



# Annual Report 2021





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## WELCOME TO THE SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TAHR FOUNDATION.

Please take this opportunity to read about the work the Foundation management team have been doing on behalf of tahr hunters. This has been a team effort with all the members contributing their time and energy over the past 12 months. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone on the committee for all your help not only with the report but also with all the meetings, emails and phone calls that go into a years' worth of advocating for tahr and tahr hunters.

We are in the very early stages of developing some hunter lead management of tahr in conjunction with the GAC and Doc. This is a good place to be right now, this is something we have aspired to be able to do. It is not something to be taken lightly however so we will be wanting to take small steps and learn to walk before we run. There will be opportunities for hunters to get involved and assist us further down the track so read what's been happening and give some consideration to being part of what comes next. Be patient too, good things take time and its early days, I encourage you to have a read and see what you think.

*Snow Hewetson Chair NZTF*

### THE NZ TAHR FOUNDATION

#### Management Committee

Chairman: Snow Hewetson  
 Vice Chairman: Markus Pinney  
 Secretary: Terry Pierson  
 Treasurer: Sheene Ottmann

#### Committee Members

James Cagney, NZ Professional Hunting Guides Association  
 Gerald Telford, NZ Professional Hunting Guides Association  
 David Keen, NZ Deerstalkers Association  
 Kaylyn Pinney, NZ Chapter of Safari Club International  
 Greg Duley, Unaffiliated recreational hunters' representative  
 Joseph Peter, Co-opted  
 Willie Duley, Co-opted

### TAHR FOUNDATION AGM 15 OCTOBER 2021

Tahr Foundation management committee nominations.

To the following positions,

Chairperson – Kaylyn Pinney.

Vice Chairperson – David Keen.

Secretary – Terry Pierson.

Treasurer – Sheene Ottmann

General Committee – Snow Hewetson.

**We will be taking nominations at the AGM.**

*Signed Snow Hewetson Outgoing Chairperson.*



## Presidents Report

WHENEVER I START ONE OF THESE REPORTS I ALWAYS REFLECT ON WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE GOT HERE, THIS TIME I DON'T WISH TO DWELL TOO MUCH ON THE PAST AND WANT TO FOCUS MORE ON WHAT THE FUTURE COULD LOOK LIKE.

In 2016 we formed the Tahr Foundation with a primary goal of having the tahr recognised as a Herd of Special Interest under the game animal council act. The Department of Conservation were very much on board with that at the time and we were all working through the process of formalising a proposal to have tahr designated a Herd of Special Interest.

Back then we were confident that with some time and effort we would achieve that goal in the not-too-distant future, unfortunately that was all about to change.

What changed and why did it change? It was all political, a change in government and a change in minister tipped everything that had previously been an amicable relationship into one of direct conflict over the future of tahr and tahr hunting. We all know only too well how that played out; it didn't need to be like that.

Today as I sit here and write this report it is a relief to be able to say we can now move on from that with a renewed if somewhat cautious optimism that things have changed for the better. I encourage you to read all this annual report, it outlines and showcases some of the initiatives and projects that the Tahr Foundation is undertaking in conjunction with the Game Animal Council and the Department of Conservation.

Kaylyn Pinneys report on her time with Doc's vegetation monitoring team in the Landsborough is a fine example of this, Kaylyn puts it very nicely into context when she says, "for ecologists the sight of dead plants is as confronting as the sight of culled tahr is to a hunter". This type of collaborative approach where we can learn from each other about tahr and the vegetation they impact on and to also understand each other's perspective can only be a good thing, it can only lead to a more enlightened view of the challenges of managing tahr for both parties.

This is one example of how things have moved on, the challenge will be to keep this going, this could have been happening for the last 30 odd years, it is exactly the sort of approach that is allowed for in the 1993 Tahr Control Plan. The reason these initiatives failed over time is down to politics, changes in government leading to changes in policy and changes in funding all of which puts this type of approach at risk sooner or later.

It will be up to us to keep future political agenda out of this as best as we can and the only way to do that is to be more involved and producing more positive outcomes that stand up to the test of public scrutiny, we need to win over the general public by being the lead in preservation of the environments that our cherished tahr inhabit. That is a huge challenge, are we up to that? I believe we are, but only if we work collaboratively with the Game Animal Council and the Department of Conservation, for that to happen we need the same commitment from them to help us achieve that. It is a given that the Game Animal Council are there for us and that will not change with a change of government, so I have no concerns there. History has taught us however that Doc can be captured by elements opposed to introduced species existing on conservation estate, we need to be awake to that and stay ahead of any such attack in the future.



How do we do that? we must prove we are invested in the conservation of the natural ecology and our native species first and foremost and then that tahr can live among those if managed responsibly, in so doing we are enabling the conservation of all these things. Conservation by its very definition means preservation, protection, maintenance, safe keeping, it does not place a priority over one living thing to the detriment of another.

You can argue that both ways by insisting tahr are detrimental to the alpine environment, its up to us to make sure that they are not, we are already doing that in many ways, we are already contributing to tahr control by hunting them. We are already contributing to preservation of native species like kea and whio. We are starting to work with the Doc vegetation monitoring program, we have had the opportunity to be part of animal surveying in some of the management units this year. We have contributed honestly and with integrity to the formulation of the control program, even our stance of not shooting bulls in the national parks is based on a sincere belief that the best overall outcome for tahr control in the parks will be achieved by maintaining hunter interest in the park.

To grow a credible history and reputation beyond reproach we will need to do all this and more, yes it could be argued that its late but what's more important is that it has finally started.

In reading the annual report you will see some of the initiatives that are underway and more that are being developed, you will see reference to hunter lead management where you the hunters will have the opportunity to be part of research and survey work where your contribution will help us make a case for our goal of a, Herd of Special Interest.

I guess the main point I want to make in this report is that we are now in a good space to move forward. We have come through a difficult time but have risen to the challenge and come out of it stronger than ever. We have finally started the research that should have begun with the implementation of the Tahr Plan in 1993.

At this point we do not have a final figure for tahr culled by Doc control for the current year, that will come out in due course. Given the numbers culled over the last 3 years and the hours allocated this year I believe they are on track to have removed the 25,000 minister

Sage had set her sights on by the time they finish. That hasn't been all one sided, over this last year we have managed to have some input into where and when control has taken place. We have managed to keep bulls exempt from control in some of the management units, unfortunately this did not apply to the National Parks, we firmly believe bulls in the national parks should be exempt from culling.

We are now going to be faced with a diminishing resource, bull numbers are set to decline over the next few years, how we deal with that will be up to us. We are going to have to accept that shooting immature bulls or shooting more than one bull or even the expectation of shooting a bull on every trip will no longer be sustainable. With all the interest there is currently in hunting tahr the past practise of shooting as many as you can, then measuring them on the ground will simply not be sustainable.

If we start to treat our tahr as a world class alpine trophy animal which they surely are, then we can begin to focus on maintaining and managing them for future generations to enjoy.

We are all in this together, we all need to play our part, there are still some big challenges ahead, but things are moving in the right direction.

Finally, in closing I will be stepping down this year from the position of Chairman of NZTF, when I came into the role, I had no intention of getting into conflict with Doc over tahr, we were ready and willing to work with them to achieve a mutually agreeable management regime for tahr. When I reflect on what took place, I can now take some consolation in the knowledge that after the relationship turned sour under Eugenie Sage it is slowly being rebuilt and so I am cautiously optimistic for the future.

