



Te Pānui Kaitiaki o Ata Whenua

In this issue, we reflect on the cruise vessels that were turned away from Fiordland over summer, give an update on the fisheries review, and talk about recreational fishing reporting with a special focus on southern bluefin tuna. We profile Ali Ballantine, who has served as a Guardian since 2018.

We also provide an important update on *Undaria* control in Fiordland as the Jobs for Nature Programme reaches a conclusion.

As always, we welcome your thoughts and feedback.

Who are the ‘Guardians’?

The Fiordland Marine Guardians are an advisory committee that works with government agencies and their Ministers to manage the Fiordland Marine Area (FMA). The Guardians first met Ali Ballantine when she chaired Environment Southland. Her knowledge and understanding of resource management policy and processes has been instrumental to the Guardians as Fiordland faces growing visitor pressure.

I began by asking Ali about her connection to the sea.

I grew up in the Waikato: Mum and Dad and us five girls. We'd go on these long holidays in our caravan beside the sea. Our days were spent swimming and exploring and collecting pipi. It was fantastic.

When did you first visit Fiordland?

I was invited to crew on a cray boat within two weeks of moving to Te Anau to work as a physiotherapist, in 1979. I remember flying in with Hannibal, over the tops, and landing on the Ranganui. After that week I was seriously tempted to give up the physio work and go fishing.

Do you recall your first impressions of the place?

It was the isolation, the magnificent scenery, the silence... It just felt unspoiled.

Thinking about the Guardians' vision that was set back in the 90s: That the fishery and wider fishing experience be maintained or improved for future generations to use and enjoy...Do you still think this is relevant?

Yes I do, but it feels like it is getting harder to achieve. Fiordland seems to be facing so many more issues these days and I am concerned that it is such a slow process to make regulatory changes. We need better systems so we can adapt quickly and respond to changes in Fiordland so we can be more effective in managing the area.

What experience do you have with coastal management that led you to becoming a Guardian?

I was a regional councillor in Southland for 15 years and sat on the Planning Committee. That role involved developing plans under the Resource Management Act and being on hearing panels for resource consents. When we were working on the Southland Regional Coastal Plan in the early 2000s we took the decision-makers into Fiordland so they could get a better understanding of the place and the challenges that come with its isolation and size.

What parts of the Guardians work do you put particular focus on?

I contribute a lot on the planning and resource consent side of things. I really enjoy working with the Marine Biosecurity sub-committee, particularly the collaboration with the agencies. We're focused on strengthening connections



Guardian Ali Ballantine (right) and former Guardian Kerri-Anne Edge Hill (left) warm their hands during a tour of an engine room in Piopiotahi/Milford Sound.

with other areas to build more of a “bottom of the south” approach to marine biosecurity. We need to make sure it's easy for people to comply with the rules, as the consequences of non-compliance (marine pests coming into the area) are dire.

What do you see as the biggest challenge facing the Fiordland Marine Area?

There's huge growth in visitors to the FMA, and that means more pressure on the fisheries, the biosecurity risks are higher, and the feeling of wilderness is eroding in places. The nub of the issue is that people can only see their individual activities. They're just one vessel in that place, having a fish. It's difficult for people to comprehend the collective number of visitors and activity and the impacts of that. So that's a challenge for the Guardians – addressing and managing the cumulative effects of people's activities in the fiords.

The other big challenge is climate change and the consequences of the marine heat waves Fiordland is experiencing. The marine ecosystem is changing in response and we need to think about what the future is likely to bring and what, if anything, the Guardians can do about it.

What's one thing about the Guardians that you'd like people to know?

It would have to be the importance and effectiveness of our meetings. We meet with representatives from all the agencies, and everybody learns about the range of issues and initiatives that are on the go. It's a fantastic model that cuts through the bureaucracy and that's because we build relationships and understanding and engage in a level of discussion and collaboration that simply wouldn't happen if we weren't all in the room together.

