

LIVE OCEAN FOUNDATION

IMPACT REPORT 1 APRIL 2025 – 31 MARCH 2026

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Photo by: Joshua McCormack



OUR VISION

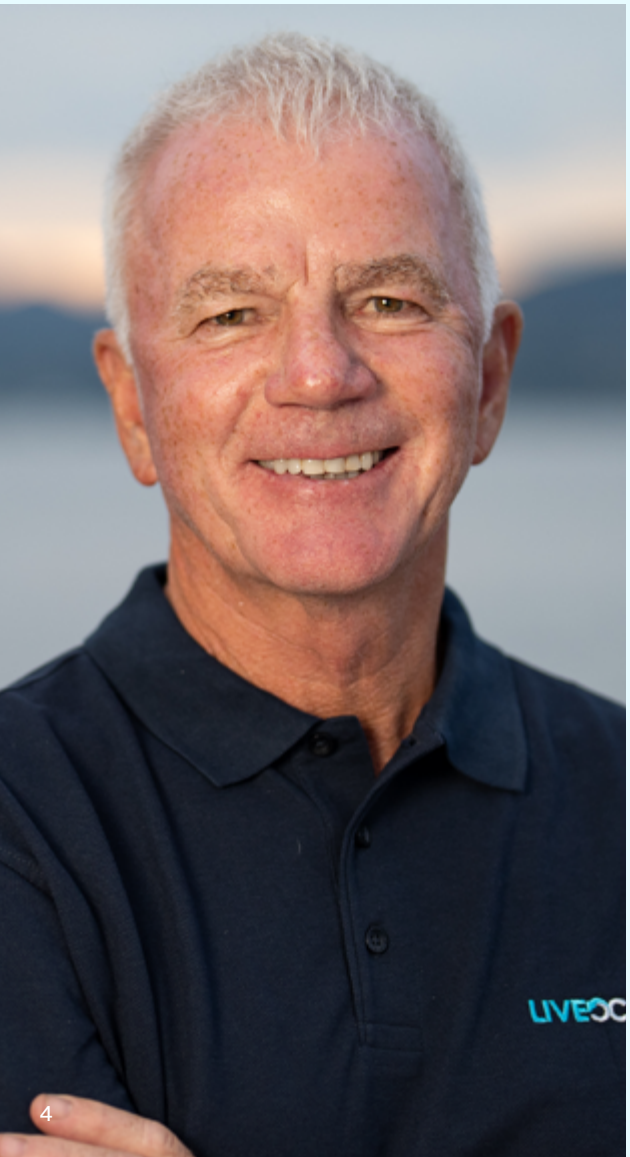
A Healthy Ocean for a Healthy Future

OUR MISSION

Scaling up Science, Innovation & Outreach for a Healthy Ocean

Photo by: Joshua McCormack

A Message from our Chair



Tēnā koutou,

Last year, I reflected that ocean protection and restoration have never mattered more, yet decision-makers weren't responding - and that Live Ocean was ready to meet that challenge. This year, I'm proud to say we have.

Our Swim4TheOcean campaign, with Jono Ridler, called for an end to bottom trawling, starting with vulnerable underwater sea mountains (seamounts). Jono's extraordinary 1,367km unassisted swim down the North Island's east coast galvanised the country; with a thousands-strong welcome in Wellington, a symbolic walk to Parliament, and meetings with senior politicians across the house. Through it, we carried the voices of 73,647 people calling on decision-makers to do better for the ocean.

Our task now is to maintain momentum, and work through what a science-led transition looks like - one that supports a modern sustainable fisheries sector.

Other highlights this year include our partnership with Te Toki Voyaging Trust and Ara Moana, connecting rangatahi with the moana through voyaging and mātauranga Māori. Often it is their first experience of the ocean, inspiring a sense of wonder that can be life-changing.

We launched a new initiative to conserve the endangered tākoketai black petrel. We are working with scientists to track the fledgling bird's 11,000km journey from Aotea Great Barrier Island to South America, to better understand the risks faced and action needed to give them a fighting chance.

And we played our part in other wins: new marine protections in Tīkapa Moana the Hauraki Gulf, and a controversial Fisheries Amendment Bill which is now parked.