I have completed my 3-year term as chair of the Tahr Foundation, and it is appropriate that someone else steps in now when a rebuilding phase is what is needed. I have no regrets, but I will say it has not been easy and has been quite unpleasant and distasteful at times, I never thought we would end up in the High Court, but I am proud the Tahr Foundation had the courage and conviction to stand up when it was needed. I thank all those who donated to our cause and gave us the resources and ability to do that when we it was needed.

*Snow Hewetson Chair of NZTF*

## NZPHGA Report for NZTF Annual Report 2021

2021 HAS BEEN ANOTHER TOUGH YEAR FOR THE GUIDED HUNTING INDUSTRY IN NEW ZEALAND AND GLOBALLY.

Covid has brought the second season in a row with the border closed to international travellers, usually the bulk of the guiding industry's clientele. While some outfits have put through good numbers of local New Zealand hunters, it has been a quiet year for many.

The real positive to come out of this has been the upsurge in New Zealand hunters who have discovered the value in employing the services of a professional guide and have taken the opportunity to book a guided hunt. Planning, logistics, equipment and supplies all taken care of, access to prime, private hunting properties, most not requiring the added expense of helicopter access. Populations of game animals that are well managed, with bulls given the chance to age - providing good numbers of old bulls to hunt. Local knowledge of experienced guides, Well equipped, comfortable camps, experienced guides ensuring safety and success. Professional preparation and care of skins, capes, and trophies, and that all important hosting and preparation of quality camp meals and refreshments while the hunters relax and enjoy the hospitality and the environment.

While most guiding outfits have good numbers of international hunters booked and ready to come as soon as the border is open, the guided hunting industry in New Zealand is embracing the newfound interest of local New Zealand hunters in taking up a guided hunt.

The NZPHGA has continued to work closely with the wider hunting community in New Zealand to ensure the future of our game animal herds and the hunting lifestyle. The NZPHGA Executive and members have worked tirelessly on issues that affect us all, ranging from moderating firearms legislation and regulation, countering Government ideology around tahr control,



to the status and future management of our game herds. We have been working closely with the Game Animal Council and the Tahr Foundation, alongside the NZDA, SCI, and the wider recreational hunting sector in dealings with the Department of Conservation, Government and Ministers. The NZPHGA has taken the lead and has committed to a proposed scheme that will see the commercial guided hunting sector contribute 1/3rd of all GAC funding, for the benefit of the whole hunting sector.

The Covid situation has been a tough time for the industry, but our members are weathering the storm. We've continued to manage our hunting areas and herds, and keep our outfits and camps in top condition. We continue to take on new members and run our annual Professional Hunter Academy training program and fight the good fight for the future of our sport and our game herds. The New Zealand Professional Hunting Guides Association and its members are looking forward to a great 2022 hunting season.

If you are considering the benefits of a guided hunt, view our Outfitter Member list on the NZPHGA website [www.nzphga.com](http://www.nzphga.com) and talk with one of our members.

*James Cagney, President, NZPHGA*



# Minutes

9.00AM, 30TH OCTOBER 2020, RYDGES HOTEL, 30 LATIMER SQUARE, CHRISTCHURCH.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### 1. Welcome

Chairperson, Snow Hewetson, welcomed to all to the meeting and confirmed that the printed copy of the Annual Report would be contain the detailed reports of this last years activities.

### 2. Attendance

**a. Personal:** Snow Hewetson, Terry Pierson, Sheene Ottmann, Garry Ottmann, Gerald Telford, James Cagney, Simon Guild, Joseph Peter, Richard Burden, John Royle, Geoff Kerr.

**b. Zoom:** Marcus Pinney, Kaylyn Pinney, Dave Keen and Gwyn Thurlow.

### 3. Apologies:

Don Patterson, Heather Purdie, Greg Duley.

**Moved:** Gerald Telford/ Simon Guild. That Apologies be accepted. *Carried.*

### 4. Chairpersons Annual Report.

**Moved:** Garry Ottmann/ Simon Guild. That the Chairpersons Report be accepted. *Carried.*

### 5. Minutes of the 2019 AGM

**Moved:** Garry Ottmann/ Gerald Telford. That the Minutes of the last AGM be accepted as a true and correct record. *Carried.*  
No Business arising.

### 6. Treasurers Report.

Sheene Ottmann, Treasurer, provided details of the Treasurers Report and Moved the acceptance. Seconded by James Cagney. *Carried.*

### 7. Sub Committee Reports.

As previously announced the Annual Report contains the sub committee Reports.

**Moved:** Snow Hewetson / James Cagney. That the Sub-Committee Reports be accepted. *Carried.*

Snow thanked the members who had submitted their very detailed reports for their efforts and confirmed that the detailed the activities of the Foundation in the past year.

### 8. Election of Officers:

Nominations Received:

Chairperson: Snow Hewetson

Vice Chairperson: Marcus Pinney

Secretary: Terry Pierson

Treasurer: Sheene Ottmann

Management Committee:

James Cagney

Willie Duley

Greg Duley

David Keen

Joseph Peter

Gerald Telford

**Moved:** Garry Ottmann / Richard Burden. That Nominations received be appointed to their respective positions. *Carried.*

### 9. General Business.

#### a. Annual Report Distribution.

Discussion in respect to who the Annual Report should be sent.

All Constituent Member organisations, GAC, Lou Sanson, Minister Sport and Recreation,

Minister of Tourism, Opposition Spokespersons, Wapiti Foundation, Sika Foundation. SCI and Dallas Safari Club. Shortcut should be on social media and the web site.

#### b. Sika Country Taxidermy Offer.

Snow Hewetson clarified that Vern Pearson of Sika Country Taxidermy, had offered to the Foundation the mounting of a Lifesize Tahr that the Foundation could use as part of our future fundraising activities which was deeply appreciated. Discussion in respect to the use took place.

The Management Committee to make a decision in respect to the type of fundraising activity. Committee to seek clarification on all aspects of their fundraising.

#### c. Hunters Element Raffle.

Snow outlined the results of the raffle that they successfully ran and the possibility of following their example.

#### d. Future Directions.

Discussion in respect to the directions that the Foundation should be looking. Obviously, the announcement of the Minister of Conservation will have a huge bearing on the direction the Foundation.

#### i. Unit Management.

Suggestion raised that the Foundation should try to take over the management on one of the Tahr Units and demonstrate the Foundations ability to manage. Take aboard the direction of FWF in respect to Wapiti Management.

#### ii. Tahr Plan Review.

Obvious need to review the highly outdated Plan is accepted but this

may take some time. Question of what are DoC prepared to come up with and what information are they prepared to share.