Finally – what's your favourite kai moana?

Freshly cooked pipis steamed open in a frying pan and dipped in vinegar.

Managing the biosecurity risks of cruise ships



Did you hear about the poor souls that had their cruise plans through Fiordland curtailed and instead spent their holiday slopping around offshore whilst the ships' hulls were cleaned? Despite the inconvenience to a few, the Guardians were pleased to see New Zealand's border measures working to protect Fiordland. We asked Biosecurity New Zealand to comment.

Over the summer there were numerous media reports around the world on the cruise season in New Zealand, as several cruise itineraries were interrupted and, in few cases, New Zealand ports of call were cancelled. Reports indicated that New Zealand had changed its requirements and how they were enforced leading to vessels suddenly being non-compliant. We would like to take this opportunity to confirm that our biofouling requirements have not changed nor have we changed how we enforce them.

There were several factors that led to some of the non-compliance over the cruise season. Border closures caused the previous two seasons to be cancelled, which led to long lay-ups during the pandemic and change in personnel. In addition, the cruise lines faced a short turn-around following confirmation of our maritime border re-opening and the cruise season beginning. This created a logistical challenge of re-joining the Australia-New Zealand loop and lining up biofouling service providers along the way to ensure their hulls were prepared.

In some cases, communicating to service providers the high standard required of cruise vessels aiming to go to sensitive areas proved to be difficult. This resulted in cases where evidence was presented which was not of a quality to allow for accurate risk assessment, or biofouling was not removed to a level which complied with the thresholds.

New Zealand's biofouling requirements within the Craft Risk Management Standard for Biofouling apply to all commercial vessels, including cruise vessels, and have not changed since 2018. Often cruise vessels will need to meet the 'long stay' category because they visit places that are not approved ports of first arrival or protected areas, such as Fiordland.

Biosecurity New Zealand is continuing to work closely with the cruise lines and service providers to remedy these issues. We will continue to support both cruise lines and the underwater service provider industry to prepare them for the next cruise season at the end of this year. Ultimately, prevention of marine pest incursions is a top priority for Biosecurity New Zealand. We know first-hand the ecological and economic consequences of marine pest incursions, hence our focus on incursion prevention. If you want to know more, feel free to contact us at: standards@mpi.govt.nz.

Do you have a current Clean Vessel Pass?

Applying for a clean vessel pass is a simple process that can be completed online at www.es.govt.nz/fmpp or by calling Environment Southland on 0800 76 88 45 to receive a hard copy form.

Fiordland fishing rules review: Progress update

After much activity last year, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the review of fisheries sustainability in the fiords had lost momentum. Rest assured that behind the scenes we have been carefully considering the feedback from public consultation and revising our advice to Government. Our final recommendations are now with the Minister of Oceans and Fisheries, and we eagerly await her decision.

During August and September 2022, Fisheries New Zealand undertook consultation on the Fiordland Marine Guardians' proposed changes to amateur fishing regulations in the Fiordland Marine Area. There was a good level of turnout at the public

meetings that were held throughout Otago and Southland, and the Guardians valued the opportunity to discuss the sustainability issues and proposed mitigations with those that turned up.

We would like to thank those who put their thoughts on paper and made submissions on the proposal. There were several themes and messages that were expressed loud and clear. The Guardians have taken the feedback onboard and modified our final recommendations to the Minister. We are confident that the final suite of recommendations will result in a better outcome for Fiordland's fisheries. The recommendations are currently being reviewed by the Hon.



Rachel Brooking and we look forward to sharing more soon once decisions have been made.



Fiordland user's guide

Have you got your copy of the 2022 edition of Beneath the Reflections – A user's guide to the Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Area? Our guide is packed with information, stunning images, and essential updates. We encourage people to replace their 2021 (or earlier) copy to ensure you are up to date with all the rules and regulations and new navigational hazards. If you operate a vessel within the FMA you can request a free copy of the latest user's guide when you renew your clean vessel pass.