I'm delighted to welcome Rosalie Nelson as Live Ocean's new Chief Executive. Rosalie brings deep not-for-profit and innovation experience and is already leading with real energy. Thank you to my fellow Trustees, our US Directors and our advisors for their commitment through a big year - and to the whole Live Ocean whānau, including our incredible supporters and donors: the momentum we've built together is real, and the ocean needs us to keep going.

Ngā mihi nui,
Stephen Jones

From our Founders



Photo by: Joshua McCormack

Kia ora Live Ocean whānau,

What a year to be proud of. Jono Ridler's Swim4TheOcean was one of the greatest individual endurance feats ever - 1,367km, 90 days, the length of the North Island. It was always about more than the swim - it was a platform for change: taking people's eyes below the surface to understand what's at stake and building ambition for an end to destructive fishing methods. 73,647 signatures on the petition, in an election year, tell us people want more from Government - and we will keep pushing for action.

At the same time, we supported the science and evidence for change. A key example of that is the groundbreaking research by Dr Caitlin Blain into kelp and carbon sequestration, yielding insights that can inform restoration, climate policy and public understanding.

Thank you to Stephen Jones for the role he's played leading our Board and the Live Ocean team this year, and a huge welcome to Rosalie Nelson as our new Chief Executive.

And to our supporters - thank you for backing us. We couldn't do any of this without you.

Ngā mihi nui,
Peter Burling + Blair Tuke



Photo by: Joshua McCormack

From our Chief Executive

Tēnā koutou,

New Zealand begins and ends with the sea. It sits at the heart of who we are; our identity, our lifestyle, climate resilience and economic wellbeing. Yet for too long it has been undervalued and overlooked.

So, it is a true privelege to join Live Ocean at such a critical time.

To me, there's real power in bringing sport, science and environment together – helping New Zealanders to think bigger, act faster and back the people and projects that will shift the dial.

The impact of Jono's Swim4TheOcean is proof of that. It has shifted New Zealand's awareness and ambition for ocean health and an end to bottom trawling. It has rallied us to demand better.

Decision makers at the highest level have taken notice. Our challenge now is turning that awareness into government action: protecting our vulnerable seamounts as a priority, then a pathway for a managed transition away from the outdated practice of bottom trawling.

Alongside this is how we help great science and bold models for change gain momentum. This is the work beautifully showcased in this impact report: how we partner, fund and tell the story of ambitious science and projects that give hope for the future of the moana.

I have been truly humbled by the belief, goodwill and support of donors and partners. You do not just cheer from the sidelines – you get out there in the game. We truly could not do this without you. Ngā mihi.

And a very personal thank you to our founders Peter and Blair, and our Board who have gone above and beyond to make me feel welcome, connected and immersed in our kaupapa. To our incredible Live Ocean team, advisors and supporters who bring so much passion, hard work and commitment - it is an honour to pick up the baton and serve this mission with you.

Ngā mihi nui,
Rosalie Nelson



Thank you

This year we've felt the strength of the incredible Live Ocean whānau - our loyal partners and supporters who share our vision.

Your commitment, trust and belief in a healthy ocean helps power everything we do. Together, we're turning ambition into action.



FLAGSHIP SUPPORTERS

AKO Foundation

BAYLEYS | Bayleys Foundation

bnz foundation

FORSYTH BARR

Whakatupu Aotearoa Foundation

Generate

MAJOR SUPPORTERS

APL WINDOW SOLUTIONS

DOYLE

Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust

The Renshaw Family

OMEGA

Lou and Iris Fisher Charitable Trust

CORE SUPPORTERS

DENTONS

EDGAR FAMILY FOUNDATION

Hugo

NuGreen Energy Solutions

ONE FRAME

patagonia

Photo by: Richard Robinson

Focus & Impact









FOCUS AREAS

Invest in the science and solutions that build climate resilience and ecosystem health	Bridge the gaps between science, public opinion and action	Protection and restoration of key species and ecosystems

IMPACT GOALS

Aotearoa New Zealand's kelp forests are thriving and valued, with a clear role in the blue carbon landscape	Get the health of the ocean on the public and political agenda	Increase marine protection and restoration in New Zealand

