023	Oneroa Bay	32
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1070</b>

Although there were a few disruptions because of substantial weather events, the season was still a great success and we are grateful to all our sponsors, partners and funders for their ongoing support!

**EMR team:**

EMR is delivered by a team of passionate coordinators nationwide. EMR coordinators/snorkel leaders offer guidance, direction and coordination of classroom exercises and field trips to the ocean. We also provide snorkel equipment, instruction, resources and snorkel risk management.

**Our Team**

Our Northland team of coordinators are snorkel instructors including **Samara Nicholas MNZM** (Programme director, Sir Peter Blake Emerging Leader recipient, Bachelor of Applied Science, NAUI Skin Diving Instructor, PADI Divemaster and MNZM), **Ray Downing** (Snorkel instructor, Bachelor of Teaching), **Ceara Wallace** (PADI instructor, BSc Biology, Skipper), **Tracey Mita** (Snorkel instructor, Ngati Wai), **Tracey Phillips** (Snorkel instructor).



		
<b>Tracey Mita</b>	<b>Tracey Phillips</b>	

### Season Highlights

For the Northland EMR team we have had a substantial amount of events compared to previous seasons so it would be hard to list all the highlights of this season, but you will find some notable season highlights below!

### Community Guided Snorkel Days 2022/23 - Reotahi Summer Series

The annual Reotahi snorkel days attract many locals and visitors with many participants returning every year to explore their local marine reserve and observe changes over time. EMR events also provide a safe and enjoyable experience for novice snorkelers of all ages and are often their first contact point with the WHMR. Visitor numbers for all events were slightly less than expected compared to 2021/22 due to unstable weather conditions and a lot of rainfall during the summer. However overall satisfaction for the event was well received.



*Our Taitamariki snorkel guide Noah (c.) and Samara (photographer) are ready to take their group snorkeling at Reotahi*

The success of the snorkel days and the feedback gained through participants suggests that the days are very worthwhile and are encouraging people to experience and enjoy the reserve, whilst raising awareness around why it is there and where the boundaries are. These snorkel days continue to be embedded in Whangarei city culture with families coming back year after year.

For a second year in a row, the Northland Regional Council marine biosecurity team joined us at the majority of our events with a focus on providing the public with information on marine pests. EMR also continued the engagement of taitamariki/rangatahi as snorkel guides. EMR provided hands-on training for these guides prior to the season at the Whangarei Aquatic Centre and practical training in the field. Taitamariki have helped at the majority of our events over summer.

The community guided snorkel days at Reotahi were made possible due to the generous support of our funders **Northland Regional Council** and with the additional support from the **Department of Conservation**.



*Repeat participants prove how embedded these snorkel days are in Whangarei city culture*



*Collaboration with the NRC marine biosecurity team*



*Our Tai Tamariki unveiling a student action project at Reotahi Marine Reserve*

## Poor Knights Whangārei 'Underwater Lovers' Competition

Celebrate connecting with our seas!  
Toi Moana - Toi Tangata

Special thanks to the Whangārei Underwater Club (dissolved), Seaweek and Dive Tutukaka for sponsoring this trip.

Our Underwater lovers Poor Knights competition trip happened on the 28th April 2023, EMR took 11 students, 10 caregivers and 2 taitamariki to the Poor Knights Islands. All of these students had never been to the Poor Knights but all had an interest/passion for the marine environment through their applications to win a spot on this special trip.

The boat ride out was very bumpy due to a straight easterly swell and wind, but within Maroro Bay it was completely sheltered and the conditions were aquarium-like!

**Quotes:** What did you love about today?

*"I loved the boat ride, it was so much fun" - Scarlett Rose*

*"The boat ride and spotting lots of new fish I had never seen"*

*"Thank you for the safe driving of the boat in choppy conditions"*

*"Awesome day with so much fish. Thank you"*

*"Today was so much fun, I loved it"*

*"Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened"*



*"The amount and variety of fish was amazing. The snapper were so friendly"*

*"Diving with my dad and when it was getting rough on the boat" - Eleyna*

*"Awesome day - thank you to the awesome crew and skipper!"*

*"When the boat ride was choppy remember Hakuna Matata"*

*"Seeing the big schools of fish was so awesome " - Pippa*



### Whananaki Paddle the Awa

Unfortunately, we had to postpone the first date and our 2nd date was a lot wetter than expected, so even though we had been fully booked, less participants turned up on the day. Those that braved the rain, were able to connect to nature and look and learn more and appreciate our local environment, while getting active outdoors thanks to [Sport Northland](#) Tu Manawa Active Aotearoa. Thanks to all the locals who came along and for our partnership with [Pacific Coast Kayaks NZ](#) We were able to appreciate some majestic mangroves (manawa), remove rubbish (we even found a surfboard).

### Whananaki Snorkel Day

Due to ongoing bad weather, we were finally able to run our Whananaki Snorkel Day. With a slight change of location (you must always be prepared to change location if weather is not suitable for the planned site!) to the Whananaki estuary. This event had a focus on water safety thanks to funding from [Water Safety New Zealand](#) and also had a focus on training established and up and coming taitamariki snorkel guides. It had a great community feel with a free BBQ for all that participated thanks to [Whananaki Community led development](#) and the Edwards family for cooking up such awesome kai. Over 50 people attended.





### Matapouri Night Snorkel

The Northland EMR crew hosted their first night snorkel at Matapouri which turned out to be a huge success. The sunset, the full moon and the awesome energy from everyone who came along meant it was a super fun evening for all! We found that the night snorkel attracted a different type of participant, experienced freedivers that were keen to try night snorkeling. Thanks to [Northland Regional Council](#) for funding this community event.

### Pataua Drift Snorkel

Our Northland crew and their epic team of volunteers took 61 people snorkelling in Pataua estuary. Conditions were perfect and the incoming tide brought in clear, blue water that let participants enjoy all the abundant and unique marine life! A big thanks to Tu Manawa [Sport Northland](#) for funding this event and to be able to share this experience with our communities. Also thanks to Te Waiariki/Ngati Korora for enabling us to share your beautiful rohe moana with us.





