

Experiencing Marine Reserves Northland. 2019/20 Season Report

Report compiled by Isabel Krauss, Northland Programme Coordinator. Reviewed by Samara Nicholas, National Programme Director and Poutokomanawa, Mountains To Sea Conservation Trust

Overview

The Experiencing Marine Reserves (EMR) programme 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 eight other regions in NZ!

The 2019/20 season has been one of the busiest seasons in Northland to date with five coordinators delivering the EMR programme throughout the entire region.

Over 1,900 students from 31 different schools and organisations took part in our snorkel experiences with 13 schools participating in the full EMR programme. These snorkel experiences also involved 575 parents and school helpers that supported the students on land and in the water.

We ran 8 community events over the summer with a total of 695 participants and 102 volunteers, exploring our local marine backyard through guided snorkel or kayak experiences.

In total, EMR involved 3,279 people in marine conservation in Northland!

We could not run these snorkel days without the amazing support of parent helpers, teachers and our dedicated team of volunteers. With a contribution of over 2000 volunteer hours we are very grateful to all the people who make these experiences possible. Although the season was cut

Short by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the season was a full success and we are grateful to all our sponsors, partners and funders for their ongoing support!



A participant at the Maunganui Snorkel Day



Participants registering for the Maitai Bay Snorkel Day

Season Highlights

It would be hard to list all the highlights of this season, but you will find the most notable season highlights below!

Pataua Estuary Snorkel Day



Rangatahi proudly present their certificates



One of the many snorkel groups at Pataua

Our community snorkel day at the Pataua estuary started with a Mihi Whakatau from Te Waiariki/Ngati Korora welcoming us to their rohe. Their presence and support throughout the day was incredible and many rangatahi that we took on a guided snorkel experience at the start of the day ended up helping as trainee snorkel guides later on. We are very grateful for this new partnership and for being able to run snorkel experiences in this estuary that is so full of life. At the end of the day, rangatahi representatives from Te Waiariki/Ngati Korora were presented certificates to acknowledge their contribution to a successful event.

Maunganui Bay Snorkel Day

Through partnering with Fish Forever we were able to run our first community guided snorkel day at Maunganui Bay (Deep Water Cove). EMR specifically wanted to target locals and low decile schools that might otherwise not get the opportunity to experience the Maunganui Bay rāhui in the outer Bay of Islands. The rāhui protection has been in place since 2010 and the abundance of marine life close to shore is huge 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. One of the highlights was being able to take out seven rangatahi from Rawhiti who will be the future kaitiaki of this area. A big thank you goes out to our funders from Foundation North, the Department of Conservation, Seaweed and the contribution from Fish Forever to make this experience accessible to everyone.



Group photo from the Maunganui Snorkel Day



Students from Pamapurua pose with Calvin the Green Sea Turtle

Turtle Release

In late 2018, Calvin the Green Sea Turtle was rescued from Ninety Mile Beach and slowly nursed back to strength at Sealife Kelly Tarlton's in Auckland. After 14 months of recovery Calvin was released back to the sea at Rangiputa beach north of Kaitaia. Alongside the event that was organised by Sealife Kelly Tarlton's, the Department of Conservation and Auckland Zoo, EMR organised a snorkel experience for two local schools (Pamapurua and Kaitaia Abundant Life). The students got the chance to snorkel in Calvin's new habitat. They also collected plastics off the beach to prevent other sea turtles from ingesting plastics in the future.

Maitai Bay Project

The Mountains To Sea Conservation Trust (MTSCT)/EMR have worked closely with Te Whanau Moana Me Te Rorohuri hapu to support the Maitai Bay rāhui that was established in late 2017. The rāhui aims to restore marine life, the bays' tapu and mana, and to implement a sustainability plan for future generations. A lot of the work involved monitoring the rāhui and building capacity within the hapu to enable informed decision making.

A two day wananga with keynote speakers including Vince Kerr from the MTSCT and a guided snorkel experience was held in November 2019 to celebrate the success to date and start the process of looking into a possible rāhui extension. In March 2020, the rāhui committee decided to renew the rāhui for a further five years. In addition to this, EMR has been working with several Far North Schools to spread the message and gain understanding and support for the rāhui. Over 200 students and parents from Broadwood Area School, Te Kura O Matihetihe, Herekino School, Pukepoto School and Te Aho Tū Roa had the opportunity to snorkel at Maitai Bay, as well as 247 people during the annual Maitai Bay Community Snorkel Day! Even in the short time the rāhui has been in place, the sealife has made big steps towards recovery and becoming a healthier, more balanced ecosystem!



