

In brief...

Toheroa deaths a puzzle

Scientists are still puzzling over the unexplained deaths of several hundred toheroa on Southland's Orepuki beach.

In scientific terms the event, discovered in early July, is considered a catastrophe, according to a scientist from Otago University.

"In scientific terms, we call this an ecological catastrophe – a short, sharp event that comes out of the blue," associate Prof Henrik Moller, of the centre for the study of agriculture, food and the environment, said.

Prof Moller, who is studying traditional Maori wild foods with the support of the Ministry of Fisheries, said it was too early to know what killed the toheroa.

Starvation, a biotoxin or an algal bloom were all possible causes.



An estimated 58,000 toheroa lived on the beach and it was a concern some of the mature shellfish, which can live up to 20 years, appeared to have died.

Toheroa are located at Oreti, Orepuki and Bluecliffs in Southland.

Kapiti and Northland are other strongholds of the shellfish.

Pirate posse out for fun

Foreign media have reported that luxury Russian ocean liners are financing private pirate hunting cruises for almost US\$6000 a day.

Unconfirmed reports say that wealthy punters are paying US\$5800 a day on armed private yachts as they patrol the most dangerous waters and wait to be attacked by raiders.

When attacked, they retaliate with grenade launchers, machine guns and rocket launchers, reports Austrian business publication, *Wirtschaftsblatt*.

Passengers pay an extra £5 a day for an AK-47 machine gun and £7 for 100 rounds of ammo and are also protected by a squad of former special force troops.

The yachts travel from Djibouti in Somalia to Mombasa in Kenya.

The ships deliberately cruise close to the coast at a speed of just five nautical miles in an attempt to attract the interest of pirates.



Union resolves seamen's plight

IN EARLY JUNE Auckland police picked up a group of men found sleeping rough on the streets in bitterly cold weather.

None of them spoke English and were taken to the Auckland Central Police Station and checked in as vagrants. After a night in the cells, and realising the group were seafarers, local Maritime Union of New Zealand (MUNZ) officials were called in to help.

The 11 men turned out to be Indonesian sailors from the Korean fishing vessel, *Shin Ji* (formerly *King Fook 88*). Police and the union officials took the seafarers to the Auckland International Seafarers Centre in Quay Street.

There they were given tea, coffee and food while they met with immigration officials, representatives of the joint venture fishing company and the local inspector for the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), Grahame McLaren.

McLaren had abandoned leading a training course in Tauranga to head to Auckland to assist in the negotiations as soon as he heard of their plight. The men resolutely refused to return to their vessel alleging bullying and poor treatment by its Korean officers, salt water showers which were limited to one per week, no hot water and no pay for four months.

The Seafarers Centre is run as a partnership by Auckland's three main seafarer welfare groups. The Sailors Society chairman, Terry Nobbs, was on duty when the group arrived and assisted in their care.

ITF Inspector McLaren subsequently visited the vessel to check out the crew's allegations. He noted that it was in a generally untidy and poorly maintained condition, with fishing gear blocking

access to the life raft on the upper deck. He found however, that the vessel appeared to be well provisioned.

At McLaren's insistence the sailors were accommodated by the charterers, Tu're Fishing Ltd of Christchurch, in a North Shore motel for two days while discussions were concluded. Arrangements were made to pay the crew and organise their return flights to Indonesia.

Under ITF supervision a little over \$50,000 was finally paid to the men, who left Auckland a couple of days after their protest had commenced, pleased to return home and obviously pleased with the resolution of their concerns. An ITF representative met the men on arrival at Jakarta to ensure they got safely to their homes.

"I was impressed by the union and ITF who showed a high level of concern for the men," said Nobbs, adding "We were pleased to help – that is what we are here for."

However, when contacted by *Professional Skipper*, Nobbs appeared to be less impressed by the New Zealand charterers of the vessel who, he said, seemed to be more concerned about getting the vessel back to sea than the concerns of the seafarers.



HOKI REMOVED FROM SUPERMARKET SHELVES

A LARGE ENGLISH supermarket chain has taken New Zealand hoki off its shelves in what could be the first salvo in a bigger battle over sustainable fishing and a fairer deal for Kiwi fishermen.

In June the Waitrose chain, which is the Queen's grocer, promoted a new film titled *The End of the Line* which draws attention to the issue of sustainable fishing and claimed that global seafood resources could collapse by 2048.

It then took New Zealand hoki off its shelves in spite of approval by Britain's Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) which had certified it as sustainable.

The snub delivered to New Zealand hoki was highlighted by Greenpeace which has been pushing the need for sustainable fishing for years. Earlier this year, Greenpeace New Zealand released its own warning document (*While Stocks Last*) which covers local fishing practices and raises serious concerns about sustainability.

The environmental lobby group came out with what it has dubbed a "red list" of New Zealand fish stocks it considers to be subject to unsustainable fishing practices and warned supermarkets not to buy them – hoki is on the list.

The full list is: Antarctic and Patagonian toothfish, arrow squid, flatfish, hake, hoki, orange roughy, deep sea dory, sharks, shrimps and prawns, snapper, swordfish and tuna.

Greenpeace says many European supermarkets are leading the charge in supporting sustainable fishing practices and have reacted directly to consumer concern



on the issue by taking unsustainable brands off their shelves.

Karli Thomas of Greenpeace New Zealand says Waitrose's actions showed that MSC certification was no guarantee of sustainability.

She says overseas retailers, with their own sustainable seafood policies, found some MSC certified species did not meet their standards due to destructive fishing methods. Other supermarkets in Europe and North America had also removed orange roughy from their shelves.

The battle over sustainability has come hard on the heels of another movie highlighting the plight of local fishermen which have had their jobs gutted by foreign fisherman serving on New Zealand chartered vessels.

The Great New Zealand Fishing Scandal was billed as "a comprehensive expose of an issue all New Zealanders should be aware of and outraged by." It screened on Sky digital's documentary channel on August 4.

Some 45 percent of New Zealand's deep sea fish are caught by foreign fishing boats and over 50 percent of all fish caught in New Zealand waters are processed overseas, mostly in Thailand and China.



MPA award

PROFESSIONAL SKIPPER magazine editor, Keith Ingram, was awarded Highly Commended in the Editor of the Year category in this year's Magazine Publishers Awards. The judges noted the depth of relationship this editor has built with readers and advertisers over a 13 year publishing period. "Passion and authority evident. Editor takes a stance and 'lives' the magazine brand personally."

Vivienne and Keith Ingram with Kath Hurley, MPA Manager, on the awards night. "The old bugger doesn't scrub up too bad either."

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