## Taputaputa Snorkel Day

EMR is extremely grateful for the manaaki shown by [Ngāti Kuri](#) to partner with us to deliver this event at the unique estuary of Taputaputa for our Far North community. This year we had 90 people participate in this event, which helped EMR communicate some important water safety information, such as to be prepared, know your limits, be aware of dangers and watch out for yourself and others. A massive thanks to our sponsor [Water Safety New Zealand](#). We had awesome volunteers from Ngati Kuri and taitamariki snorkel guides travelled from Whananaki to tautoko!



*Group photo of all those involved with the running of the Taputaputa Snorkel Day*

## Rangiputa Snorkel Day

Despite the winds our constant forecast checking paid off and we found our perfect weather window! Rangiputa provided beautiful and safe conditions for us to get into the water and learn about water safety and the marine environment. 107 participants and volunteers that took part on the day! A huge thanks to [Water Safety New Zealand](#) for funding the event and supporting our communities to engage with the water safely.



Also big thanks to [Far North Surf Rescue](#) for providing the professional in water support on the kayak, [New Zealand Police](#) Kaitiaki crew for their positive support on the ground making sure all our volunteers and snorkelers were well fed and happy! And lastly, thanks to [Far North ITM](#) for sponsoring the BBQ trailer and gas.



## Whangaumu Snorkel Day

EMR Northland hosted our first event on the Tutukaka coast, taking 68 people snorkelling with the help of 17 volunteers (85 total) around Whangaumu Bay. It was an absolute stunner of a day and we couldn't be more grateful for all those that came to join us with big smiles and great energy for a fun day exploring our coastline and learning about water safety! A special thanks to [Water Safety New Zealand](#) for funding the event and to Te Waiariki for welcoming us and letting us learn more about your beautiful rohe moana



*Ceara explaining some of the species participants might see.*

## Oneroa Bay Snorkel Day

This is the third year we have held a snorkel day at Oneroa Bay (Long Beach) for the Russell community, which was previously held at Tapeka Point. This event has been an ongoing collaboration between EMR and Fish Forever and was generously funded by NRC again. It is obvious that our snorkel days are quickly gaining the support and popularity among locals each year as a safe family friendly activity in the Bay of Islands with over 90 participants attending this year.



Again EMR received great feedback from the participants which proves this to be a valuable community event. The snorkel day provides a great opportunity for the public to observe the Kina barrens at Oneroa Bay. Kina barrens are found in places that are subject to overfishing - when snapper and crayfish numbers are reduced, the sea urchin population explodes and eats all of the seaweed. Therefore the snorkel day aims to raise awareness about the consequences of overfishing and highlights the importance of no-take marine protected areas but also raising awareness in regards to



*Ray receiving a donation from students that had a local fundraiser for EMR*

some of the marine pests found in the Bay of Islands such as the Mediterranean fanworm, Australian droplite tunicate and the newly introduced exotic Caulerpa to name a few.

### **Maunganui Bay Snorkel Day**

Through our continuing partnership with NRC and Fish Forever we completed our fourth annual community guided snorkel day at Maunganui Bay (Deep Water Cove). A key element of this event is enabling locals and students from low decile schools to experience the rāhui which is in their own backyard, but is challenging to access due to its location in the outer Bay of Islands



*Group photo from the Maunganui Snorkel Day*

The rāhui protection has been in place since 2010 and has extended to encompass the greater Cape Brett area recently. There is an abundance of marine life close to shore, with a healthy crayfish population, large schools of fish and lush kelp forest. The day highlighted the importance of marine protection and conservation in the Bay of Islands and EMR received great feedback from the participants. A big thank you goes out to our funders from **Northland Regional Council** and the support of **Fish Forever** and **Tri Oceans** to make this experience accessible to everyone.

### **Waikaraka Community Kayak Day**

Once again, the EMR Community Guided Kayak Day at Waikaraka ran successfully. 48 members from the local Whangarei community experienced their local marine reserve with EMR and DOC via kayak.

The Community Kayak Days were born out of a need to engage the wider community in the WHMR's Waikaraka site. After doing site recce and pilot experiences, including both kayaking and intertidal experiences in 2012, it was decided that the most suitable activity for a



community day at Waikaraka would be kayaking. These guided kayak days are becoming part of a culture of unique events in Whangarei. Most of the event participants were locals from the Whangarei area.

The kayak day was generously funded by the **Department of Conservation** and supported by **Pacific Coast Kayaks**.



*Participants enjoyed near perfect conditions at WHMR's Waikaraka site this year.*

### **Kai Iwi Lakes Open Day**

Our annual Kai Iwi Lakes Snorkel Day in conjunction with Whitebait Connection and Check Clean Dry continues to be a popular event among locals and visitors to the lake with a strong emphasis on promoting water safety. Each year we run a snorkel event during the day with a twilight and night snorkel component for those that want a unique experience of the lake. This year 47 participants got to enjoy the crystal clear waters during the day and night with perfect weather. Highlights for participants included building their confidence in the water while feeling safe under the supervision of EMR's experienced guides and learning about the freshwater biodiversity living within the lake such as Dwarf Inanga, Eels, Koura and bullies.

Participants got an understanding of the values and significance of the lake as well as their interconnectedness 'from the mountains to the sea'. By engaging participants through fun activities such as our snorkel day and



*Safety briefings for all participants are a key element of EMR activities*



twilight/night snorkel, they are more likely to be inspired to help protect the lakes. On the day we also focused on promoting behavior change in three following areas:

1. Always **Check, Clean, Dry** between waterways.
2. **Leave only footprints** - Don't put anything into the lakes except yourself as it will stay there!
3. **Water Safety** - Always be safe in and around the water.