Whetu Rutene (L.) and Vince Kerr (R.) presenting at the wananga

Celebrating Seaweed

Seaweed - *Kaupapa Moana* took place in the first week of March with many events nationwide celebrating our ocean. Like every year, EMR has contributed significantly to the success of Seaweed with more than half of the events in Northland being hosted by EMR, including the Pataua Drift Snorkel and the Waikaraka Kayak Day. EMR founder Samara Nicholas also spoke at the Ocean-Fest in Kerikeri with Steve Hathaway from Young Ocean Explorers.

Growing team in Northland



The team and some of their whānau from Northland and Auckland at the annual MTSC Christmas party

The demand from schools for the full EMR programme and snorkel experiences has been at a record high this season. To be able to keep up with the demand EMR has taken on two new coordinators. Elle Gibson will focus on school delivery, while Oliver Bone will work on the Maitai Bay rāhui project and connect schools to the rāhui. The Northland team now has five coordinators that offer snorkel experiences all over Northland.

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. Although some of the school programmes and associated action projects had to be cut short due to the impact of COVID-19, EMR will be working on progressing the actions over winter and completing the remaining programmes in Term 4. The annual Poor Knights Competition trip that is usually held in May to reward students for outstanding actions in their communities was also postponed to December 2020.

Kokopu School

The youngest students from Kokopu seem to be making the biggest difference by starting a “Drain Busters” Club at the start of Term 1 following participation in the EMR programme in 2019. Every second Monday before school, the club meets to clean out the school drains to stop plastics from getting into the local streams and the harbour! Year 3/4 students also wrote screen plays about marine protection and highlighted the effects of overfishing.



Kokopu students present their posters

Pamapurua School

Pamapurua School has been working on a range of artwork involving the ocean and the turtle release that they were lucky to be a part of. They are also planning a fundraiser for EMR through a bake sale and carried out a big rubbish clean-up on their school grounds. One of the students interviewed our coordinator Oliver Bone about marine reserves and shared the interview on his [YouTube Channel!](#)



Raurimu Avenue School

Raurimu Avenue School created a [motion picture movie](#) to highlight the effects of overfishing on our ocean!

Whangarei Heads School

The whole school from Year 1 to year 8 was involved in the EMR programme to explore the Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve at their doorstep. Senior students presented their learning about marine reserves and shared personal experiences during their school assembly with their whānau. They also raised \$123 through pancake sales during school assembly to go towards EMR.



The marine reserve presentations from senior students during school assembly at Whangarei Heads

Community Led Kaitiaki Action

iNaturalist Database

EMR actively encourages schools and communities to contribute to existing databases like iNaturalist. EMR has over 135 recorded observations on iNaturalist with schools being able to upload their own observations after their snorkel experiences. One of the latest observations was an introduced oyster blenny during a snorkel at One Tree Point with Whau Valley School.

Seashore Monitoring

Both Pamapurua School and Herekino School conducted Marine Metre Squared surveys during the EMR programme. Pamapurua uploaded their surveys to the Marine Metre Squared website, contributing to the national database.

Herekino School is committed to continue monitoring in the Owkata Harbour to learn more about their marine species in the intertidal zone. Their action planning is still underway, but they are intending to conduct regular Marine Metre Squared surveys along with some crab trapping to monitor the presence/absence of the invasive Asian Paddle Crab that is present in the neighbouring Hokianga Harbour.



Herekino School conducting MM2 surveys

Wetland Restoration

Portland School took part in a term-long nursery and native plant propagation workshop in 2019 and is looking to restore the wetland in close proximity to the school. By removing weeds and planting native plants they are going to contribute to a healthy Whangarei Harbour. EMR is proud to support Portland School with this ambitious and long term action project!

Subtidal Monitoring

Pamapurua School and Whangarei Girls High School both conducted timed-swim fish surveys to determine the abundance of marine life underwater. Whangarei Girls High School has incorporated the marine monitoring programme into their curriculum and assessments and has participated in the programme for three consecutive years, sourcing their own funding to be able to continue the surveys.