#### e. Zoom Comments.

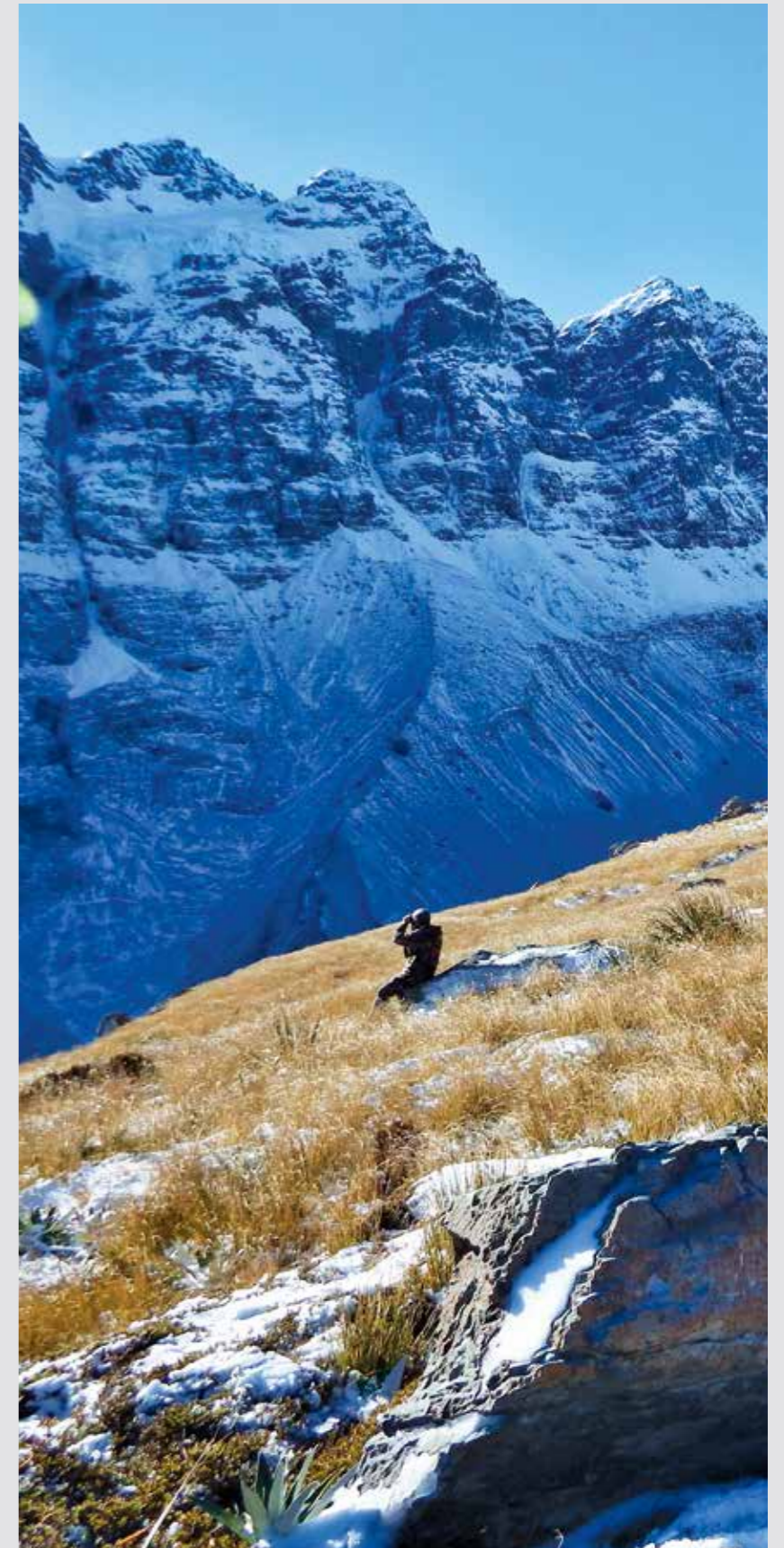
i. Gwyn Thurlow, speaking on behalf of the NZDA, wished to congratulate NZTF on the years efforts and particularly on the Annual Report and believed that it was a great publication to use for expanding the NZTF's publicity. Spoke of a party of NZDA members who while hunting Tahr in the Whataroa, were overflown by Tahr cullers who carried on regardless of the hunters on the ground who were obvious. Laying a formal complaint to DoC and the meeting agreed that this needed further investigation and would support the complaint on the basis that all factual information was provided including photographs and machine registration numbers etc. All information must be provided and substantiated.

ii. Kaylyn Pinney believes that a secure on-line method was required to ensure that reports of this nature were properly documented and preferably out of the hands of DoC where security of information was considered possibly doubtful.

iii. Marcus Pinney commented on the DoC report in respect to culling where the results were down 14 Tahr per hour currently.

#### 10. Closure.

Snow Hewetson thanked all who were present for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 9.51am.





# The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated Financial Statements

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2021

## Directory as at 31st July 2021 / Committee

Snow Hewetson / Chair  
 Marcus Pinney / Vice Chair  
 Terry Pierson / Secretary  
 Sheene Ottmann / Treasurer  
 James Cagney, Greg Duley, Willie Duley, David Keen,  
 Joseph Peter, Gerald Telford

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2021

	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Sales	-	655
Less Cost of Sales		
Purchases	-	1,260
Gross Deficit from Trading	0	(605)
<b>SUNDRY INCOME</b>		
Donations Received	4,794	18,195
Grants Received	10,400	-
Interest Received	707	2,969
Total Income	15,901	20,559
<b>Less Expenses</b>		
Advertising and PR	675	9,958
Bank Charges	1	9
Donations	-	500
Legal Expenses	-	119,257
Meeting Expenses - TLG	204	-
Printing, Stamps & Stationery	2,443	-
Rent - Meeting venue	304	-
Research and Monitoring	-	8,208
Sika Show	-	1,639
Travel - National	477	1,413
Website	420	410
<b>Total Expenses</b>	4,524	141,394
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) Before tax</b>	11,377	(120,835)
Income Tax Expense	-	(551)
<b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	\$11,377	(\$121,386)

Incorporation Number: 2655152  
 Date of Incorporation: 3 November 2016  
 Address: c/- 2763 State Highway 63, RD 1,  
 Blenheim 7271  
 Bankers: Westpac  
 IRD Number: 123 960 801

## STATEMENT OF MOVEMENTS IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2021

	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
<b>EQUITY AT START OF YEAR</b>	48,981	170,367
<b>SURPLUS &amp; REVALUATIONS</b>		
Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the Period	11,377	(121,386)
Total Recognised Revenues & Expenses	11,377	(121,386)
<b>OTHER MOVEMENTS</b>		
<b>EQUITY AT END OF YEAR</b>	\$60,358	\$48,981

## STATEMENT OF CASH MOVEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2021

	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
<b>OPENING BALANCES</b>		
Bank Accounts	166,535	170,053
<b>Cash From Operating Activities</b>		
Cash Receipts	38,654	22,134
	38,654	22,134
<b>Cash Payments</b>	145,092	25,652
	145,092	25,652
Net Cash Applied to Operating Activities	(106,438)	(3,518)
Cash Applied to Investing Activities		
Cash Payments	10,400	-
Net Cash Applied to Investing Activities	(10,400)	-
<b>CLOSING CASH BALANCES</b>	\$49,697	\$166,535

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT 31ST JULY 2021

	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Bank - Cheque Account	22,311	6,741
Bank - Savings account	27,386	57,376
Bank - Term Deposit	-	102,418
GST refund due	63	20,067
Taxation refund due	198	510
Total Current Assets	49,958	187,112
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Other Assets	10,400	-
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	60,358	187,112
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts Payable	-	138,131
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	-	138,131
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	\$60,358	\$48,981
Represented by; <b>EQUITY</b>	\$60,358	\$48,981

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2021

### 1. Statement of Account Policies

The financial statements presented here are for The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated, an incorporated society.

The financial statements of The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated have been prepared in accordance with Special Purpose Framework for use by For-Profit Entities (SPFR for FPEs) published by Chartered Accountants of Australia and New Zealand, and are for members use and income tax compilation only.

The accounting principles recognised as appropriate for the measurement and reporting of earnings and financial position on an historical cost basis have been used, with the exception of certain items for which specific accounting policies have been identified.

### Specific Accounting Policies

In the preparation of these financial statements, the specific accounting policies are as follows:

#### (a) Goods & Services Tax

These financial statements have been prepared on a GST exclusive basis with the exception of accounts receivable and accounts payable which are shown inclusive of GST.

#### (b) Taxation

Income tax is accounted for using the taxes payable method. The income tax expense charged to the Statement of Financial Performance is the estimated tax payable in the current year, adjusted for any differences between the estimated and actual tax payable in prior years.

