

In brief...

Commercial fishing suspected in marine reserve

The Department of Conservation is investigating a report that a commercial fishing boat appeared to be fishing in the Motu Manawa/Pollen Island marine reserve in Auckland's Waitemata Harbour.

DoC rangers who responded to a phone call from a motorist seized two nets and about 80 fish.

"We're investigating the incident and if we find an offence has been committed we'll be prosecuting," says Phil Brown, the biodiversity manager at DoC's Auckland area office.

The reserve protects some 500ha of the inner reaches of Waitemata Harbour and supports an abundance of birdlife.

Refits not just for superyachts

The 37 South offices have had a complete interior refit of their own. The directors, Allan Jouning and Phil Tomlinson, agreed that after 11 years in the same surroundings it was time for a major refurbishment to give the offices a true representation of the modern superyacht industry, with a sharp, clean, organised atmosphere.

The street front has dark tints with the corporate logo in frosting. The interior base colour, called "black white", is painted throughout and colour is introduced through glass and light features.

The refit was celebrated with an opening event on June 30.

Company continues trips to Tiri

360 Discovery has been successful in re-securing the contract to carry passengers to Tiritiri Matangi Island for the next five years. The sister company of Fullers has been operating the service from Auckland and Gulf Harbour to the island over the past six years and plans to continue its programme of raising awareness about the renowned conservation island and bird sanctuary by working with the Department of Conservation, the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi and enhancing the existing schools programme.

"We will be working on initiatives to continuously improve the service and experience to passengers over the next five years," said 360 Discovery's manager, Tony Galloway.

The island brings significant revenue to the Auckland region from tourism as well driving international awareness of New Zealand's clean, green image.

Passengers suffer in fast boat rides

TWO COMPANIES OFFERING thrilling boat rides in the Bay of Islands are facing investigations by Maritime New Zealand after passengers were injured.

Cathy Cooke, of Maungatapere, boarded the *Mack Attack* last December 21 with her granddaughter, Scarlett, and a young cousin, both aged 14. The trio were sitting in the front of the open boat. Ms Cooke did not fasten her seatbelt and said she was not directed to do so. Big swells near the harbour entrance lifted her up and she was injured when she fell back down, ending up on the deck and breaking her spine. The *Mack Attack* returned to Waitangi, where she was taken to Whangarei Hospital.

Maritime NZ found the *Mack Attack* did not comply with safe ship management requirements and a prohibition notice issued on January 12 ordered the boat off the water, although she is now back in operation.

Mack Attack director Richard Prentice said passenger seats on the vessel were improved after another woman hurt her back on the boat about two years ago. He expressed sympathy for Ms Cooke, but declined to comment on the case, as it was under Maritime NZ investigation.

Maritime NZ is also looking into separate incidents involving the *Excitor III* on January 12 and March 22, in which passengers received serious back injuries.

She has been ordered to stay docked



after several passengers were injured, with one woman, Petula Patey, spending 12 weeks in a body brace after fracturing her back in rough seas. An Australian woman suffered a back injury while on the *Excitor III* on March 22 and was expected to be off work until early May.

The manager of Fullers GreatSights Bay of Islands, Charles Parker, said Maritime NZ requested it withdraw *Excitor III* from service after the company correctly notified the body of two incidents involving passengers on the vessel. Parker said the *Excitor III* was a new Naiad rigid inflatable and was commissioned into service on October 10.

"Fullers always places passenger safety as a top priority," he said.

Maritime NZ was actively working with operators of high-speed craft in the Bay of Islands as part of a wider review of the sector, the scope and terms of which were now being drafted, said a Maritime NZ official, Sharyn Forsyth.

DRILL SHIP MOVED TO SAFETY

THE DRILL SHIP *Noble Discoverer*, with 114 people on board, was marooned for a while off the Taranaki coast in April during heavy weather, reports our US correspondent Hugh Ware.