Pamapurua School monitoring the Maitai Bay Rāhui through timed swim surveys

Programme stats

More than 1,700 students from 31 different schools and organisations got the opportunity to experience their local marine environment through a guided snorkel experience in 19 different locations across the Northland region. EMR programmes reach 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. The school experiences also involved 575 parents, teachers and school helpers .

In addition to this, 695 members of the public participated in EMR community snorkel or kayak days with 65 volunteers helping out during the events. This includes 29 new volunteers that were recruited in the 2019/20 season. The most popular event was the Maitai Bay Snorkel Day in January with 220 participants and 27 volunteers. More than 2100 volunteer hours contributed to the successful school and event delivery - this is the equivalent of 250 working days!

Although the majority of events and school delivery were fully funded, more than half of the schools either sourced their own funding or took part in user-paid EMR snorkel experiences. This shows the demand for and value of the EMR programme!



EMR coordinator Isabel Krauss at Portland School

EMR in the Media

Reotahi Snorkel Day

[The snorkel day in pictures](#)

Maitai Bay Snorkel Day

[Video from Te Hiku Media](#)

[Snorkel Day Coverage in the Northland Age](#)

Maunganui Bay Snorkel Day

[Story in the Northern Advocate](#)

Maitai Bay rāhui wananga

[Invitation to the public](#)

EMR on social media

- [Maunganui Bay Snorkel Day](#)
- [Pataua Drift Snorkel](#)
- [Turtle Release](#)
- [Tangiteroria at Reotahi](#)
- [Portland School at Reotahi](#)
- [Reotahi Snorkel Day February](#)
- [Whananaki Snorkel Day](#)
- [Tapeka Point Snorkel day](#)
- [Maitai Bay Snorkel Day](#)
- [Kokopu School at Goat Island](#)

EMR instagram page:

https://www.instagram.com/emr_nz

Evaluations

School programmes

For numerous students, a snorkel experience with EMR is their first meaningful encounter with marine conservation. The EMR programme received incredibly positive feedback from all the schools, captured through online teacher evaluation forms.

All teachers strongly agreed that this type of

hands-on environmental education had a high educational value. Most teachers also agreed that their



Snorkel experiences at Reotahi during summer are a highlight for many students and the community

students and parents were more aware of marine conservation as a result of the programme and that the EMR programme was contributing to positive changes in their local marine environment.

“[The EMR programme] also engaged students with the possible careers and activities in marine/environmental science”. - Megan Stalman, Whangarei Girls High School

Children are learning so much, not just superficial topics, but in-depth investigations into environmental studies, marine life, etc - Michelle Tate, Te Horo School Principal

Very safe and well organised snorkel session - Denise Humphrey, Whangarei Heads School



The treasure box at Te Horo School

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
	5.6	5.7	5.7
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
5.8	5.7	5.9	5.5



The Waikaraka Kayak Day in the Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve was a full success for everyone!

Students also commented on their experiences:

Thank you for taking us snorkeling. The fish I saw were a sea slug, a triplefin and a big fish. I did not know whether it was a snapper or a trevally. When we first met you, you had a big trailer. It had all the gear inside of it. It was amazing to see that much stuff. My mind exploded” - Leah from Tangiteroria School

It was fun learning about the reserve - Whangarei Heads School student

Event Evaluations

In the 2019/20 season, 100% of our snorkel day participants felt safe and enjoyed the day! 9 out of 10 participants learned something new during the day and indicated that their marine conservation knowledge had increased as a result of the event.

Safety was important and demonstrated by our instructor. Friendly, helpful and very informative. Thank you so much for an amazing day. our children learnt a lot, felt safe and are eager for the next one. - Keryn Pivac

Fantastic Day. Great Day, one of my boys had never snorkeled before and at the end he was very confident and had an amazing time. Great staff and volunteers. Thank you so much! - anonymous

Really good to experience these 'hidden' places in our backyard. - anonymous

Tangaroa i te titi, Tangaroa i te tata - Aroha Ellis



Pamapuria School at Rangiputa Beach after their snorkel with EMR leader Oliver Bone

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.



EMR snorkel leader Isabel Krauss

Four Northland coordinators attended the National wananga in 2019, while the new coordinators were due to attend the 2020 wananga. Unfortunately, the 2020 wananga had to be postponed due to COVID-19 .