The guide is also available online at www.fmg.or.nz, or you can purchase a hard copy from DOC's Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre: Lakefront Drive, Te Anau 9600, Phone: +64 03 249 7924, Email: fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz. Printed copies cost \$25.00 if collected from the visitor centre. Inquire about postage rates within New Zealand and overseas.



Come and see us

The Guardians will be at the Southland Boat Show, in the ILT Stadium in Invercargill over the weekend of 12 and 13 August. We're keen to discuss issues relating to the Fiordland Marine Area and provide practical advice about visiting the area. You'll find us near the Harbourmaster vessel *Kewa*.

Recreational fishing reporting App good to go

The Guardians have received a clear message from recreational fishers: they want reporting of catch to be part in parcel of fishing in Fiordland. We share this thinking and are strongly advocating to Government for mandatory reporting of recreational catch, as we know all too well that we can't manage what we don't measure. We're pleased to let you know that Fish Mainland have delivered, with the launch of the app Mainland Catch. Randall Bess shares the details.

Fish Mainland Inc. recognises the first step towards improving the management of recreational fishing is better data on catch and effort. The best source of data is recreational fishers.

South Island fishers can collect their data through a mobile app named Mainland Catch. Mainland Catch is an intuitive and simple app designed by Fish Mainland. A single person can record data for all members of a fishing group.

Your personal data is confidential and will not be made public. Data will only be available to the public and to Fisheries New Zealand in aggregated form (eg, regional). Data will be stored with the app developer, the Nelson-based Plink Software Ltd.

The data will provide a basis for action or a recommendation to improve fisheries that are important to recreational fishers. Better data may also provide a basis for reducing environment impacts.

We encourage all fishers to do their part in sustaining fisheries by fishing within set limits and using Mainland Catch to record their catch and fishing effort data.



Mainland Catch is intuitive and easy to use. And importantly, the app works out of mobile phone coverage – you just need to make sure you have downloaded it before you head into Fiordland.

Mainland Catch was first developed for the South Island blue cod fishery. We are working with Plink Software to expand Mainland Catch to include other fisheries that are important to South Island recreational fishers, including pāua and crayfish.

Our website has links to download Mainland Catch and videos on how easy it is to use: <https://www.fishmainland.nz/mainland-catch-app>.

Our website also steps you through becoming a Fish Mainland member and outlines ways that you can support our work.

About Fish Mainland Inc.

In 2019, a group of South Islanders explored the establishment of an organisation to represent their marine recreational fishing interests to Government and others. This exploration led to Fish Mainland being incorporated in 2020 and gaining charitable status in 2021. Our charitable purpose is to coordinate and help the South Island marine fishing community restore and sustain fisheries resources for the benefit of all who fish in the waters of the South Island.



www.fishmainland.nz

Reporting catch of southern bluefin tuna



Warm waters over the summer and autumn resulted in pelagic fish – tuna, kahawai, kingfish and even swordfish – schooling around Fiordland’s coast. In response people and boats have been schooling too... coming to Fiordland in record numbers to get amongst the action. We asked John Holdsworth from Blue Water Marine Research to tell us more about southern bluefin tuna and how they are managed and monitored.

Southern bluefin tuna (SBT) stocks are recovering after being overfished for many years. Cold water tuna are highly valued for their high fat content, especially in Japanese food such as sashimi. They are mostly found in the southern Indian Ocean and southwestern Pacific Ocean between latitudes of 30 to 50 degrees south. They have been targeted by surface long line vessels off the west coast of the South Island since the 1960s and by recreational fishers out of Fiordland since the 1970s.

New Zealand is a founding member of the Commission for Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna, an intergovernmental organisation responsible for the conservation and management of SBT. Member countries receive an allocation from the global total allowable catch and need to report all sources of SBT fishing mortality each year, including recreational catch.