The rig had been drilling on the Ruru-1 exploration well off the coast of south Taranaki for Shell Todd Oil Services, or STOS, when it was disconnected from its wellhead as a precaution before heavy winds hit on April 27 and 28.

Some of her eight anchor lines snapped in the storm and the remaining lines were released so she could be steered to deeper water nor'west of New Plymouth. All the crew were said to be safe, despite the understandable discomfort caused by the top-heavy drilling derrick rolling in the 7m seas.

STOS said the *Noble Discoverer* had a long history of safe and reliable offshore operations. She had received major refits in 2001 and 2006, and a \$25 million upgraded exhaust system in 2009.



The company had identified the ship as the most suitable vessel for the contract before June last year, said the general manager of STOS, Rob Jager.

The ship is to remain in Port Taranaki before resuming drilling later this year, and may be involved in recovering heavy drilling equipment left on the seabed when she had to run for shelter.

Both STOS and Maritime New Zealand are investigating the incident.

RESEARCH PAYS OFF FOR BLUFF OYSTERS

THE NEWS APPEARS to be all good for a successful oyster season up until it finishes at the end of August.

“The bonamia parasite, which has greatly reduced catches in the Bluff oyster fishery over the last 25 years, was at a relatively low level last summer. At this low level of mortality, the oyster fishery is continuing to rebuild,” says NIWA scientist Keith Michael.

There was a real sense of celebration at the Bluff Oyster and Food Festival, held on May 21, not only because the fishery is doing well, but also because closer collaboration between those in the oyster industry and researchers provided a better understanding of the fishery, Michael said.

Recreational and customary fishers, the Ministry of Fisheries, oyster boat skippers and industry representatives all meet regularly to assess how the fishery is doing and to exchange information.

The five-year Foveaux Strait Oyster Fisheries Plan, begun in 2009, gave top research priority to gaining a better understanding of the relationship between bonamia and oysters. “We don’t just focus on what are safe harvest levels, we work across a broad range of key research projects to better understand the fishery as part of a larger ecological system,” Michael said.

The plan also includes research into improving fishing equipment and fishing methods, and understanding the



interaction between oysters, disease and fishing in different parts of the oyster fishery.

Because of the information available, researchers can now reliably predict trends in the fishery for three years ahead. This provided confidence that the harvest levels have no affect on its ability to rebuild, and that mortality from bonamia ultimately determines its fate.

Bonamia has infected Bluff oysters since 1963 and maybe much earlier. It is unlikely to disappear and is expected to be a recurring problem. If the research

can help predict where and when the deaths will occur, vulnerable areas can be fished, rather than areas with low infection, allowing these areas to rebuild further before the oysters are harvested.

NIWA also works closely with a group of 11 oyster skippers, who own the information and the process by which it was derived.

“The skippers get together and discuss the state of the fishery and harvest levels and areas ... and we can communicate information to all participants in the fishery,” says Michael.

The Bluff Oyster Management Company invests heavily in research every year. Funding is also provided by the Ministry of Fisheries and the Foundation for Research Science and technology through Seafood Innovations Ltd.

Seismic tests pulp squid and octopus

LOW-FREQUENCY SOUND from seismic testing destroys the organs of squid, octopus and shuttlefish, says the Environment and Conservation Organisations of New Zealand.

The research by scientists in Spain and France showed the animals were damaged after just two hours exposure to low-frequency noise from 50Hz to 400Hz, the “acoustic smog” typical of oil and gas exploration and shipping.

The scientists found the organ that allows squid, octopus and cuttlefish to regulate their positions, balance and direct how and

where they swim was damaged, leaving them unable to move or feed, and vulnerable to predators.

“This research is further reason to be very concerned about seismic surveys in the sea, including those of Petrobras off East Cape,” said Barry Weeber of ECO.

The news was bad for everyone, including the fishing industry, he said. “It adds to the already known damage to whales and dolphins from seismic noise.”