A big thank you to **Water Safety New Zealand** for funding the Kai Iwi Lakes Open Day.



*The water safety code is embedded in all EMR activities and is passed onto our participants*

### **Shackleton Sea Scouts**

Our 'once off' snorkel experiences prove to continually be a popular activity for school and community groups throughout Northland. This summer we had the pleasure of taking the Shackleton Sea Scouts out for a snorkel at Taiharuru Bay. With quite a diverse age range, the scouts learned about water safety and the fundamentals of snorkelling which included gear fitting, in water hand signals and emergency procedures. Being such a perfect day the scouts got to enjoy the warm waters and see an abundance of marine life in the bay. The day ended with some good memories and the scouts BRAVO for Ray.



## Patuharakeke

We provided an snorkel experience and kayak opportunity with PC Kayaks for Patuharakeke on their holiday programme at Ruakaka.



## Manaia View School

Thanks to the generous donation from the Whangarei Underwater Club, we were able to give Manaia View School a snorkel experience at the Reotahi Marine Reserve. For a lot of the students it was their first ever snorkel experience!

## Nga Kaitiaki o te Ahi

EMR - Te Kura Moana went out to Maunganui Bay (Deep Water Cove) with Nga Kaitiaki o te Ahi, a marae based learning programme to see the difference between the unprotected Tapeka Point and no-take Rāhui area. The rāhui means no taking any fish species/marine life (except kina) and it was initiated under the Fisheries Act by local hapū Ngati Kuta and Patukeha of Te Rawhiti. Maunganui Bay was closed in December 2010 under section 186A of the Fisheries Act 1996. Initially this was set down for two years with an extension granted every two years and it is still in place today. We came across a garfish, that was incredible rare to see around the mainland coast. This day was a



continuation from a programme with Whitebait Connection in which the kura focussed learning on key components from the mountains to the sea.



*Jermaine's action project which secured his place on our annual Poor Knights trip*



### Northland Marine Hui

This was an opportunity for 20 educators to learn from each other, network and plan awesome collaborative activities for the benefit of our marine environment, communities and taitamariki. Hosted by EMR with [TriOceans](#), [Northland Regional Council](#), [Ocean-Spirit](#), [EcoSolutions](#), [Seaweek](#), [Patuharakeke Te Iwi Trust Board](#), [NorthTec - Te Pūkenga](#), [Sails for Science](#), [Kohatu Development](#), [Enviroschools](#) and the [Ocean Mind](#) project.

## EMR Northland Internship

Laura Buser volunteered for our organization for 36 days at WBC and 21 days with EMR, 57 days in total.

For her time with EMR, Laura assisted with school programme delivery and community events in Northland. Her primary role was supervising students in the water under the leadership of the EMR team. Her positive disposition, and punctuality, made students feel at ease. She was able to learn many different aspects of a typical EMR day such as the pre snorkel safety briefing, gear fitting/clean up and being able to lead participants in the water at our community snorkel events. During her internship she also completed a freediver fundamentals course with EMR and Freedive Aotearoa.



*Laura Buser and her sister Annika at our first Whangaumu Snorkel Day*



*Our pre-season volunteer and Taitamariki snorkel guide training sessions proved to be a success attracting many new Taitamariki*

## Marine Mahi for Rangatahi

Marine Mahi for Rangatahi utilises existing mentorship and environmental education frameworks to achieve leadership and education outcomes for taitamariki and action for the marine environment.

Participants have the opportunity to undergo training, volunteer and progress to paid cadetship positions with EMR. On completing the programme participants have an increased knowledge of environmental issues and the actions we need to take to resolve them. They also have skills and practical experience in implementing the solutions. However, most importantly, they are inspired to protect and restore our shared life-sustaining ecosystems for future generations. The programme garnered strong support from both the participants and their





Amber practicing her freedive skills at Kai Iwi Lakes

### Celebrating Seaweek

Seaweek - *Kaupapa Moana* took place in the second week of March with many events nationwide celebrating our ocean. Like every year, EMR has contributed significantly to the success of Seaweek. EMR's annual Fish of the Year/*Te Ika o Te Tau* competition aims to raise awareness for some of the issues our awesome ika face and teach people about the incredible biodiversity in our freshwater and marine environments. Voting was open to the public between the 4th of March to the 31st March 2023.

Prizes have been kindly donated by: Wilderlab NZ, SeaLife Kelly Tartlton's, Auckland Zoo, Manta Watch NZ, Goat Island Discovery Center, Northland Regional Council and more! A huge thank you to our supporters for supporting the campaign which include, by o-fish-ally backing a fish! Waiheke Marine Project, NZ Marine Science Society, Sustainable Coastlines, Mountains to Sea Wellington, Auckland Sea Kayaks, Young Ocean Explorers, Goat Island Marine Discovery Centre, Aotearoa Lakes, Revive Our Gulf, Dive! Tutukaka, Benthics, Tindale Marine Research Charitable Trust, Sir Peter Blake MERC, Whitebait Connection, Wettle, Wilderlab

whānau.

In addition to the programme, we are extremely happy to announce a further partnership with [Dive! Tutukaka](#) where we have chosen Noah Edwards as our EMR representative from our 'Marine Mahi for Rangatahi' project to gain SCUBA training and work experience thanks to sponsorship from Dive Tutukaka this winter.



NZ, Sea Change Podcast, SEA LIFE Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium and Kelly Tarlton's Marine Wildlife Trust, Manta Watch NZ and the Live Ocean Foundation, Auckland Zoo, STET, New Zealand Underwater Association and Dive Pacific, New Zealand Freshwater Science Society, The Hauraki Gulf Forum, AUUC and BLAKE

### 22nd Annual Poor Knights competition trip



*Group photo from the Poor Knights Competition trip in May 2023*

We ran our 22nd annual Poor Knights competition trip on Friday 12th May, sponsored by [Dive! Tutukaka](#) and [The Bobby Stafford-Bush](#). We started our day with a minute's silence to show respect and aroha to Karnin and his whānau following the tragedy at Abbey Caves. Students came from as far north as Peria (Kaitaia) and as far south as Dunedin to experience one of Aotearoa's best marine reserves!