Action for the Ocean

* Live Ocean Foundation is committed to funding and amplifying marine science, innovation and outreach that contributes to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Impact Highlights



Photo by: Joshua McCormack

Live Ocean impact since launching in 2019

21

MARINE CONSERVATION PROJECTS SUPPORTED

$6m

DIRECTED TO THE PROJECTS WE SUPPORT

The cumulative amount directed to the projects we support has been restated for FY2024–25 to **$4.5 million.**

Highlights from the 2025-2026 year



12
NEW HPAs

True marine protection in Tīkapa Moana the Hauraki Gulf increased from 0.3% to approximately 5.9% of the Gulf's area with the passing of new legislation including 12 new High Protection Areas.



73,647
SIGNATURES

Jono Ridler's epic 1,367km ocean swim over 90 days inspired 73,647 signatures on the Live Ocean petition calling for an end bottom trawling starting with seamounts.



400+ million
REACHED THROUGH SWIM4THEOCEAN

The campaign had 36.4 million social media views, 1.27 million swim tracker views, and 416 media stories, representing a media reach of 390 million.



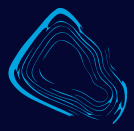
47
FLEDGLINGS TRACKED

With your support, the largest ever tracker deployment on black petrel chicks is set to provide insights on the migratory journeys of 47 fledglings.



1,442
RANGITAHI

This year Ara Moana reached 1,442 students from 17 schools across Tāmaki Makaurau and the Waikato region, strengthening connections between our communities, the moana, and ancestral voyaging mātauranga.



12
UNDERWATER SOUNDSCAPES SITES

Hydrophone monitoring in 12 sites across the Poor Knights Islands and Hauraki Gulf will help scientists detect invasive species, identify human impacts and assess ecosystem health.



11
DTAGS

11 DTAGs on Hector's dolphins suggest their range and behaviours extend beyond what current marine mammal protections assume - so existing sanctuary boundaries may need extending.



10×
CARBON UPTAKE

Healthy kelp forests draw down up to 10X more atmospheric CO_2 than degraded, kina-dominated reefs.

Ocean Champions & the Power of Sport











Live Ocean Winter Dip 2025

TAKING THE PLUNGE FOR OCEAN HEALTH

An estimated 400+ brave Kiwis took to beaches, lakes and rivers across Aotearoa and beyond - even Antarctica - over the 2025 Matariki weekend as part of the Live Ocean Winter Dip.

Watch video



Foil4TheGulf

BLACK FOILS COLLABORATION

Foil4TheGulf was created as an ambitious on-water event to reignite momentum for the Hauraki Gulf Marine Protection Bill. 200 foilers came together at Okahu Bay for New Zealand's largest ever foiling event. New protections for the Gulf were introduced in October 2025.

Watch video



Auckland SailGP Impact

ATHLETES VISIT MOTUTAPU

In February 2026 an Auckland SailGP event Impact League Project saw athletes lend a hand at Motutapu Island where a riparian planting project led by Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki is benefitting coastal ecosystems by reducing sedimentation.



Live Ocean Founders at UNOC

VOICE ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

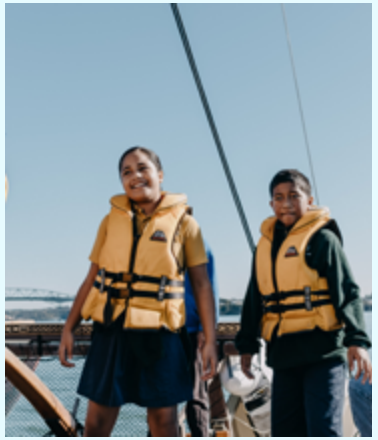
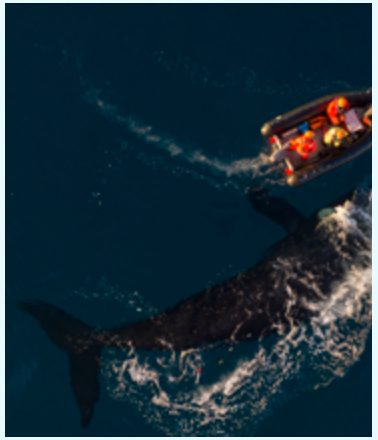
Live Ocean co-founders Peter Burling and Blair Tuke were invited to speak at multiple events at this United Nations Ocean Conference centred on ocean health hosted in Nice, France taking the Live Ocean story of impact to an international audience.

