



TE IPUKAREA SOCIETY

*Caring for our Environment
Taporoporo i to tatou Ao Rangi*



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Who is Te Ipukarea Society Inc.?

Te Ipukarea translates as “our heritage”. We are a Cook Islands environmental NGO (non-government organisation) formed to help look after our heritage. We were the very first Cook Islands environmental NGO, registered as an Incorporated Society on 12th June 1996.

Our philosophy is that we do not own our land and marine resources but borrow from future generations, and need to return them in good condition. We desire a sustainable, healthy and beautiful environment. We are members of IUCN and Birdlife International. Among our staff and membership we have well respected scientists and active campaigners for environmental sustainability. Te Ipukarea Society is managed by a voluntary committee who are elected by members at our Annual General Meeting, as per our constitution. Paid staff and volunteers attend to the day-to-day running of the Society.

What does Te Ipukarea Society do?

Te Ipukarea Society encourages innovative, proactive and positive outcomes to environmental problems, by working with individuals, community organisations, private sector and government. We provide leadership on key environmental issues and a voice for our community. We incorporate the connection between environmental sustainability and social and economic justice. We believe individuals must avoid actions that negatively impact our plants, animals, current and future generations. We coordinate important local and nation-wide campaigns on a broad range of environmental issues in the Cook Islands. We also implement environmental projects and lobby Government.

We have 5 Key Focal Areas:

- **BIODIVERSITY**—Eg Invasive species eradications, native bird surveys and monitoring, advocating conservation efforts for both terrestrial and marine ecosystems.
- **CLIMATE CHANGE**—Eg Promoting nature-based adaptation to climate change; Educational programmes amongst schools across the Cook Islands.
- **ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**—Eg Raising awareness on the potential impacts of deep sea mining, overfishing, commenting on Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) which threaten wetlands and coastal areas, promoting a sustainable tourism industry.
- **WASTE**—Eg Advocating the benefits of compost bins and worm farms which we provide to local communities; promoting the use of re-useable and biodegradable packaging and nappies; awareness raising documentaries and short clips.
- **YOUTH**—Eg School presentations on various environmental issues, youth science camps, environmental competitions and training on environmental monitoring. Annual internship opportunities through the Dame Margaret Karika Internship Award.

Some current projects (2020)

- **Mana Tiaki Eco-Certification** initiative to encourage an environmentally sustainable tourism industry by promoting a ‘green’ accreditation scheme.
- **Creating Positive Behavioural Change** in community and young people’s attitudes towards waste management on the islands of Mauke and Mangaia.

- **Rent a Plate project** at Punanga nui markets, supporting the Cook Islands Solid Waste Management Committee.
- **Maine Mura** promoting ecologically safe sanitary products for Cook Islands women, to reduce waste.
- **Environmental Photography for Youth** - teaching nature photography skills amongst youth to activate and communicate environmental awareness.
- **Nature based coastal protection** - pilot study in Avana, Rarotonga
- **Seabird Research** – installing acoustic bird recorders in the Southern Cook Islands to help identify any rare species still present in the Cook Islands.
- **Sea and Earth Advocates Camp** for young Cook Islands students to learn and be inspired about future careers in science and conservation, learning from both local and international experts.
- **Suwarrow Rat Eradication and Sea Bird Surveys** on our national park ‘Suwarrow’ a regionally important seabird breeding atoll. Supported by BirdLife International and in conjunction with the National Environment Service.
- **Biodiversity conservation** through invasive species control
- **Key biodiversity area monitoring**
- **National Waste Management Project** – Providing compost bins and worm farms to all schools nationwide, with ongoing training. Also working with the food and beverage industry to promote biodegradable food containers and reducing plastic water bottle use.

- **Sustainable Fisheries Campaign** – focusing on the impacts of unsustainable harvesting methods such as using Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs) by purse seine vessels, because of threats to our pelagic ecosystems and particularly vulnerable bycatch species such as turtles, sharks, and bigeye tuna.
- **Mana Tiaki donation scheme** – Visitors are encouraged to “give back” to the Cook Islands, by protecting a little paradise. We have Mana Tiaki donation boxes around Rarotonga and participating accommodations can invite guests to donate towards our current environmental projects on checkout.

Some Past Projects

- **Marae Moana 50nm Exclusion Zones** 2017 public awareness campaign for a 50 nautical mile exclusion zone for foreign fishing around each island in our Cook Islands Marine Park. This was compared to the more lenient 24nm exclusion zone intended by Government. The 50nm zones were legislated in March 2017 and will have conservation benefit for pelagic fish species such as tuna, and protect foraging zones for seabirds, as well as benefit local fishers.
- **Mitiaro Maroro Tu Documentary** 2016 documentary produced on the flying fish Maroro, which spawn in the waters off Mitiaro. The documentary describes the fish biology, the traditional fishing methods used and the many traditions and beliefs associated with this sustainable fishery.
- **Tangaeo Mangaia Kingfisher project** 2014-2016 project with the Mangaian community to conserve their endemic bird, the Tanga’eo, found nowhere else in the world. A management plan and film documentary were produced.

What can we do for our environment’s sake?

Quite simply it is Think before you act!

- Practice ‘Refuse, Reuse, Reduce, Recycle’.
- Take your own reusable cloth bags, cardboard cartons or other containers for shopping and takeaways.
- Purchase fruits and vegetables that are not pre-packaged in containers and plastics. Also consider buying food and products in bulk.
- Buy sustainably caught fish – Look for low impact catch methods like hook & line caught fish not purse seine or bottom trawling.
- Support local fishers and growers.
- Use coral reef friendly sunscreens without Oxybenzone and Octinoxate ingredients.
- Avoid filling in wetlands and if you need to clear land then seek advice on preventing soil erosion, and save useful trees first.
- Conduct an EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) as you plan a project—to assess physical and social impacts.
- Support and participate in local and worldwide campaigns and voice your concerns.

You can join Te Ipukarea Society as an individual or corporate member, or support us through our **Givealittle** page.

*You can
be the change
you wish to see
in the world*