Students are selected based on action projects they have undertaken and the enthusiasm they show when studying & experiencing the marine environment. The national delivery of EMR would also not be possible without the amazing support of the [The Tindall Foundation](#), Lotteries National Community and Foundation North (Northland and Auckland).

EMR started in Tai Tokerau/Northland in 2001 with just three schools and the idea of comparing unprotected marine areas to fully protected marine areas with water safety and conservation messages embedded throughout the programme. Seeing huge tāmure/snapper swimming has inspired thousands of kids to take action for the marine environment and exercise kaitiakitanga - guardianship for their local beach or harbour.

For this year's trip we had 32 students and 30 guardians representing 26 schools from 7 regions of Aotearoa including Northland, Auckland, Taranaki, Gisborne, Wellington, Nelson/Tasman and Otago. Since 2002, we have taken representatives from 399 schools, totalling 563 students! Each student attends with a parent or guardian. We also had some second generation students attend as guardians!

"Action projects this year included monitoring rimurimu with the Love Rimurimu project in Wellington, rahui monitoring, comparison of marine species at different areas, invasive species research, a kina barren board game, litter blitz with Sustainable coastlines, informative video about the impacts of microplastics and the local rahui" says EMR founder Samara Nicholas.

In addition to the opportunity to represent their school or region for the EMR ACTION prize, we offer the EMR Ocean Art prize. The Bobby Stafford-Bush Foundation supports this special prize for young kiwis that have experienced the marine environment with EMR and display that passion and experience through art.



*Xander Vanstones with Brian Stafford-Bush*

On board the vessel 'Perfect Day' our snorkel site this year was the stunning 'Garden's at Maroro Bay, part of the Poor Knights Islands that have been protected by no-take status since 1981. Participants were delighted to see thousands of two spot demoiselles, black angel fish, snapper galore and the friendly sandagers wrasse. With this being the first time most of the students and guardians had ever visited the Poor Knights!

*"A highlight of the trip for me was experiencing first hand the abundance and friendliness of fish inside the marine reserve. Because of the safety the reserve provides, you can observe so many different kinds of fish up close which is an unparalleled experience. It has inspired me to speak up in my own personal life to educate people around me and advocate for the existence of more marine reserves" - **Bella Tissink (Whangarei Girls)***

*"Thank you for taking me to the Poor Knights to go snorkeling. I had an amazing time and it was a really fun day. I have never been to the Poor Knights before and I wouldn't have been able to go without all the help. The islands were really pretty and I saw lots of cool fish. My favourite thing was seeing a stingray and going in the cave" - **Josie (Taipa School)***

*"Highlight of the day: The haka echoing in Rikoriko Cave was something I will remember forever- It was nice to be inside the cave without engine running (thanks to the experienced skipper!). Also it was special that Steve took us to southern group of rock islands even there was southern (head) wind. Some kids got soaking wet, but they were extremely happy and excited. I love nature. I love seeing healthy environment. Abundance of food and other happy life (not just for humans, but for all the creatures) makes me smile. It was beautiful to see so many lives are thriving around Poor Knights."*

*Outdoor education / experience for kids can be tricky because there is always some risks involved. We have to teach them to take reasonable risk and explore. We need to teach them to respect the nature (without getting scared), too. Throughout the day, both on the boat and in the water, I felt that we were given lots of freedom and choice. That is based on the staff's confidence and experience, which I thought was excellent." - Maki Millichamp (parent)*

### Northland Student List 2023

Hikurangi - Xander Vanstones and Sasha Wano
Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o te Tonga o Hokianga - Ayvah Korewha Crouch,, Niwa Rawiri
Taipā Area School - Josie Millichamp
Peria - Cassie Walker-Hapi
Whangarei Girls High School - Ella Farrier and Bella Tissink
Whananaki School - Katie Mander
Russell School - Mali Johnson and Huinui Legrand
Totara North - Millie Toren
Nga Kaitiaki o te Ahi - Jermaine Pira
I HAD A DREAM - Reihana Mackie
Whangarei Boys High School - Noah Edwards



*Noah Edwards at the Poor Knights!*

**Northland Schools that have engaged with EMR in 2022/23:**

<b>School</b>	<b>#participants</b>
Peria School	67
Oruaiti School	50
Opua School	50
Te Kura o Matihetihe	17
Taipa Area School	64
Kaingaroa School	54
Whangarei Girls High School	48
Whau Valley School	73
Okaihau Primary	36
Maungatapere School	75
Maromaku School	15
Hora Hora Primary	106
Hurupaki School	120
Kamo Intermediate School	53
St Francis Xavier Catholic School	150
Kamo Primary	136

Tauraroa Area School	148
Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Hokianga	57
Totara North School	28
Hikurangi Primary	35
Russell School	18
Whananaki School	42
Glenbervie Primary	75
Manaia View School	28
Kamo High	33
Maunu School	114
Pompallier College	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>1716</b>

**Inspiring Action and Student Leadership**

EMR action projects foster kaitiakitanga - guardianship and facilitate action to address marine issues. Some schools go above and beyond with their action projects and creativity to help look after their marine environment.

**Taipa Area School**

Taipa Area School is one of the closest kura to the Maitai Bay Rahui. When the year 7& 8 students set out to snorkel their local rahui, they wanted to monitor the number of fish they saw. Each group had a recorder to record the number of fish seen during a timed swim along the snorkel trail (fixed transect) These surveys provide an effective and simple means for participants to engage with their local marine environment and learn more about its health and functioning.