The government needed to rethink its approach to deep-sea oil exploration and development, Weeber said.



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In brief...

Boats going too fast

Recreational boating numbers almost doubled this summer in Marlborough, but too many exceeded five knots within 200m of the shore, the harbourmaster, Alex van Wijngaarden, said on March 29.

The blame did not rest purely with recreational boaters, he said. "Commercial vessels similarly fail to observe this requirement and staff are currently working with this sector to resolve this. They [commercial operators] should perhaps be setting an example."

Kiwis want more "no take" reserves

More than nine out of ten New Zealanders, or 96 percent, want more of our ocean to be protected in "no take" marine reserves, according to a study by WWF New Zealand. The survey found New Zealanders want around 36 percent of our exclusive economic zone to be protected, a 100-fold increase on current levels.

The proportion of our oceans in marine reserves was wholly inadequate, said Rebecca Bird, the WWF-NZ marine programme manager. It is campaigning for a national network of marine reserves to safeguard New Zealand's marine biodiversity.

Lifejackets required by law

Environment Canterbury's new navigational safety bylaw, introduced on June 1, makes it compulsory for all boaters on recreational craft of 6m or less to wear lifejackets.

ECan navigation safety manager Evan Walker says the initial focus will be on education, unless transgressors are repeat offenders. The current fine of about \$150 would be increased, he said.

Cup challenge will bring big rewards

The Emirates Team New Zealand challenge for the next America's Cup will bring huge gains to the economy, says the executive director of NZ Marine, Peter Busfield.

He says the decision by America's Cup holders Oracle to build the AC45 trial boats in Warkworth, rather than California, was worth about \$20 million to the economy and created over 150 jobs.

Busfield says NZ Marine supports the government's decision to back the Emirates' challenge. A 2008 report on the 2003 challenge, when the government invested over \$30 million in Team New Zealand, found the economy had been boosted by \$2 for every \$1 the government had invested. GDP rose by \$60-\$70 million and up to 900 full-time equivalent jobs were created throughout the country.

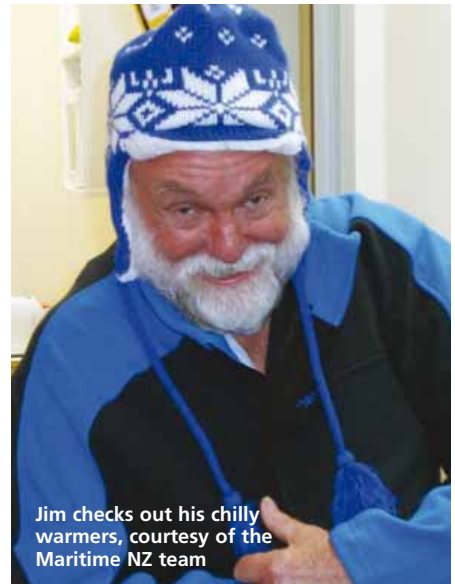
Jim heads to Chile

THE OLD CODGER Jim Lott slung his hook and quietly slipped his ropes on his last day with Maritime New Zealand on June 10.

Jim spent 11 years as the recreational boating manager, a job he was well prepared for, given his long history of involvement in recreational boating. In Jim's words he started as a toddler "a very looong time ago" in small boats and quickly took a shine to sailing, especially offshore racing and cruising. Over the years he would build many boats, but the flagship is the 50ft (15.25m) cruising yacht *Victoria*. With recreational boating accidents and fatalities at an all-time high, Jim saw the need for boating education for the great unwashed in the recreational sector, who needed saving from themselves at the time.

Much of what we see today in places like Coastguard Boating Education has Jim's fingerprints all over them. As an educator he also taught the early inshore commercial qualifications, but mainly his focus ended up on the yachties, with Ocean Yacht Master, for which he had an affinity with both the students and the environment they would be venturing into. During this time Jim was an active participant on the Spirit of Adventure Trust and a qualified tall ship's master.