#### (c) Donations

Donations received are included in operating revenue. If particular conditions are attached to a donation that would require it to be repaid if these conditions are not met, then the donation is recorded as a liability until the conditions are satisfied. Donated goods or services (other than donated assets) are not recognised.

### 2. AUDIT

These financial statements have not been audited.

### 3. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

At balance date there are no known contingent liabilities (2020:\$0). The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated has not granted any securities in respect of liabilities payable by any other party whatsoever.

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2021

	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
<b>4. TAXATION</b>		
Tax Payable		
Interest Income	707	2,969
Less tax exemption	1,000	1,000
Taxable Income	-	1,969
The Taxation Charge is Represented by		
Current year tax	-	551
	-	551
Tax Payable		
Less		
RWT credits	198	1,061
Total Tax to be Refunded	(198)	(510)
<b>5. OTHER ASSETS</b>		
Bronze Trophy Tahr Sculpture 350mm High with Rimu Base		
At cost	10,400	-
	10,400	-
Total Other Assets	\$10,400	-



Photo Credit: Josh Boyd-Wilson



# Tahr Control Operational Plan 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022

THIS PLAN HAS BEEN INFORMED BY THE RESULTS OF TAHR CONTROL OPERATIONS OVER 2020/21 AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE TAHR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION LIAISON GROUP (TPILG).

Over the coming year the TPILG will continue to provide for effective collaboration amongst parties with interests in tahr management. This will include advising the Department of Conservation (DOC) and working together to enhance contributions to tahr management. The last year has been a difficult time for many, with ongoing COVID-19 travel restrictions disabling much international tourism and creating a huge draw on Government resources to sustain the wellbeing of the community. It seems probable that ongoing effects of COVID-19 will remain in play for the 2021/22 year. The commitment of all parties to effective management of tahr remains strong, and Government commitment to the tahr programme has not changed.

Longer-term management will be shaped by the results of new research and ongoing and new monitoring. This will improve understanding of both control parameters, such as the effects of controlling fewer males than females, and the effects of tahr densities and herd sizes in different environments. Anecdotal observations of male-biased herds may reflect localised effects of control in recent years. Wider observations suggest that the overall herd may not be significantly male biased and further monitoring, undertaken in autumn 2021, will improve understanding of this issue. High numbers of tahr remain in some locations, particularly on the West Coast where ground hunting may be a useful additional control measure.

## SCOPE

Included: This document covers management of tahr from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, including:

- > Control of tahr on Public Conservation Land (PCL).
- > Contributions from recreational and concession hunting, including guiding
- > and Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO).
- > Contributions to tahr management on land tenures other than PCL.
- > Research and monitoring relating to tahr.

## Projections for:

- > Official tahr control on PCL within and outside the feral range.

## Excluded: This document does not deal with:

- > Management of tahr control beyond 30 June 2022.
- > Tahr farming.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONTROL

A suite of contributors will deliver measures to control populations of tahr. Tourism-based hunting and associated environmental contributions are expected to remain severely reduced compared with the pre-COVID-19 period. Domestic recreational and guided hunting and WARO will continue to contribute. Official control will occur as required to move towards Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 (HTCP) targets. The intent is to pilot the use of professional ground hunters as part of official control.

- > Recreational hunting can contribute within the feral range, though there remain places where recreational hunting is not a practical control option. Hunting will be encouraged by ballots, emails to recreational hunting permit holders, and the provision of information on observations of tahr.
- > Guided hunting will contribute in areas permitted by concessions.
- > Aerially Assisted Trophy Hunting (AATH) environmental contribution control may contribute as directed by DOC in areas of high tahr density (due to COVID-19 we anticipate a low contribution to tahr control).
- > Commercial WARO may contribute over the year, except from May to early July (these require appropriate concessions to be applied for and issued for PCL).
- > Official control funded by DOC will continue in national parks, where required throughout the management units and feral range, and beyond the feral range.

*“At DOC, we are committed to learning as we go, using available information, including consideration of stakeholder knowledge. This approach will be enhanced over coming years.”*

## RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Development and implementation of research and monitoring will continue for 2021/22. This will include DOC’s own planned programme, collaborative programmes, and facilitating the work of others to:

- > Analyse data from aerial surveys completed in Management Units 1 and 3 in autumn 2021.
- > Continue remeasurement of historic vegetation plots.
- > Analyse spatial data on tahr, hunting and ecological values.
- > Potentially undertake further tahr counts in specific management units.
- > Implement a programme to look at vegetation condition in relation to different densities of tahr.

## OPERATIONAL SPECIFICATIONS

### Total effort on Public Conservation Land

Total control effort for 2021/22 will be less than in the 2019/20 or 2020/21 financial years.

Outside the feral range there will be a total of approximately 120 hours of aerial search and control. In addition to helicopter control effort, DOC will also look at the potential of searches using fixed-wing aircraft and groundbased surveillance and control.

A total of approximately 175 hours of control effort in the management units for 2021/22 was determined based on data and observations from work in 2020 and contributions from stakeholders.

Control will be focused where population densities are high, e.g. on the West Coast.

An additional 20 hours of control effort will be provided for areas within the feral range but outside the management units defined in the HTCP to reduce risk of breeding populations spreading.

Use of ground control will be piloted in forest and scrub, likely in Management Unit 6 and in the south of the feral range.



**TARGETING**

General provisions for targeting in official control are given below. These will be refined during operations planning, drawing on expertise from within and outside of DOC.

- > Tahr that could extend the feral range will be targeted as a high priority (e.g. in areas within the feral range but outside the management units) as they may contribute to source populations outside the feral range.
- > All tahr (including identifiable males) will be targeted in the national park management unit (Management Unit 4), and outside the feral range.
- > Identifiable males will not be targeted in Management Units 2, 3, 5, and 6 (noting no control is planned in 1 & 7), nor outside the management units but inside the feral range. Subject to the above, groups of 10 or more tahr will be targeted wherever they are found.

**LEARNING AS WE GO**

At DOC, we are committed to learning as we go, using available information, including consideration of

stakeholder knowledge. This approach will be enhanced over coming years as better data become available and longerterm planning and management are enabled.

Approximately halfway through the official control hours period, a review will be carried out to ensure optimal use of the remaining control effort. This review will involve the Game Animal Council.

Results of surveys of tahr on pastoral leases will be considered as they become available during 2021. This information may result in additional management actions following engagement with LINZ and leaseholders.

To enhance opportunities for collaborative learning and advance understanding on key issues of common concern, DOC intends to establish three working groups for 2021/22. These will be focused on:

- > Longer-term operational planning.
- > Optimising control outside the feral range.
- > Determining how the hunting sector can take a lead in tahr management at specific locations, initially focusing on Management Unit 1.



## NZTF Submission on the Draft Tahr Control Plan

outside the feral range, we accept and agree. We would like to be kept informed by the Department of any populations establishing outside the feral range so we can inform hunters to help stop the tahr range extending.

**1. Management unit 7, Wills/Makarora Hunter.**

We accept and agree.

**2. Management unit 6, Landsborough.**

We accept and agree.

**3. Management unit 4, Aoraki/ Mt Cook, Westland /Tai Poutini National Parks.**

We accept the total hours but submit the following, the approximate 90 hours should all be done in the parts of WNP where some problem areas still exist. We have given these areas to DOC at the last TPLIG meeting. We encourage a review and reconsideration at 45 hours and would like to be involved in that review.

Aoraki /Mt Cook should be the last consideration, once the problem areas in WNP have been fully addressed.