**Some student learning below:**

*Q: A rahui is when you can't take things from an area to protect important resources.*

*Why is there a rahui at Maitai Bay?*

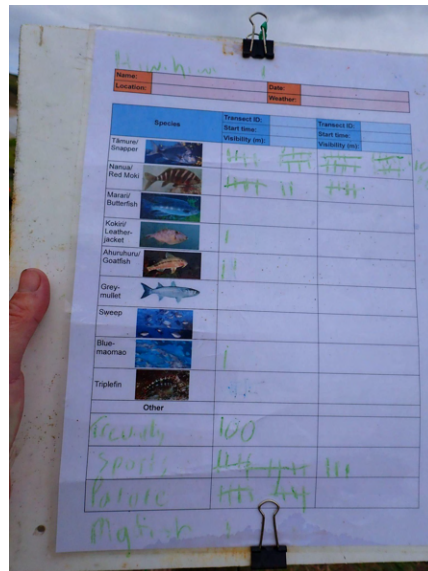
*A: The reason why there's a rahui at Maitai Bay is to grow the ecosystem under the water. This is because a few years ago anyone was allowed to fish and basically take anything they want to. Soon this escalated very badly because there were barely any fish so Te Whānau Moana ordered a rahui on Maitai Bay and the rahui has been there for five years.*

*Q: What are Te Whanau Moana trying to achieve?*

*A: Te Whanau Moana are the people who put a rahui on Maitai Bay to help the ecosystem grow. The rahui has been on Maitai Bay for five years. For the past five years the sea creatures have been doing very good. There are more kinds of fish, shellfish and general sealife.*

*Q: What kinds of sealife were there?*

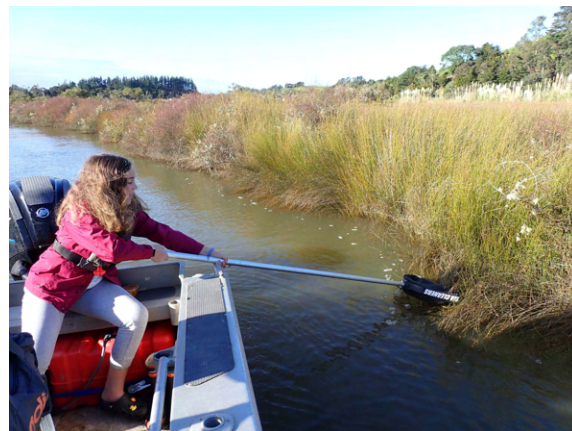
*A: There were all kinds of sealife. There were snappers, triggerfish, stingrays, leatherfish, and much more.*



Species	Transect ID	Transect ID	Transect ID
	Start time	Start time	Start time
	Visibility (m)	Visibility (m)	Visibility (m)
Tamara Snapper			
Namoi Red Moki			
Mangi Butterfish			
Kokoi Leather-jacket			
Ahuhoua Godfish			
Grey mullet			
Sweep			
Blue-moono			
Trigfin			
Other			
Crusty	100		
Spots			
Parrot			
Mogfish			

**Whananaki School**

Whananaki school participated in the EMR programme in term 1 2023. They snorkelled at their local beach and the Poor Knights marine reserve. Their action plan had a focus on cleaning up the estuary, especially after Cyclone Gabrielle. Senior students Katie Mander and Tamanui Mita-Warren teamed up with Seacleaners.com to remove rubbish from their estuary. Whananaki School has





been participating in EMR since the programme's inception and due to the school being adjacent to the estuary, they have always had a strong focus on action to protect the estuary, including monitoring and removing rubbish from the catchment.



### **Oruaiti School**

Oruaiti School participated in the EMR programme in Term 4 2022 and completed the programme in Term 1 2023. As part of the full programme they first snorkelled at their local beach Pia Pia and then snorkelled at Maitai Bay Rahui. As part of the action component of the programme they have focussed on restoring the sand dunes at Taupo Bay which is another local beach within 15 minutes drive from the school. Throughout the school year and also in the school holidays, students have been very engaged with this ongoing project and have learnt a lot about erosion and the harvesting and propagation of Spinifex and Pingao in hopes to restore habitat for coastal native



bird species such dotterel and oystercatchers.



### **Community Led Kaitiaki Action iNaturalist database**

EMR actively encourages schools and communities to contribute to existing databases like iNaturalist. EMR has over 1000 recorded observations on iNaturalist with schools being able to upload their own observations after their snorkel experiences. We have been engaging rangatahi in actively monitoring the presence of mediterranean fanworm in the Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve. This season our team explored the furthest parts of Northland around Paua and Te Hapua wharf. The purpose was to undertake a marine biodiversity observation survey which encompassed looking into the variety of marine biodiversity and marine pests in the marine rohe of Ngati Kuri and uploading observations to inaturalist.





*Plocamopherus imperialis*

### Programme stats

More than 3994 people were engaged in snorkel experiences in the Northland region. EMR reached 3104 students of all ages from a variety of backgrounds. Many of these students were able to see the effects of marine protection first hand through snorkeling in a marine reserve or protected area.

In addition to this, 890 members of the public participated in EMR community snorkel or kayak days with 1085 volunteers hours helping out during the events. Our reach in Northland this season was 4948.