We partner with exceptional marine scientists, innovators and communicators for a healthy ocean.











Outreach



that Connects

Photo by: Joshua McCormack

Swim4TheOcean Captures the Nation



Photo by: Joshua McCormack

In partnership with Live Ocean, Jono Ridler swam the entire east coast of the North Island, igniting New Zealanders in the race for a healthy ocean, with a clear call to end bottom trawling. No wetsuit - just togs, swim cap and goggles.

Swim4TheOcean began on 5 January 2026 at Waikuku Beach, North Cape and was completed 90 days, 468 swim hours, and 1,367km later on 4 April, when Jono freestyled into Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington.

The boldest public awareness campaign from Live Ocean yet, Swim4TheOcean had 36.4 million social media views, 1.27 million swim tracker views, and 416 media stories, representing a media reach of 390 million.

Hundreds turned out on beaches and in coastal communities along the route and 36,913 digital messages of support for Jono streamed in. A crowd of thousands gathered to cheer Jono into Wellington and a walk to Parliament followed with a symbolic handing over of the Swim4TheOcean petition to our nation's decision makers.

1,367km
from North Cape to Wellington over 90 Days

36.4 million
social media views

390 million
media reach

73,647 Signatures
calling for an end to bottom trawling



Huge thank you to the many organisations and individuals that helped make Swim4TheOcean possible including:

TMNZ
APL Window Solutions
Forsyth Barr
Generate
Stabicraft
Patagonia
PAK'nSAVE
PredictWise
Manukora
Dentons
The Renshaw Family
Fran Wyborn
Whakatupu

"

What Jono did is one of the greatest endurance feats of all time, but this was always more than just a swim, it was a platform to create change. Swim4TheOcean was one of the most challenging and rewarding projects I've ever been involved in and I'm so proud of what was achieved.

Blair Tuke
Co-Founder, Live Ocean



Swim4TheOcean Driving for Change

Photo by: Joshua McCormack

Bottom trawling is a destructive commercial fishing method that drags heavy weighted nets across the seafloor, destroying habitats, biodiversity and releasing stored carbon. Seamounts, or underwater mountain features, are particularly vulnerable. New Zealand is still bottom trawling seamounts in our own waters, and the only nation still bottom trawling seamounts in the South Pacific high seas.

Jono's feat of human endurance created a platform for people to show they believe New Zealand can do better in caring for the ocean and the 2026 Live Ocean petition attracted 73,647 unique signatures. It was one of the largest ocean-related petitions presented to Parliament.

As the nation builds to a November 2026 general election and beyond, the Swim4TheOcean petition calls for the New Zealand Government to lead the change and to implement a plan to phase out bottom trawling starting with underwater mountains (seamounts).

The Petition's three-step plan;

1.

Act immediately to stop renewal or issuing of permits for NZ-owned fishing boats to bottom trawl on seamounts in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

2.

Fully protect seamounts in New Zealand waters by the end of 2027 – no bottom trawling on any seamount rising 100m or more from the sea floor. The destruction is high; the value of the catch is relatively small.

3.

Support the industry to innovate and rapidly transition away from bottom trawling entirely. This is not an anti-commercial fishing position: instead, it is about ensuring the long-term resilience, social licence, and international credibility of an industry that matters deeply to regional New Zealand.



> "I want my generation to be the generation that says not 'do you remember how good it used to be, but do you remember how bad it used to be?'

Jono Ridler

73,647

SIGNATURES

calling for an end to bottom trawling

47%

OF NEW ZEALANDERS

identified bottom trawling as the greatest threat to the marine environment in a 2026 poll, up from 37% in 2024

90%

OF NEW ZEALANDERS

support limiting bottom trawling in some form



Ara Moana

Inspiring Rangatahi to Walk with Pride



Aotearoa New Zealand's story is intrinsically linked to the moana and the many wayfinders who voyaged across the ocean.