We do not agree with taking bulls. Reason, bull numbers do not drive the reproduction rate, the number of adult females does. Time and effort hunting bulls is neither efficient nor cost effective at population reduction, removes the incentive for recreational hunters to hunt these areas and do tahr control for free, and creates unnecessarily disturbance to recreationalists, emissions and noise pollution for less conservation gain.

**4. Management unit 2, South Whitcombe/ Wanganui/Whataroa.**

We accept and agree but the Zip program needs to be taken into account. We would like to see the 25 hours include the tahr taken by the Zip program if inside MU2, so 25 hours total, not 25 hours plus Zip program tahr removal flight times.

Example: 15 hours Zip, 10 hours Doc control for a total of 25 hrs. Also, tahr taken by Zip should all be nannies, even if inside the National Parks, for all the reasons stated above.

**5. Management unit 5 Ben Ohau.**

We accept and agree, but we seek clarification of areas deemed to be difficult to access by recreational hunters.

We do not accept the creation of buffer zones in or around any of the units, as this is not consistent with the HTCP.

**6. Management unit 1, South Rakaia/Rangitata.**

We support.

**7. Management unit 3, Gammack/ Two Thumb.**

We accept and agree but the 10 hours to be where it can be demonstrated there are still too many nannies present.

This could be addressed by Tahr Foundation observers being involved in the research and monitoring of this unit.

**8. Inside the feral range but outside the management units close to feral range boundaries.**

We accept and agree but want confirmation of no bulls to be targeted. Bulls do not expand the range or the population, and bulls will always return to where the females are present. These bulls are a viable and valued recreational hunting resource.



**9. Other general concerns are:**

Any commercial ground control must be auditable as are the aerial contractors, and they must not shoot bulls. As aerial control hours seems to be the measurable being used by the Department in the yearly control plans, if any significant amount of ground control is to be done, there needs to be a means of equating ground control effort to aerial control hours. In other words, in areas other than where there are agreed by all significant vegetation issues such as the Jacobs, un-agreed and unquantified ground control must not be in addition to agreed aerial control hours.

AATH is mentioned in the draft plan, what role if any is envisaged for AATH?

What is proposed to encourage recreational hunters?

No control to be done around huts and landing sites. We must avoid the conflict that eventuated last year. Suggest a 3km no culling radius.

All culling should be done in August and September, after the popular tahr rut and before the spring hunting. This is plenty of time to complete the hours in the draft plan.

At what point does control stop? How is that defined? And who makes that decision?

Dr Reddiex's email 1st March contained some contentious points that are either clearly wrong or unverifiable conjecture:

Nanny/bull ratios have clearly changed or the results of DOC's culling has been incorrectly reported by the contractors. You cannot cull so many nannies and not have significantly changed the ratios. All the field observations we have from reliable and experienced hunters on the ground confirm this. This change in nanny/bull ratios significantly affects the reproductive capacity of the herd.

Tahr wisening up to helicopters is also a given, as has happened with every species subject to aerial hunting. Again, all reports from reliable and experienced hunters on the ground confirm this. The aerial culling is driving a significant number of tahr deep into the bush in some Westland areas, creating more vegetation damage issues.

Culling should be targeted to where the worst vegetation damage is. Nannies have reasonably small home ranges compared with the bulls and will not be too far from where the heavy browse is observed. Areas with significant vegetation damage may well need tahr population suppression for some time to enable the vegetation to recover.

The final comment is this plan must be targeted at killing the right tahr in the right places, not the Department's previous one size fits all approach, or we will not support it.

*Snow Hewetson Chair of NZTF*



## NZTF Correspondence on the Draft Tahr Control Plan



### FEEDBACK TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION FOLLOWING THE TPILG MEETING 15/12/2020

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE FEEDBACK

The purpose of the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (Group or TPILG) is to form and maintain a liaison group which the Department of Conservation (Department) and Ngāi Tahu, as Treaty Partner, liaise and consult with in respect to the implementation of the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 (HTCP), a statutory plan prepared under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, and yearly operational plans thereunder. The Group is formed by organisations with an interest in tahr and their habitat who will collaborate and share information to support successful implementation of the HTCP.

#### FUNCTIONS

The functions of the Group are to:

- > Provide input, contributions and perspectives which

support the development of annual operational plans that give effect to the statutory plan.

- > Receive information from the Department to inform the Group of the Department's annual management priorities, so that input, contributions and perspectives can be accurately and appropriately provided.
- > Receive results from the Department's annual plan implementation and research and monitoring activities to support improved input, contributions and perspectives for future plans.
- > Improve understanding by all parties interested in Himalayan tahr (tahr) of the conservation and other outcomes required in implementing the statutory plan.
- > Provide an opportunity for free and frank discussion of perspectives and suggestions on the integration and optimisation of hunting, and control, of tahr.
- > Rapidly share new information and decisions amongst interested parties.
- > Facilitate participation in the development of research and monitoring priorities.





Photo Credit: David Keens

## MEMBERSHIP

Membership is limited to organisations with an interest in the management of tahr in New Zealand.

### The core membership will be comprised of:

- > The Director-General of Conservation represented by the Director responsible for tahr (or their nominee) (the Director).
- > Two representatives of Te Runanga o Ngāi Tahu.
- > Two representatives of the Game Animal Council, one designated as the Tahr lead.
- > One representative of Land Information New Zealand.
- > One representative of West Coast / Tai Poutini Conservation Board
- > One representative of Canterbury / Aoraki Conservation Board
- > One representative of the NZ Conservation Authority
- > One representative of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society.
- > One representative of the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand.
- > One representative of the NZ Tahr Foundation Inc.
- > One representative of the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association Inc.
- > One representative of the SCI (NZ Chapter) Inc.

- > One representative of the NZ Professional Hunting Guides Association Inc.
- > One representative representing helicopter operators (Concession holders, WARO or AATH).
- > One representative for big game hunting estates / high country farm operators.
- > One representative representing tahr farmers.

Decisions on additional attendees at, or allowing observers to attend, meetings of the Group will be at the sole discretion of the Director. This will include key DOC staff and GAC staff involved in the management of tahr or key experts to assist informed management or implementation decisions. It is acknowledged that many of the interest groups are voluntary run organisations and therefore one non-speaking observer may attend, but not speak, at face-to-face meetings, unless invited by the chairperson.

Representatives will remain 'nominated representatives' forming part of the Group until such time as the Director responsible for tahr is notified of the cessation of their 'appointment' and a replacement representative is advised in writing. If a nominated representative cannot attend a scheduled meeting they may nominate a proxy to attend that meeting.

## MEETINGS

Meetings may be face to face or through the use of information technologies. Where possible all meetings will be held in Christchurch or at other appropriate locations near the feral range of tahr.

### The Director will:

- > Chair all meetings of the Group,
- > Approve agendas and notes of meetings, and
- > Provide facilities and support for meetings hosted by the Department (both face to face and involving information technologies).

Agendas and supporting papers will be provided in a timely manner, but by no later than one (1) week before each meeting. Draft notes (focused on actions) will be circulated no later than two (2) weeks after each meeting. Any member may bring forward agenda items for meetings.

## ROLE RELATIONSHIPS

The Group advises members' perspectives and suggestions to the Department through the Director and the Department commits to taking into account such advice and information.

## SUBGROUPS

The Group may establish subgroups at the discretion of the Director responsible for tahr or the GAC tahr lead. Any such subgroup will have any work programme clearly tasked after discussion in the Group. The tasks will define clear purpose, objectives, membership, costs provided or required and time frames. All subgroups will report regularly to the Group.