*Russell School seeing the abundance of marine life at Maunganui Bay*

# Maitai Bay rāhui five years strong

By [Noel Garcia](#)

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10 Jan, 2023 05:00 AM ⌚ 5 mins to read



The recent anniversary celebration where two pou were unveiled to mark the start of the rāhui five years ago, representing tupuna Kahutianui and Te Parata. Whetu Rutene described them, along with two pou of kaitiaki of the moana Hinemoana and Tangaroa, as "an acknowledgment that we are here to restore the balance to our moana". Photo / Ceara Wallace

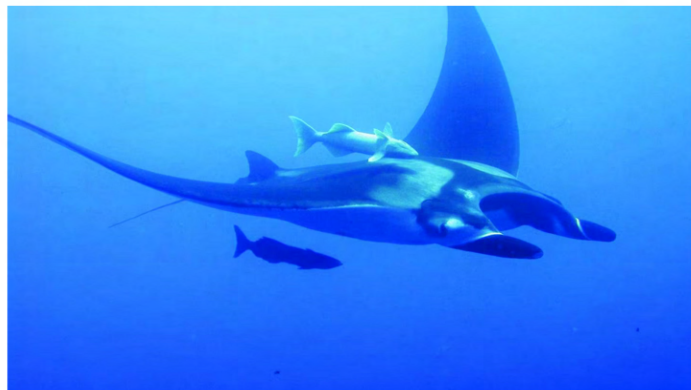
EMR Northland and the Maitai Bay hapu celebrating five years of the rāhui

# Seaweek 2023: Meet the manta ray vying for Fish of the Year

By [Susan Botting](#)  
Local Democracy Reporter

[Save](#) | [Share](#)

15 Mar, 2023 06:00 PM ⌚ 2 mins to read



A giant manta ray glides at Poor Knights Islands. Photo / Glenn Edney Te Wairua O Te Moananui Ocean Spirit Trust

Seaweek 2023 Fish of the Year

JUNE 8, 2021, BAY CHRONICLE 9

## Poor Knights visit inspires students

For Whangarei Girls' High School student Bella Tsitsik a trip to the Poor Knights has inspired her to become a vocal advocate of marine reserves.

Bella was one of 52 students, some from Northland, who were taken the Poor Knights as part of the Experiencing Marine Reserves (EMR) - Te Kura Moana Initiative.

Students came from as far north as Peka Peka and as far south as Dunedin to experience one of Aotearoa's oldest marine reserves.

Students are selected based on action projects they have undertaken and the enthusiasm they show when studying and experiencing the marine environment.

"A highlight of the trip for me was experiencing first hand the abundance and friendliness of fish inside the marine reserves," says Bella.

"Because of the safety the reserve provides, you can observe so many different kinds of fish up close, which is an unparalleled experience."

"It has inspired me to speak up in my own personal life to educate people around me and advocate for the existence of more marine reserves."

EMR is a programme of the Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust. The day started with a minute of silence to show respect and aroha to the Northland student and his whānau following the recent tragedy at Abbey Caves.

"EMR started in the Far North in 2001 with just three schools and the idea of comparing protected marine areas to fully protected marine areas with water safety messages embedded throughout the programme."

Seeing huge tānare snapper swimming has inspired thousands of children to take action for the marine environment and exercise kaitiakianga - guardianship for their local beach or harbour.

For this year's trip there were 22 students and 30 guardians representing 26 schools from seven regions of Aotearoa.

"Action projects from Northland included monitoring the Whangarei Harbour marine reserve, comparison of marine species at different areas and litter trap installation in the school grounds," says EMR founder Samara Nicholas.

In addition to the opportunity to represent their school or region for the EMR Action prize, the group also offers the EMR Ocean Art prize. The Bobby Stafford-Bish Foundation supports this special prize for young Kiwis who have experienced the marine environment with EMR and display that passion and experience through art. This was won by Kaitiaki Mander (Whangarei Girls' High School), Millie Toren (Tairāwhiti North), Jermaine Pira, (Ngā Kaitiaki o te Ahu), Jollana Mackie (Te Aroha), Noah Edwards (Whangarei Boys' High School).

The national delivery of EMR is thanks to a network of provider organisations across the country and would not be possible without the support of the Tindall Foundation, Letterbox National Community and Water Safety New Zealand.

Katie Mander (back) from Whangarei School, Bella Tsitsik and Ella Farrier from Whangarei Girls' High School, Xander Vanstones and Sasha Wano from Hikurangi School, and Robina Mackie representing Te Aroha.

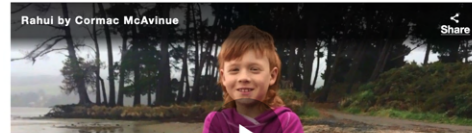
Thursday, 1 June 2023

## Prize trip an eye-opening experience

By Shawn McAvinue

97 0

The Star



Rahul by Cormac McAvinue

News Sport Life & Style Entertainment Business Regions Fe



Dunedin schoolboy Cormac McAvinue (9) was a winner of an annual competition to be able to snorkel at Poor Knights Islands marine reserve off the east coast of Northland. His father, Allied Press reporter Shawn McAvinue, accompanied him on the trip and asks why it is taking so long for Otago to get its own marine reserve for children to enjoy.

## Northland and Otago representatives at Poor Knights Competition Trip, The Bay Chronicle and The Otago Times

### EMR on social media

- [Kai Iwi Lakes Snorkel Day](#)
- [Matapouri Night Snorkel](#)
- [Reotahi Snorkel Day with NRC December](#)
- [Whananaki Snorkel Day](#)
- [Taputaputa - Ngati Kuri Snorkel Day](#)
- [Long Beach Russell with NRC and Fish Forever Snorkel Day](#)
- [Maunganui Bay Snorkel Day with NRC, Fish Forever and Tri Oceans](#)
- [Annual Poor Knights Competition Trip](#)

### EMR instagram page:

[https://www.instagram.com/emr\\_nz](https://www.instagram.com/emr_nz)



Here is a little clip made by some of our participants that have a Youtube channel



## Participant feedback

"Felt totally safe. Good communication between supervisors and helpers. My grand kids were really well supervised and have really increased their snorkelling confidence. Thanks Ray, Annika and Laura for your guidance." - Joanne Higgins

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"Amazing experience, friendly people, learnt about sea life in the area." - Chantal and Craig Bedingfield

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"Whakawhanaungatanga. Kaitiakitanga." - Adam Jones

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"Les & Andrew really helped me. It was my first ever time in the water." - Jyoti Thakkey

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"Great experience for the kids to learn confidence." - Sarah Ostegaard

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## Quotes from teachers

*Very good localised documentation. Ray was always safety conscious and responsive to the individuals and situations - Joanne Higgins, Russell School*