New coordinators received full training prior to the start of the programmes and delivered their school programmes with support from Samara Nicholas to ensure all H&S procedures were understood and followed at all times.

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. Prior to the Maitai Bay Snorkel day, EMR provided a training opportunity to all volunteers and DoC staff. In light of the recent developments with COVID-19, EMR decided to take a proactive approach and postponed and/or cancelled all non-essential delivery and events prior to the announcement of the lockdown . A national directive was issued to all regional providers and we are currently working towards a document outlining processes and delivery options for all alert levels in regard COVID-19.



A group of snorkelers at Maunganui Bay

New projects and conservation initiatives

Roger Grace Memorial Fund

In 2019, one of New Zealand's marine conservation heroes, Dr Roger Grace, passed away and left a huge gap in the field of marine ecology and conservation. In honour of Dr Roger Grace and to continue his legacy, a memorial fund was set-up that is administered by the Mountains To Sea Conservation Trust. The priorities of the fund are:

- Long term crayfish monitoring at Tawharanui
- Marine conservation establishment projects (no-take and long term)
- Memorial annual Whangateau Snorkel Day
- Triennial Award for early career recipients for contributions to New Zealand marine conservation and communication, to support and give credence to their future work

A special committee has been established to decide on the use of the funds.



The late Dr. Roger Grace holding a gift for his long-term contribution to MTSC

Maunganui Bay Rāhui Renewal and Extension

The rāhui at Maunganui Bay (Deep Water Cove) was established in 2010 and includes a closure on all fisheries except kina. Since then, the sea life at Maunganui Bay has flourished and created an abundance of sea life. Due to the location in the outer Bay of Islands and the associated costs for a trip, EMR ran their first community guided snorkel day in March 2020.

Following the Maunganui Bay Snorkel Day in March 2020, EMR received a request for a letter of support for the renewal and extension of the rāhui. Robert Willoughby, one of the Far North District Councillors said, that “given the recent education trip and neat images of families and children experiencing the



Rangatahi from Rawhiti with their snorkel guides

rāhui abundance [it] would add currency to making such a bid at the same time the opportunity to extending the rāhui boundary down to Moturahurahu.”

Mediterranean Fanworm Monitoring and Removal

EMR took part in a Mediterranean fanworm monitoring and removal ‘action day’ organised by Northland Regional Council to determine the distribution and abundance of fanworm in the Whangarei Harbour Marine reserve at Reotahi. Over the following months EMR plan to establish a monitoring programme that engages senior students in fanworm monitoring.



One of the many happy snorkel groups at Maitai Bay

Maitai Bay Innovative Resources

With the rāhui being extended for another five years, the focus of the project lies on increasing engagement from schools and the community to spread the message of marine conservation. Ideas involve a QR code at the Pou that could link to stories and videos about the history and cultural significance of the area. Another potential project involves kelp forest farming and kelp translocation at Maitai Bay as an option to accelerate kelp forest regeneration.

Funders and Supporters

- Bobby-Stafford Bush Foundation
- Department of Conservation
- Foundation North
- Hansen Products
- Henderson Reeves Lawyers
- Lotteries
- Seaweed
- Sport Northland
- Tindall Foundation
- Wettle Wetsuits and Spearfishing
- Whangarei District Council
- Z Good in the Hood

Partnerships

- Dive! Tutukaka
- Fish Forever
- The Lodge at Kauri Cliffs
- Te Rarawa Anga Mua Trust
- Te Whanau Moana me te Rorohuri hapu
- Te Waiariki/Ngati Korora
- Northland Regional Council
- Fish Forever

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

- Auckland Zoo
- Bennetts Associates
- EnviroSchools
- Far North Surf Rescue
- Goat Island Marine Discovery Centre
- Ngati Kahu Social Services
- NZAEE (New Zealand Association for Environmental Educators)
- Orbit Audit
- Pacific Coast Kayaks
- Sealife Kelly Tarlton's
- Seashuttle Bay of Islands
- Te Aho Tū Roa
- TriOceans
- Whananaki Community Led Development Group
- Young Ocean Explorers
- VOYCE



Tapeka Point Snorkel Day



Improving snorkel skills at Maunganui Bay



Students looking for triplefin at One Tree Point