Ara Moana, run by the Te Toki Voyaging Trust at the New Zealand Maritime Museum, engages rangatahi in meaningful experiences that showcase the brilliance of ancestral navigation, and construction methods used to create waka hourua (double hulled sailing canoes) to find new lands, while learning about ocean health and conservation along the way.

Across the year Ara Moana has reached 1,442 students from 17 schools across Tāmaki Makaurau and the Waikato region, strengthening connections between our communities, the moana, and ancestral voyaging mātauranga.

The programme connects students and their whānau with mātauranga waka, showing tamariki they descend from great navigators, engineers mathematicians and scientists - inspiring them to walk with pride into the future.

Knowledge and appreciation of our history is critical in rebuilding our connection with the ocean and by learning about those who crossed the ocean before us we can restore and protect it for future generations.

33

SESSIONS

run at the New Zealand Maritime Museum

17

SCHOOLS

from across Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland & the Waikato region

1,442

RANGATAHI ENGAGED



> "For many of the students, it was their first time into the city by the waterfront and also their first time to the Maritime Museum which was an experience in itself. But to add to that, sailing on a waka and meeting real voyagers who look and speak like them was unforgettable.

Teacher

Science



to Understand

Photo by: Joshua McCormack



Tracking the Tākoketai

Photo by: Joshua McCormack

5,000

BREEDING PAIRS REMAIN

2

BREEDING LOCATIONS REMAIN

<10%

OF THESE BIRDS HAVE EVER RETURNED HOME

1.1m

BLACK PETRELS HAVE A 1.1M WINGSPAN

47

FLEDGLINGS TRACKED

The story of the tākoketai black petrel is one of vulnerability and hope. Each year, newly fledged chicks embark on their first extraordinary migration from their home in the Hauraki Gulf to fly thousands of kilometres across the Pacific to Ecuadorian waters. Yet fewer than 10% return, and much about their journey remains a mystery.

Just 5,000 breeding pairs remain, and the tākoketai is one of our most at-risk seabirds, facing threats including fishing bycatch, predation, light pollution and habitat loss.

Protecting them is vital not only because they're unique to Aotearoa, but because as a sentinel species, their status reflects the health of the wider ocean they depend on.

Live Ocean has partnered with researchers leading a multiyear project which aims to reverse the decline of the black petrel population through migration tracking, international collaboration, and advocacy. With your support, the largest ever tracker deployment on black petrel chicks is set to provide insights on the migratory journeys of 47 fledglings.

By investing in science, storytelling, and community action, we can give these seabirds a fighting chance – protecting a vital part of Aotearoa's natural heritage and inspiring collective responsibility for the ocean that connects us all.

The project is guided by Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea and Ngāti Manuhiri as kaitiaki of these tākoketai. Huge thank you to the BNZ Foundation, the Lou and Iris Fisher Charitable Trust and the Black Foils, alongside everyone who gave through our 2025 Christmas fundraiser, for helping fund these trackers and bring this research to life.

Tākoketai tracker



> "The ultimate goal is to chart a course for recovery and protection of this on the brink species, so that we might see their return to some former nesting sites right around the North Island.

Biz Bell
Wildlife Management International



Photo by: Ed Marshall

Revealing the Underwater Lives of Hector's & Māui Dolphins



Photo by: Richard Robinson

Innovative science is uncovering the hidden lives of the world's smallest and rarest dolphins to better protect them in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Hector's and Māui dolphins are the world's smallest and rarest dolphins - taonga unique to Aotearoa New Zealand. Recognisable by their rounded dorsal fins and distinctive black, white and grey markings, these endemic species face serious threats.

Until now, most of what we knew came from boat-based daylight observations, leaving major gaps in our understanding of their underwater behaviour. DTAGs - suction-cup tagging devices that record sound, location, depth, speed and 3D movements - are changing that.

11 Hector's dolphins were tagged and Live Ocean funded data analysis published in September 2025 by University of Auckland researchers which revealed underwater acrobatics and surprising behaviours previously unknown to science. Combining dive data and echolocation soundtracks allow us to experience hidden lives beneath the surface for the first time.