## COSTS

The Department will provide venues and administration for all meetings that it hosts. All members will meet their own costs to attend and participate in meetings of the Group. Costs of formal subgroups established by either the Department or the GAC may be provided for at the discretion of the Department or the GAC respectively.

## AMENDMENT, MODIFICATION OR VARIATION

These Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified after consultation and agreement by the Group members.

## OPERATIONAL PLAN FEEDBACK

The following information is provided in addition to the feedback given at the last TPILG meeting on 15th December 2020. Given that much of the period since that meeting has been the Christmas New Year break, it is intended that this feedback will be discussed at the next TPILG meeting on 16th March 2021 and more detailed information such as maps can be provided prior or subsequent to that meeting.

## PRIORITIES FOR CONTROL OPERATIONS

### Priority 1: Tahr outside the Feral Range and Exclusion Zones

1. Prevent new populations of tahr establishing outside the current feral range

1.1 The hunting sector members on the TPILG will assist DOC to identify where tahr currently exist or are thought to exist outside the feral range so that DOC may undertake control required to eliminate them. We support the use of helicopter control, judas tahr programmes and professional ground hunters for this purpose.

### Current locations identified for examination:

- I. Browning Pass
- II. Upper Waimakariri
- III. Mount Rolleston – Carrington Peak
- IV. Upper Taipo
- V. Bottom end of Craigieburn
- VI. Lewis Pass
- VII. Robinson River and Tutaekuri River
- VIII. Hunter Hills

2. Prevent tahr moving from inside to outside the feral range.

*“Members on the TPILG will assist DOC to identify where tahr currently exist or are thought to exist outside the feral range so that DOC may undertake control required to eliminate them. We support the use of helicopter control, judas tahr programmes and professional ground hunters for this purpose.”*





**2.1** Re-examine the current Northern and Southern Exclusion Zones to ascertain if they are still appropriate for containing the spread of tahr North and South of the feral range. Mapping and reasoning to support any proposed alterations to be provided. Consider establishing an additional exclusion corridor to prevent the spread of tahr east across the Lindis Pass road. Continue with the Judas tahr program in these zones.

**2.2** Discontinue any buffer zones inside management units, such as MU1 and MU2. The two exclusion zones themselves are buffers to prevent the spread of tahr as is described in the HTCP. In addition, with lower tahr densities it is unnecessary to have buffers within management units and this is clearly stated in the HTCP.

**Priority 2: Tahr inside the feral range but outside the management units.**

**1.** Establish more detailed and geographically defensible boundaries for management units, especially on the eastern and western boundaries. In doing so take into account areas that are suitable for hunting but do not pose a risk of tahr moving outside the feral range.

Some biological logic is required here rather than arbitrary lines on a map. NZTF will provide maps for consideration at a later date. 2. Until point 1. Is completed, we advise that the Department reduce nanny/kid groups to under 10 animals to prevent dispersal with no identifiable males to be culled. Many bulls will be transient wanderers and will not establish any new populations outside the feral range. In addition, as many of these areas have high recreational value and easy access, hunters will continue to reduce bull populations throughout the year.

**Priority 3: Tahr inside the management units**

Given the amount of population control that has taken place in recent years and the focus on females we suggest the following items be considered in deciding if and where control operations are required:

- > The population in terms of tahr densities and composition.  
*MU1, 3 and 7 are below at or approaching intervention density. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the composition of the population in terms of sex and age structure. In other terms, the reproductive capacity of the population and likely trajectory of the population in the absence of culling.*
- > Prioritise where there are identifiable effects from tahr on the vegetation and high tahr numbers still remain.  
*The hunting sector will assist DOC to identify locations where there are identifiable effects from tahr and significant tahr populations so that the Department can act on up-to-date information when operations commence.*
- > Prioritise culling in areas that are more inaccessible for hunting.  
*The NZTF and GAC are working together to produce a GIS map that outlines areas which are not reasonably accessible to hunters and will require continued control by helicopter, either WARO or official control. Also included will be potential no culling zones for areas adjacent to huts, camps and road ends to help reduce conflict. The map will be formatted for use in machines and be made available for discussion in the March meeting.*
- > No identifiable males to be culled inside the management units

*The hunting sector members on the TPILG still agree that there is no evidence to support that the culling of identifiable male tahr in National Parks is required for the protection of any indigenous species. Increased hunter access would allow for bull populations to be reduced without shooting to waste.*

**CONTROL WITHIN MANAGEMENT UNITS LISTED IN ORDER OF PRIORITY**

**Management Unit 6 – Landsborough**

Feedback suggests that tahr densities are above intervention density and there are pockets exhibiting identifiable tahr effects and high tahr concentrations in this management unit.

Feedback also indicates that some tahr in this MU are living in the bush and alpine scrub zone, so may be more difficult to control by helicopter.

**Problems:**

- 1.** Tahr are significantly harder to control and monitor when they live in the bush.
- 2.** Tahr have learned to live in the bush. AATH methods have encouraged this behaviour, as many tahr are chased but only a few are harvested.
- 3.** Hunting sector cannot support DOC contract ground cullers without a verification system to confirm that bulls are not targeted, as is the case for aerial control.

Alterations to access or control methods may be required. For example, helicopter spelling was used historically to control tahr and was very successful. Spelling helicopter hunting pressure for periods before control is undertaken may assist in population management by allowing tahr to spend more time in the open without helicopter harassment.

NZTF is willing to assist the Department in controlling nanny numbers in pockets that have been identified as exhibiting identifiable tahr effects and which have high nanny / juvenile tahr concentrations. Please see NZTF letter of request also attached.

**Management Unit 4a Westland / Tai Poutini National Park**

Feedback suggests that tahr densities are above intervention density. Feedback also indicates that some tahr in this MU are living in the bush and alpine scrub

zones, so may be more difficult to control by helicopter. Again, alterations to access or control methods may be required.

Please note; the hunting sector in no way supports the targeting of bulls by culling in MU4a. However, the hunting sector will participate in the harvesting of bulls within this management unit recreationally or by commercial guides, and nannies via organised culls, when managed by NZTF so far as the Department permits or facilitates.

**Management Unit 2 South Whitcombe / Wanganui / Whataroa**

Feedback suggests that tahr densities are above intervention density in isolated pockets. Feedback also indicates that some tahr in this MU are living in the bush and alpine scrub zones, so may be more difficult to control by helicopter. Again, alterations to access or control methods may be required.

**Management Unit 4b Mount Cook / Aoraki National Park**

Feedback suggests that tahr densities are above intervention density, but likely below what is considered to cause irrevocable damage to vegetation. Most of the terrain is accessible to hunters. Therefore, the hunting sector advises that a “nannies only” culling policy is sufficient for this MU. Control of bulls would still occur but instead by hunting. This format poses no risk of tahr densities in the MU increasing, rather continues to work towards lower tahr densities at lower cost and with higher buy-in. While the intervention density for this MU is currently <1 km<sup>2</sup>, if this can be reasonably achieved and how this may be achieved is not specified in the HTCP. The hunting sector therefore considers that the targeting of bulls by hunters is a reasonable approach for the Department to employ and is not counter to its legal obligations. The NZTF would commit to establishing a way of counting recreational effort that is accepted by the hunting sector and allow for better monitoring of tahr harvest if the Department so requires.

**Management Unit 5 – Ben Ohau**

Feedback suggests that tahr densities are above intervention density but most of the terrain is accessible to hunters. A large percentage of MU5 is private land. Reduce nanny kid groups on PCL to 10.