With a life spent in everything from dinghies to the *Spirit of New Zealand*, we asked, what's with retirement, Jim?



Jim checks out his chilly warmers, courtesy of the Maritime NZ team

"Weeeell!" he said as he rubbed his scuffy chin. "I feel I still have one more world cruise left in me." Karin, Jim's wife, who retired at the same time after years of accumulated service teaching English at Papatoetoe High, broken only when following Jim on world sojourns, was a good clue.

"We have become like ships in the night with work and all, so it's now time to do something about it while we both have our health," says Jim. "So we have been preparing *Victoria* for another extended voyage that might take two to five years, but I don't think either of us will be counting."

What can one say other than to wish them both fair winds and good health.

TOURISM OPERATOR WITHDRAWS FROM ABEL TASMAN

THE OWNER OF two Abel Tasman National Park sea tourism businesses has put them up for sale so it can concentrate on assets in other regions.

The iwi group Ngai Tahu Holdings Corp is selling its Abel Tasman Tourism business, which operates Abel Tasman Aqua Taxi and the Nelson booking office, Nelson Escapes, and its joint venture with Wakatu Incorporation, Kayaking Abel Tasman, which operates the Kaiteriteri Kayaks, Abel Tasman Kayaks and Abel Tasman Seal Swims brands.

Between them, the businesses operate 220 kayaks and 10 ferries, and employ 110 people at the peak of the tourist season.

Ngai Tahu Holdings' chief executive, Greg Campbell, said interest had already been shown in both Abel Tasman Tourism and Kayaking Abel Tasman. "I think, from our point of view, we're concentrating primarily in some locations like Queenstown and Franz Josef," Campbell said.

Revenue was forecast to be about the same in the year to June 30, 2011, as for the previous year, but would be affected by the Canterbury earthquakes.

Ngai Tahu was trying to sell the tourism operations as a whole, said Abel Tasman Tourism's general manager, Lori Keller.

She said she believed the sale would have no impact on the region's tourism industry, "assuming the brands get picked up. There is a large demand for products in the Abel Tasman."

MAY WAS A MONTH OF EXTREMES

NIWA SAYS MAY 2011 was the warmest since records began in 1909, with an average temperature of 12.9° Celsius, 2.2° above average. Monthly mean temperatures for May were at least two degrees above the May average between the Waikato and Christchurch, as well as in the South Island Lakes District, with many records broken. For the remainder of the country, monthly mean temperatures were also between 1.2° and 2° above the May average.

New Zealand was affected by more northerly winds than usual, squeezed between low pressures over the Tasman Sea and anticyclones parked east of the country. These northerly winds contributed to the record-breaking May warmth, a record wet May for Nelson and extremely high rainfall totals for many parts of the North Island, as well as for Marlborough, the Tasman

District, Otago and south Canterbury. In contrast, southern Hawkes Bay, the Wairarapa, Banks Peninsula and parts of Fiordland experienced only half their normal rainfall.

Overall, May was a month of extremes. It started with a heat wave on the West Coast of the South Island, with Hokitika recording a record 26.7° on May 1 and Westport a record 25° for May.

A tornado swept through the Auckland suburb of Albany on May 3. It was the cloudiest May on record for Hokitika, Cromwell and Stratford. The highest one-day rainfall of 289mm was recorded at North Egmont on May 25, and the strongest gust was 184kph at Southwest Cape on May 12.

Of the six main centres, Auckland was the wettest and warmest, Tauranga the sunniest and Christchurch the driest.



The boys in this runabout had more guts than a school of whitebait. No lifejackets but two did have the boss's high-visibility work gear on

What right hand rule?

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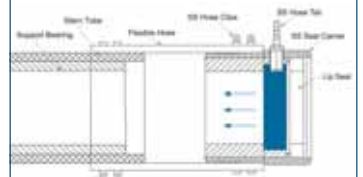
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