A recreational allowance of eight tonnes was used to cover the likely SBT catch for many years. Fisheries New Zealand has funded an annual survey of the recreational catch of SBT since 2018 to capture the significant fishery that developed the year before off Cape Runaway to East Cape. This project also reported overall catch from amateur fishing charter vessels, including those operating out of Fiordland. Little was known about the catch from private vessels in southwest New Zealand

and a phone survey of boat owners was initiated in 2020. This is a voluntary survey and each year the number of respondents has increased following referrals from cooperating skippers.

In the first few months of 2022 large numbers of small SBT, about 12 kg, were caught for the first time from inshore boats fishing with baits and boats trolling for albacore off the west coast of the North Island. This year schools of SBT arrived off Fiordland and Jackson Bay in January, possibly the same cohort of fish a year older, with some larger fish as well. Calm weather and good fishing encouraged increased fishing effort. Blue Water Marine Research has set up an online catch reporting form at www.fishcatch.co.nz. We encourage fishers to report their SBT landed or released catch to help complete the picture of this developing fishery. Leave a note in the comments box if you would like to add your name to the survey list.

The South Island recreational SBT catch in 2021–22 was estimated at five tonnes and the total New Zealand recreational catch was 50.5 tonnes. The science working group has agreed to add an allowance for unaccounted catch which gives a total recreational landed catch estimate of 60 tonnes. The New Zealand national SBT allocation from the tuna commission of 1,047 tonnes was under caught by about 100 tonnes in 2021–22.

An Australian study using pop-up archival transmitting tags recorded relatively high survival rates (83 per cent) of SBT caught and released by recreational fishers. Fish caught on treble hooks or not hooked in the jaw accounted for most of the fish that died. Fish under 30 kg can be carefully brought on board for hook removal. It is best not to remove larger fish from the water before release. There are fish handling tips and much more on the Tuna Champions website <https://tunachampions.com.au/skill-up/>.

Undaria: an update from the front line

The Ata Whenua Fiordland *Undaria* Control Programme aims to contain *Undaria* within the Te Puaitaha/Breaksea Sound – Tamatea/Dusky Sound complex and eliminate it from Taiari/Chalky Inlet. Environment Southland oversees the programme, which received two years of funding through Jobs for Nature – Mahi mō te Taiao in 2021.

Environment Southland, the Department of Conservation, and Biosecurity New Zealand, with support from the Fiordland Marine Guardians, have been working together on an intensive control programme for *Undaria* in Te Puaitaha/Breaksea Sound since 2010. In 2021, Jobs for Nature funding provided an opportunity for a refreshed approach with the large-scale removal of *Undaria*. This enabled a local dive team to be trained up and dedicated to the programme.

In November 2022, mature *Undaria* plants were discovered on the south side of Tau Moana/Resolution Island in Tamatea/Dusky Sound. The dive team was rapidly redeployed to survey how far it had spread.

The main incursion in Duck Cove was found to span over two kilometres. Divers also observed small numbers of mature plants at multiple locations within the fiord. Biomass removal continued across all 'new' infestation sites, and the team surveyed high-risk areas from Rakituma/Preservation Inlet north to Tai Te Timu/Caswell Sound, with no additional new finds of either *Undaria* or other marine pests.