**Management Unit 3 – Gammack / Two Thumb**

Feedback suggests that tahr densities in some places are above intervention density but most of the terrain is accessible to hunters. Carry out population counts including age and sex structure. Model the trajectory of this MU. Consider not culling this MU and stratifying land types and tenures with varying tahr densities. Reassess for 2022/2023.

**Management Unit 1- South Rakaia / Rangitata**

Feedback suggests that tahr densities are at or below intervention density and trajectory of the population would be down even without culling. Most of the terrain is accessible to hunters. Carry out population counts including age and sex structure. Model the trajectory of this MU and consider not culling this MU as the GAC is formulating a proposal to implement a monitoring regime for tahr and vegetation. Reassess for 2022/2023

**Management Unit 7 – Wills / Makarora / Hunter**

This Unit is below intervention density no action required.



**HOKKER/LANDBOROUGH AND ADAMS WILDERNESS AREAS TAHR BALLOT MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

The NZ Tahr Foundation with the support of hunting groups and others with an interest in Himalayan tahr proposed the Hooker/Landsborough and Adams Wilderness Areas Tahr Ballot Management and Research Proposal. The proposal was designed as a mechanism to assist in managing the effects of Himalayan tahr in the Tahr Ballot areas by coordinating and fostering recreational hunting. We provide further support to the proposal presented and clarify the intentions of the proposal.

**Goal:** To contribute to the protection of the natural values, within the tahr ballot areas through a partnership between the Department of Conservation, and the NZ Tahr Foundation to operate the annual tahr ballot.

**Objective 1:** To provide reliable, regular, long-term methods of obtaining information from hunters that can assist in managing tahr and other species of conservation interest, for enhanced conservation outcomes within the Hooker/Landsborough and Adams Wilderness Areas.

**Objective 2:** To increase the effectiveness of hunting effort in the Tahr Ballot areas by providing education to and coordination of hunters participating in the Tahr Ballot.

**Objective 3:** To increase the engagement of hunters and others who regularly use the Tahr Ballot areas in initiatives to conserve indigenous species.

**Objective 4:** To foster and improve the relationship between tahr hunters and the Department of Conservation in the management of the Tahr.

The proposal builds on examples from other parts of New Zealand, such as Fiordland and the Central North Island where hunters have demonstrated that when given the right incentives, education and resources, they can provide valuable information to assist in the control of game animal populations through better informed decision making. They will also engage in conservation programs that have direct benefits to indigenous species. For example; Kea and Whio. This conservation multiplier effect provides a win/win scenario for conservation and hunting.



**Hunter-led management in Tahr Management Unit 1**

**GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL REPORT TO THE NEW ZEALAND TAHR FOUNDATION, SEPTEMBER 2021**

The Game Animal Council and the hunting sector have been discussing with the Department of Conservation an opportunity to take responsibility for management of tahr within all or part of Management Unit 1 (the Upper Rakaia/Havelock). Such agreements are enabled by provisions in the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993. Following liaison with the hunting sector, the GAC has proposed that the most appropriate structure under which to undertake such management would be for the GAC to be the contracted body to develop and implement management plans in partnership with the hunting sector. It is the Game Animal Council's intention to model any management program as closely as possible on the principles for management of a herd of special interest.

**The Department has welcomed the approach and a process has been initiated to identify:**

- > Legal aspects of any such agreement,

- > How to engage effectively with Iwi, hapu and whanau
- > Objectives for management,
- > Management parameters e.g., ballots, concessions
- > Types of management activities that could be undertaken under such an agreement,
- > Area(s) for hunter-led management,
- > Duration of the agreement,
- > Contingency arrangements, and
- > Opportunities for research to find better methods for estimating tahr abundance and the effects of varying tahr density on selected environmental parameters.
- > Resourcing hunter-led management

Adjoining landowners have been informed of this opportunity and that it is under discussion. They are supportive of the concept and are willing to contribute their substantial personal knowledge of tahr in these locations.

The Department has been highly supportive of the proposal. Discussions between the Department and the Game Animal Council are ongoing, and a full day meeting in late October 2021 will progress details. The Game Animal Council will be working with the hunting sector on the proposal as it develops.



# Expedition Report

## VEGETATIVE MONITORING WITH DOC AT ARBOR RIFT

The Purpose is to gain a basic understanding of vegetative monitoring conducted by the Department of Conservation as part of the 2020/2021 Himalayan Tahr Operational Plan; section research and monitoring.

### ADMINISTRATION

Attendance on the trip required approval, attending a briefing at DOC Hokitika and signing a volunteer disclaimer.

Flights into camp were delayed by a night due to weather. We assembled at the hanger at 7:30 am and attended a helicopter safety briefing before departure. Upon arrival, camp sites were set up for individuals and a general camp area established.

A health and safety briefing was conducted prior to leaving camp each day, whereby, hazards and hazard reduction plans were identified by the team. Gear and required equipment was checked and spread across the team's packs for transport to the plots.

### VEGETATIVE PLOT MONITORING

This site included 16 plots. Four additional plots and partial portions of some of the 16 plots had been lost to slips. Originally the plots were created using square meterage to include 20 snow tussocks (*Chionochloa pallens*).



Therefore, the plots ranged in size with the largest being 5x5m and smallest 2x1m. Teams of at least three were required to undertake the survey, including a botanist. By day two teams were working fluidly and efficiently undertaking monitoring.

Relocating the plots was reliant on laminated maps, GPS points and two waratahs depicting diagonal corners on the plot. Smaller pegs were used on the opposite diagonal. Due to snow fall, the waratahs were often bent over and the smaller pegs missing. Identifying the plot boundary in this case consisted of running measuring tape around the outside of the plot so that both sides of the plot were the correct length and then replacing the missing pegs. If three of the four markers were missing, there was no accurate way to ensure the plot was correctly placed. A peg was placed every metre around the periphery of the plot and lines of tape were run between pegs to depict 1m<sup>2</sup> squares.

While practically simple, laying tape to mark plots and squares within plots is imprecise. This is not a cause for concern when plants are large, however, when the plants being measured are small or infrequent within the plot this may result in error. Given the advances in modern technology, some tweaking to the method could improve the accuracy of plots and/or square outlines.

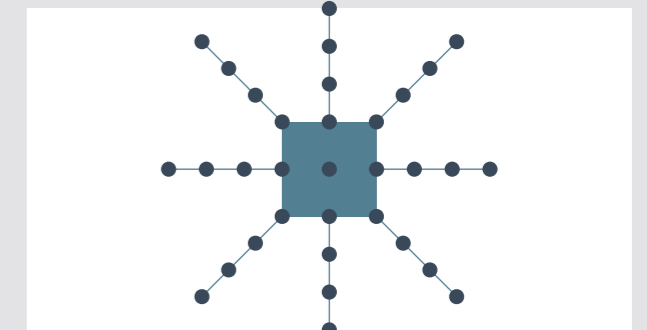
The monitors had a map of where tussocks were located previously and a metal tag was placed at the base of tussocks with an ID to confirm the correct tussock was being rerecorded.



A metal detector was used to find tags where tussocks were no longer present. New tags were placed when new seedlings were observed. Each team had a botanist who worked with others in their team to ID species of interest. Differences between many species were slight and identification was often a challenge for the botanists, especially when the seedlings were small. It was not a simple process and is not something hunters could do without assistance by a botanist. Species coverage across the plot, slope and aspect were also recorded. Photographs were taken from all angles of the plot as a visual record of change through time.