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*Really engaging and well presented, the students were interested and the snorkel days ran smoothly - Helen Moore, Hikurangi School*

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*This is such a valuable programme, the resources and experiences are amazing - Frances Chadwick, Peria School*

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**A summary of the teacher evaluations can be found below:**

Rating: 1=lowest 6= highest	Resources provided by the EMR programme	Content of the EMR programme	Effectiveness of in water safety management and H&S documentation
	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.8</b>
Satisfaction with your EMR Leader's role in the delivery and effectiveness of the programme	Effectiveness of the programme in meeting agreed objectives of the EMR programme manual	Educational value of this type of hands-on environmental education	Value added to students' knowledge (awareness), confidence, skills, and attitudes
<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5.7</b>



*Our first event ever at Whangaumu Bay was a great success!*

**Event Evaluations**

In the 2022/23 season, 100% of our snorkel and paddle day participants felt safe and enjoyed the day! 88.7% of participants learned something new during the day and 93.4% indicated that their marine conservation knowledge had increased as a result of the event.

*Thank you for this opportunity. Our whole family were engaged, enjoying ourselves and felt safe at all times. "*  
- Anonymous



*"Hey, loved feeling welcome and the calmness of Les*

was very soothing. Felt very safe and great to see the educational efforts " - Anonymous

Participants spotting Pied Shag during our Waikaraka Kayak day under the safety of Pacific Kayaks

"Awesome free event! The guides were really kind and showed us everything . Helped my confidence in the water" - Anonymous



A group of snorkellers exploring the shallows

**Health and Safety**

As the umbrella organisation for all other regions, the trust's Health and Safety management for the team, volunteers, participants and everyone we associate with is our number one priority. The trust is accredited Adventure Activity provider (AAO 534) with Outdoors Mark and audited on a regular basis. New coordinators always receive full training prior to the start of the programmes and are provided hands-on support with their initial delivery to ensure all H&S procedures are understood and followed at all times. We have recently purchased an AED to have at our events moving forward.

**Volunteering and training**

A high proportion of the EMR volunteers in Northland are regular volunteers. All new volunteers sign up on our database and receive in-water training and supervision prior to taking their own groups with also the opportunity for pre-season training in collaboration with Freedive Aotearoa.



Pre-season taitamariki snorkel training





*Some of our regular volunteers Les and Sachet modeled the safety briefing to taitamariki at the Oneroa Bay, Russell snorkel day to ensure consistency.*



### **Invasive marine species monitoring**

EMR continues to contribute to the detection and management of invasive marine species in Northland. Utilising our current EMR team, and Taitamariki snorkel guides we plan to work closely alongside the NRC marine biosecurity team so we can help to detect invasive species.

Our current programme is based on snorkelling surveys and focuses on the detection of invasive Crabs, Mantis Shrimp, Undaria (invasive seaweed), Mediterranean fanworm, and the current exotic Caulerpa which has been found in the Bay of Islands. This hands-on, practical programme will raise awareness of marine pests among coastal communities and empower them to take action.

Northland is in a unique position to further prevent the spread of marine pests to other regions if detected early.



*Noah assisting with the removal of invasive fan worm at Reotahi Marine Reserve*

## **Volunteer Celebration Evening**

On Friday the 9th of June we held a celebration evening for our Northland volunteers and Tai Tamariki in recognition of all their hard work throughout the season. In appreciation of our top volunteer this season, we have introduced the Manaaki award which was awarded to Les McKenzie this year. Les has always shown a strong commitment to EMR Northland and it is clearly evident that he is great at sharing his passion for the marine environment with others.



*Les accepting our first Manaaki award*

## **Nature Connection Programme**

This summer, EMR coordinators (Ray Downing and Ceara Wallace) and the Whitebait Connection team (Pat and Tracey) worked with the I Have a Dream Charitable Trust based in Tikipunga to run a nature connection programme in the Whangarei Heads region. I Have a Dream staff who are mentors to the students came along to support as supervisors each day. The premise of the programme was to provide some general intellectual understanding of ecological concepts alongside practical activities to enable a sensory experience of those concepts. The aim being that this locks in a feeling of being closely connected with the rest of nature and leads to mutually beneficial outcomes.

### ***Session one – Awa***

The river session focussed on getting to know a section of a local river (Whangarei Heads) and understanding the important functions that rivers perform. Facilitated by our Whitebait Connection coordinators Pat and Tracey, the taitamariki learned about the importance of freshwater to life and how rivers distribute water across the landscape. They got to explore what makes a river 'healthy' and our team demonstrated some hands-on tools for monitoring. The location was at a small stream that flows into Taurikura bay in which they looked at macroinvertebrates and life within the awa. Finding freshwater species such as banded Kokopu, Longfin Tuna, Common Bullies and Redfin Bullies were a highlight of this day.

### ***Session two – Coastal***

The ocean session focussed on snorkelling at a local coastal site (Matapouri). The focus of the snorkelling was to experience the connection with a unique environment and the species that live within it. Before entering the water taitamariki participated in a breathing workshop

with Sacha from Freedive Aotearoa, in which some important skills were gained such as being more self aware. Ceara also demonstrated how to use our snorkel equipment and some key skills involved with water safety and snorkelling.

**Session three - Harbour to Mountain**

This session involved walking to the top of Mt Aubrey to gain a broad overview of the local environment - the Whangarei Harbour. Based on how much fun was had and how engaged everyone was, we believe this will be a good foundation for these taitamariki to have a very positive relationship with the ecosystems they experienced. They also gained a good general understanding of how important certain facets of each ecosystem are in supporting life, what could disturb that balance, and how they can act on an individual level to support healthy processes in those ecosystems.



## Wettie Free Diving Rep

This is the fifth year we have offered the Darren Shields - Wettie freediving representative prize, for a Northland high school student that shows talent for freediving. This year's winner was Noah Edwards from Whangarei Boys High School.