Critically, the findings suggest dolphin range and behaviours in Te Koko-o-Kupe Cloudy Bay extend well beyond what current marine mammal protections assume - meaning existing sanctuary boundaries may not go far enough. This scientific knowledge is a lever for smarter conservation strategies that balance industry needs with wildlife risk.

15,000

Hector's dolphins and just ~54 Māui dolphins remain

~120m

Record-setting dives down to ~120m deep! Extraordinary for a 1.4m animal

15km

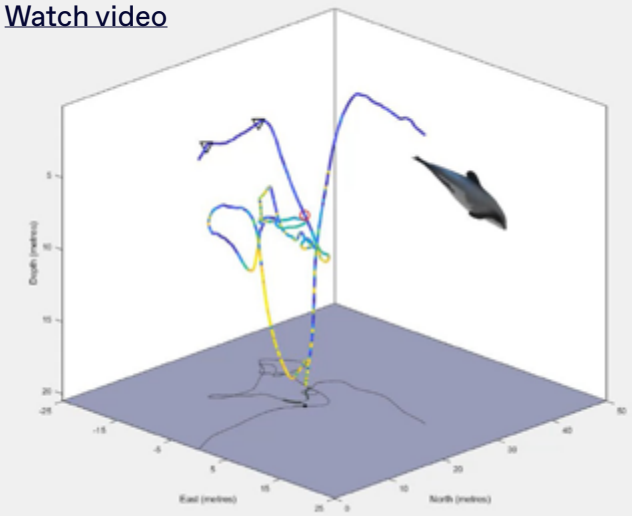
Tagged dolphins swam up to 15km offshore, well beyond current sanctuary boundaries

11

Hectors dolphins were tagged with suction cup DTAGS as part of this study



Watch video



> Despite this being a preliminary study, we can clearly see the value of the DTAG for understanding risks such as interactions with fishing gear or vessels. It's important to continue this work to better understand how to minimise the risks to the dolphins and to know how they behave in other locations.

Professor Rochelle Constantine
Waipapa Taumata Rau University of Auckland



Photo by: Joshua McCormack



The Ten-Fold Case for Restoring Kelp

Photo by: Gareth Cooke

Kelp forests are the underwater forests of our temperate oceans, playing a vital role in the ocean's natural carbon cycle - though exactly how has remained one of kelp science's biggest open questions.

After three years of world-leading fieldwork and laboratory research, Dr Caitlin Blain is closer to synthesising an answer.

Her research at the University of Auckland's Leigh Marine Centre is building the first robust picture of kelp carbon sequestration in Aotearoa - evidence that could reshape how kelp restoration is valued, for climate resilience as much as biodiversity.

Findings show healthy kelp forests draw down significantly more atmospheric CO_2 than degraded, kina-dominated reefs, with carbon uptake falling as much as ten-fold once kelp is lost.

There's also new evidence suggesting around 23% of that carbon is exported offshore, some of it reaching deep-ocean environments or seafloor sediment.

The research also points to the value of restoration - removing sea urchins can rapidly boost kelp growth and carbon capture, while long-term protection supports Aotearoa's climate resilience and coastal management.

With fieldwork now complete, these findings will be synthesised into New Zealand's first national study into how much carbon our kelp forests really store, as the evidence for future policy and climate models.