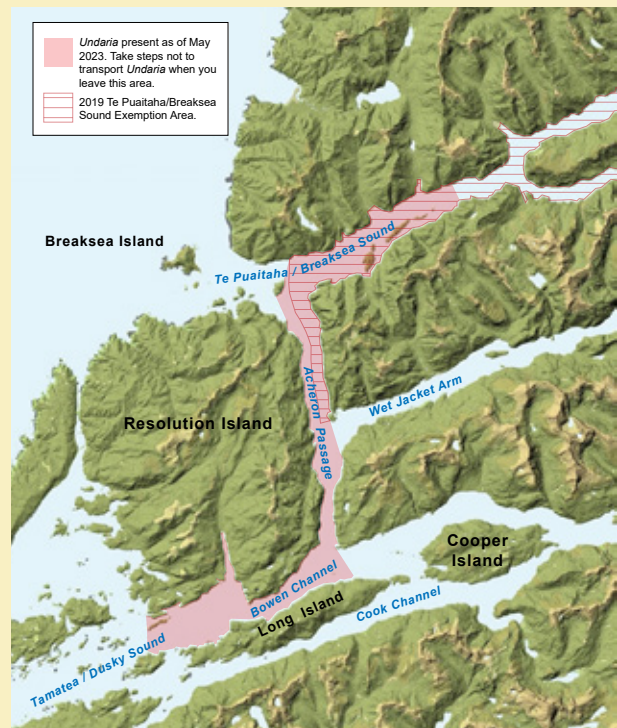
Significant follow-up effort will be required in the main infestation areas to slow its spread. With Jobs for Nature funding ending, the team are undertaking monthly containment and surveillance trips through winter.

What can you do to help?

Always keep a look out for *Undaria* and other new marine pests within the Fiordland Marine Area and report anything unusual on 0800 76 88 45.

If you are operating a vessel in the pink zone (Te Puaitaha/Breaksea Sound to Tamatea/Dusky Sound), ensure your vessel and equipment are free of *Undaria* before you leave the area. This includes your anchor, chain and onboard seawater. Visit Environment Southland's website for information on the existing Te Puaitaha/Breaksea Sound *Undaria* Exemption Area.

All vessels operating in the FMA must hold a valid clean vessel pass and comply with the clean vessel, clean gear, and residual seawater standards.



Undaria pinnatifida is a threat to Fiordland's marine environment with its ability to establish and outcompete native marine species quickly. Pests like *Undaria* and other fouling species can hitchhike to new locations on dirty boat bottoms and marine equipment. All vessels should check, clean and dry mooring lines and buoys, fishing or dive gear, kayaks, and other recreational equipment before travelling to Fiordland.

The Ata Whenua Fiordland *Undaria* Control Programme has trained and employed 15 divers to scientific diving standards since 2021. Nine divers are undertaking winter surveillance trips and are available for incursion responses.

Last season the team worked on a pilot project assessing a tool to suppress *Undaria* in Te Puaitaha/Breaksea Sound (funded by Biosecurity NZ and delivered by Pure Salt Charters), undertook numerous compliance and surveillance trips around the region, responded to two significant marine pest incursion events in the coastal waters of Rakiura Stewart Island and contributed significant hours to the global e-bird database for Fiordland.



Keeping in touch

As always, the Guardians will work hard to facilitate community-led, proactive approaches that are informed by the best scientific information and knowledge available. We place a high value on the experiences and understanding of the Fiordland community and encourage you to share your thoughts with us. For more information about the proposed changes to amateur fishing regulations in the FMA visit the 'news' section at fmg.org.nz.

FMG-AGENCY MEETINGS 2023

NEXT MEETING

Monday 14 August 2023,
Invercargill Public Library

For more information visit
www.fmg.org.nz

All welcome

Our quarterly FMG agency meetings are open to the public and agenda items for discussion at these meetings can be brought to the Guardians. The agenda is set three weeks in advance of a meeting.

Te Pānui Kaitiaki o Ata Whenua is available online at fmg.org.nz or via email.

In the interest of sustainability, we encourage people to opt for an electronic copy. Please email info@fmg.org.nz to update your contact details or to switch to electronic communication with the Guardians.



Te Rūnanga o NGĀI TAHU



Biosecurity New Zealand
Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



environment SOUTHLAND
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Taiāo Tonga



Fisheries New Zealand
Tini a Tangaroa



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiāo



Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Thank you!

The Guardians would like to thank the following individuals and businesses for the photographs used in this issue: Crispin Middleton, Seacology NZ and the Southern Fiordland Initiative, Rebecca McLeod, Braaksma Family and Blue Water Marine Research.