Noah guiding at our Reotahi Snorkel event

## Funders and Supporters

- Northland Regional Council
- Water Safety NZ
- Department of Conservation
- Sport Northland - Tu Manawa Aotearoa
- Wettie Wetsuits and Spearfishing
- Bobby-Stafford Bush Foundation
- Dive! Tutukaka
- Foundation North
- Lotteries- COGS
- NZAEE - Seaweek
- Tindall Foundation
- Lotteries Community - National
- Whangarei Underwater Club



Matua Piripi, Niwa and Ayyah from Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Hokianga at the Poor Knights

## Partnerships

- Te Rangi-i-taiāwhiaotia Trust
- Te Waiariki/Ngati Korora
- Ngati Kuri
- Northland Regional Council
- Fish Forever
- Freedive Aotearoa
- Dive Tutukaka

**EMR MAITAI BAY RAHUI SNORKEL TRAIL**

**Snorkelling Code of Conduct:**

- Be prepared (check weather forecast & your gear)
- Always snorkel with a buddy & dive flag
- Tell someone on shore your plans
- Familiarise yourself with the rules regarding the 'no-take' rahu
- Know your limits

**SNORKEL TRAIL KEY**

- High Tide Route
- Low Tide Route

**HAZARDS**

- Sharp Objects on Rocks
- Eagle Rigs in Shallow
- Waves Swell Washing up Against Rocks

**CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF RAHUI AT MAITAI BAY**

Te Whanau Moana me Te Rorohuri decided to take action against the unsustainable management of their rohe and implemented a 'no-take' rahu. This means NO taking of any shellfish, fish, kaimoana, seaweed, etc. This initiative was taken with the aim to:

- Bring balance back to their moana
- Restore the depleted areas
- Restore the tapu, restore the mana
- Implement a sustainability plan for future generations.

To learn more about the rahu visit: [rahuimaitai bay.nz](http://rahuimaitai bay.nz)

Contact: [emr.org.nz](http://emr.org.nz) Please help us protect, restore, and preserve this special place.

Collaboration with Te Whanau Moana me Te Rorohuri

*and celebrating 5 years of the rāhui*

**Other organisations that have supported and engaged or collaborated with us through schools, events and action projects**

- I Have a Dream
- EnviroSchools
- Goat Island Marine Discovery Centre
- NZAEE (New Zealand Association for Environmental Educators)
- Pacific Coast Kayaks
- Island Getaway Bay of Islands
- Te Aho Tū Roa
- Fish Forever
- TriOceans
- Kaitaia Police
- Far North Surf Lifesaving
- Whananaki Community Led Development Group
- Young Ocean Explorers
- Ferrier Family
- New Zealand Underwater Association
- Sails for Science
- Patuharakeke



*Tri Oceans supporting with safety watch during our Maunganui Bay snorkel day*

## Appendix

Hi Ray and Samara,

Cassie and myself (Jordyn) had such a good experience on this trip one that will stick with us forever we enjoyed learning about how they are a part of a super volcano, how once the people of Ngatiwai used the islands and where able to once live there until raided by the Hikutu tribe.

We found it fascinating that the East Australian Current runs past the islands making it one of the only known places in the world where cold water and tropical water fish can be seen side by side.

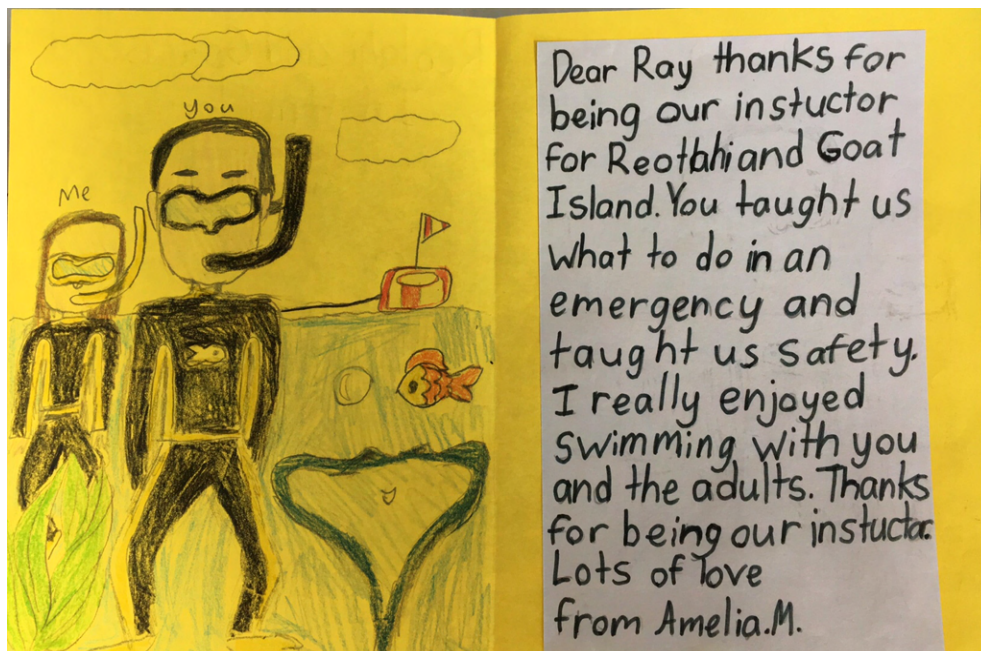
Also that now there is a tuatara sanctuary on the island is also a very great thing.

For us, learning these things showed us that not only does the place look special but the knowing of why it is something so much more shows why it needs to be protected and by swimming amongst the natural beauty of it all seeing how places like this should look shows that protecting areas like this it can stay a real treasure.

Quote by Cassie

I really appreciated that I got the chance to go. I Loved seeing all the different species of fish and learning about the importance of having a Rahui there. I also really like the kind staff and meeting new people.

Thank you.



St Francis Xavier Catholic School showing appreciation to EMR coordinator Ray Downing