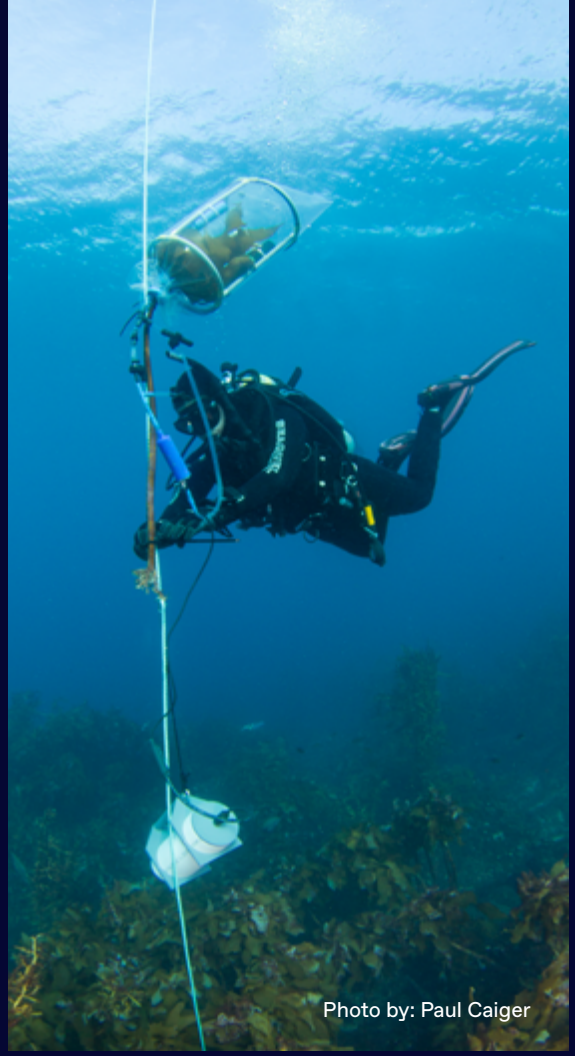


Photo by: Paul Caiger

3 Years

of fieldwork and lab research

10×

healthy kelp forests draw down up to 10X more atmospheric CO_2 than degraded, kina-dominated reefs

15-23%

of carbon fixed by kelp may be exported offshore, some of it reaching deep-ocean environments or seafloor sediment

$8m

reforestation of Hauraki Gulf reefs could be worth nearly $8 million in carbon storage



> “Carbon can support marine food webs and nutrient cycling, be transported into other ecosystems, or contribute to long-term storage. Understanding those pathways is critical if we want to understand the true value of kelp forests, and how protecting and restoring them can deliver the greatest benefits.

Dr Caitlin Blain
Waipapa Taumata Rau University of Auckland



Urchins & Underwater Soundscapes

Photo by: Arie Spyksma

The Underwater Soundscapes Project is pioneering acoustic monitoring as a tool for protecting Aotearoa New Zealand's marine ecosystems. Together, Dr Louise Wilson and PhD student Zoe Starkey from the University of Auckland are creating new tools that use soundscapes to detect invasive species, identify human impacts and assess ecosystem health.

Because sea urchins make sound while grazing, researchers are testing whether soundscapes can detect the invasive urchin *Centrostephanus rodgersii*, track habitat recovery after urchin removal, and measure biodiversity.

Recordings from Tawhiti Rahi the Poor Knights Islands and Tīkapa Moana the Hauraki Gulf's new High Protection Areas are revealing daily, seasonal, and lunar patterns in reef sound.

Alongside the science, Live Ocean project partners Professor Craig Radford and Dr Louise Wilson are advocating for marine protected area design that addresses noise and other stressors (not just fishing), reshaping how ocean health is monitored and protected.

12 sites

monitored with hydrophones across the Poor Knights Islands and Hauraki Gulf

~2 years

of continuous acoustic recordings from urchin-removal and control sites at Tawhiti Rahi (March 2025–June 2026)

600 – 3000 Hz

the daily burst of reef sound detected at every site around sunrise and sunset

> “Your funding has enabled us to advance innovative acoustic approaches for monitoring habitat diversity and to champion the inclusion of soundscapes in marine reserve design and policy, helping us better understand and protect the rich marine ecosystems that define Aotearoa New Zealand. This investment strengthens both our science and our shared commitment to healthier oceans.

Professor Craig Radford
Institute of Marine Science

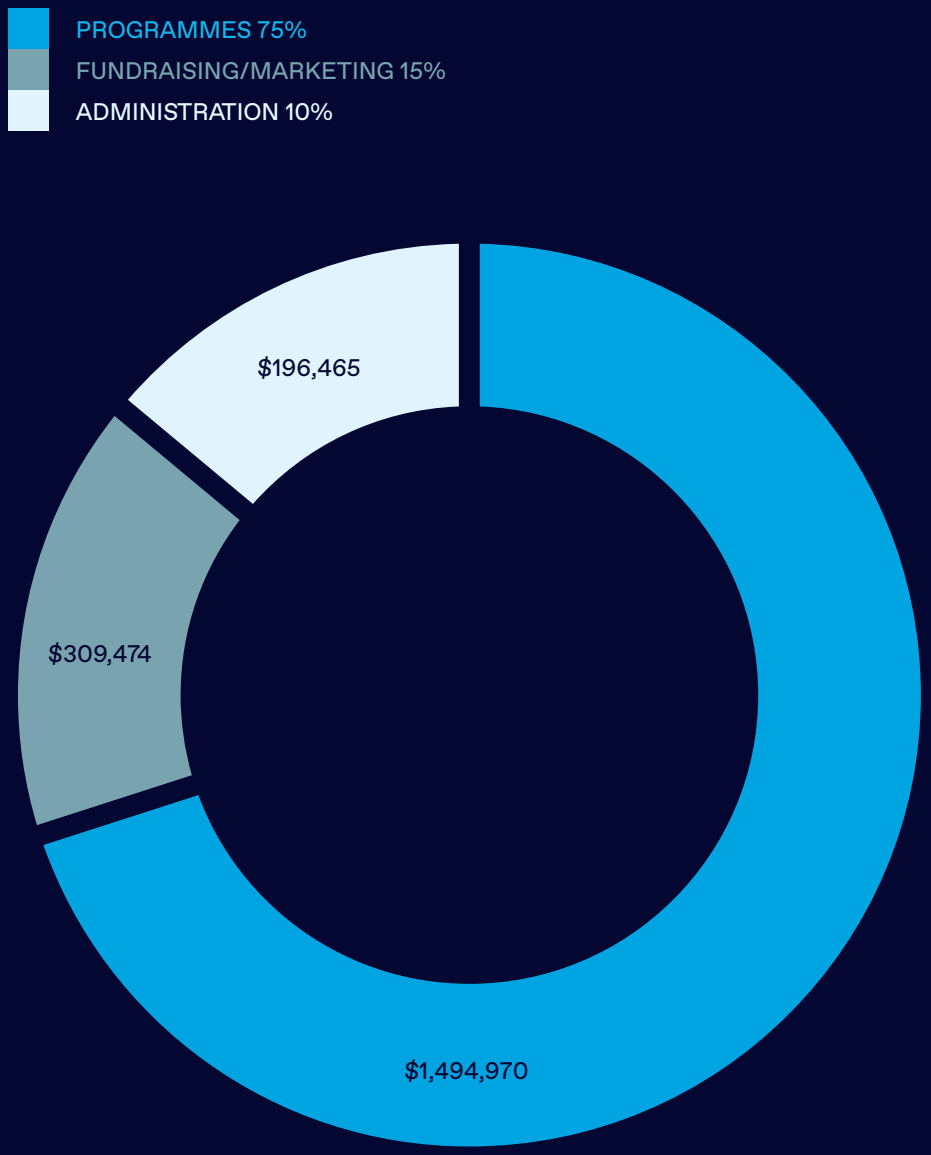


Photo by: Paul Caiger

The Numbers

Consolidated Financials 2025-26

	FY 2025-26	FY 2024-25
TOTAL REVENUE	$ 1,970,346	$ 1,458,510
EXPENSES:		
PROGRAMME	$ 1,494,970	$ 960,466
FUNDRAISING/MARKETING	$ 309,474	$ 222,086
ADMINISTRATION	$ 196,465	$ 185,408
TOTAL EXPENSES	$ 2,000,909	$ 1,367,960
NET DEFICIT	($ 30,563)	$ 90,550
TOTAL ASSETS	$ 828,976	$ 787,014
TOTAL LIABILITIES	$ 203,979	$ 130,862
NET ASSETS	$ 624,997	$ 656,152



Consolidated financials for Live Ocean (New Zealand) and Live Ocean (USA) for 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026. Full audited financials for Live Ocean Charitable Trust Group (NZ) are available on our website. Live Ocean USA form 990s submitted to the US Internal Revenue Service.



LIVEOCEAN

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Photo by: Joshua McCormack