### PELLET COUNTS

Pellet counts were conducted at each of the vegetation plots. Presence or absence of Tahr, Hare, Possum or Other pellets were recorded within a 1m<sup>2</sup> circle at 5m intervals in the pattern which follows:



Age of pellets was not recorded. This is important to note as pellets take a long time to deteriorate (depending on environmental conditions), i.e. the presence of a pellet could indicate a species presence within the last 2-3 years.

This method is relatively easy to perform and some version of it could be used by hunters (who were trained and willing to perform it). However, there are numerous limitations to applying this type of method for population monitoring which would need to be considered before committing to its use as an informative management tool.

Note: this method differs from the Tier 1 pellet counting method.

### TAHR OBSERVATIONS

Numerous tahr were observed across the valley, down the valley and some within range of camp. Predominantly females and young were viewed across the valley and within range of camp, males were further up valley and separated from nanny groups.







**KEA SIGHTINGS**

**Day 1:** Single male adult kea sighted and one heard in the distance at the same time later in the day.

**Day 2:** Group of 7 Kea visited the camp rock, interacting and chattering away. Mature female and mature male, three young - 2 male, 1 female + 2 unknowns. By day two the kea started to hang around the camp and began interacting with us. Unwelcome wake up calls were the norm each morning.

**Day 3:** Five kea observed flying and playing with gear by day 3.

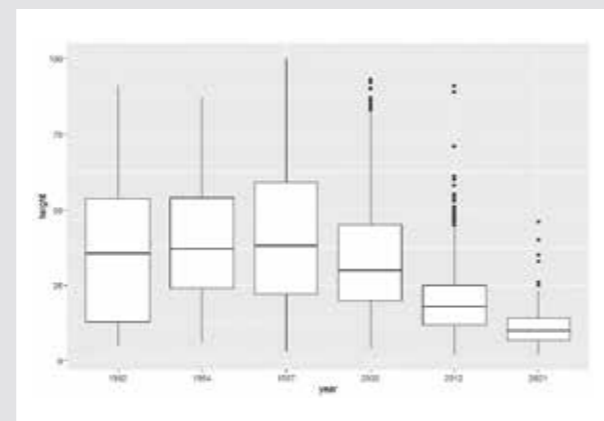
**NOTES OF INTEREST**

1. Species that are non-palatable to browsing ungulates increase and cover landscapes in the absence of the palatable large tussocks. On the surface it appears that the level of biodiversity at these plots is not reduced, rather, the composition of species is altered. Certainly, it is better for tahr if palatable plants are more common than un-palatable plants, this being an obvious common ground between conservation and hunter goals. While the underlying reason for the common ground differs, the outcome of working together to achieve healthy populations of palatable species in the presence of ungulate browsers is a win/win scenario.

2. Plots were established in 1992. Subsequent re-measures occurred in 1994, 1997, 2002, 2012 and 2021. The graph below depicts the height of all living *Chionchola pallens* on the plots at Arbor Rift.

Tussock deterioration began after 1997 and has continued on a downward trend since. The pictures below show one of the plots measured at Arbor rift, on the left is 2002, right is 2021.

Unfortunately the density of browsers responsible for this deterioration is unknown.



**Two questions immediately come to mind;**

- i. How long does it take for tussocks to recover from such extensive damage in the continued presence of x density of tahr?
- ii. Is 'natural' recovery to some preferred tussock state essential, i.e. if an increase in tussock density and size at a specific site is the desired outcome, and cultivation methods could achieve this faster than only tahr population control, would cultivation be considered as a conservation tool for application in extensively damaged vegetative areas by the Department?

3. Many discussions were had with the team about a range of different subjects. The take home outcomes of these conversations are below;

- i. Plant enthusiasts care as deeply for the tussocks as hunters do for game species. Respect and understanding for each other's values will be central to developing workable management plans.
- ii. Defining acceptable levels of impact is currently challenging as it is personal to each individual rather than based on the greater ecological system.
- iii. Conservationists who are not also hunters may have a limited understanding of ungulate biology and behaviour. Filling this gap in knowledge could support improved ungulate management for the benefit of both hunting and the environment.
- iv. Educating people from all walks of life on the important role of hunters in the kaitiakitanga (guardianship) of New Zealand's wild places, through financial and practical contributions to conservation, is essential for both the future of good hunting and the sustainable protection of valued ecosystems.
- v. Close interaction with wild animals is exhilarating to people, regardless of their values.

4. The bush on the West Coast is likely to be a complication for both population monitoring and management. Thermal may have some application on hill sides with sparse cover under optimal conditions, i.e. cold mornings. A question to consider and perhaps an appropriate research topic to undertake for improving future management outcomes.



i. What is/are the best methods for monitoring tahr population trends across variable landscapes?

5. Kea are an important alpine species present in tahr habitat, which need better monitoring. Citizen science by hunters has real potential to improve monitoring and understanding of this species. In addition, kea can be detrimental to the health and safety of hunters in these environments when they play with gear. For the health and safety of hunters and other back country users, and for a future relationship between wilderness users and kea to be positive, something needs to be done.

- i. How can hunters improve kea conservation in the back country?
- ii. What methods could be used to minimise kea playing with gear vital for backcountry user safety.

**FINAL COMMENTS**

Many thoughtful and considered conversations need to occur between hunters and non-hunters within the conservation space. Developing a deeper understanding of the value systems which underpin each other's reasoning and identifying common goals has the potential to both improve game populations for hunters and support better conservation outcomes. We are no longer poles apart, but we are lacking in the knowledge and experience of each other's passions.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The NZTF would like to extend its gratitude to the Hokitika vegetation monitoring team and the Department of Conservation for facilitating this opportunity.



# The Tahr Ballot Kea Sightings Project

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE KEA CONSERVATION TRUST & NEW ZEALAND GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL

The purpose is to initiate a cost-effective long-term monitoring program for kea (*Nestor notabilis*) present in the Hooker/Landsborough and Adams Wilderness Areas during the Tahr Ballot May-July, using hunter observations.

## OUTCOMES

1. The development of a cost-effective monitoring strategy for kea in less accessible areas of conservation estate.
2. An increasing understanding of kea and their populations trends in mountainous environments during the nesting period.
3. Increased hunter awareness of and participation in the conservation of kea.
4. Hunters contributing to the kaitiakitanga (guardianship) of our wilderness areas.



## BACKGROUND

This project was initiated by the NZ Tahr Foundation (NZTF). The Game Animal Council (GAC) as a statutory body facilitates the project by being the intermediary between organisations, as necessary. The Kea Conservation Trust was set up in 2006 to assist in conservation of kea in their natural habitat amongst other things. Ngāi Tahu confirmed general support for this initiative.

The Kea Conservation Trust and the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation have been formally working with each other since March 2016 utilising hunters to monitor kea in the wapiti area of Fiordland National Park. Data is collected and analysed to establish a baseline for the local kea population and to develop a sustainable community protection programme for Fiordland kea. This partnership has been highly successful and demonstrates a time-proven model for using hunters to monitor kea in remote parts of New Zealand's backcountry.

This project expands on the partnership approach between the Kea Conservation Trust and other organisations to integrate the sustainable management of valued introduced species, such as tahr and deer, with indigenous species protection programmes.

## MONITORING

The Tahr Ballot was chosen due to there being existing parameters i.e. set timeframe and location on an annual basis. The monitoring was initiated in the 2021 ballot and will be ongoing.

In 2021, a 'Kea Sighting Survey' form was provided to ballot hunter parties to fill out during their tahr hunt.

The survey was designed by the NZTF and Kea Conservation Trust technical teams with scientific advice. The NZTF technical team have collected surveys from hunting parties and provided raw data to the Kea Conservation Trust.

## RESULTS FROM 2021

The overall uptake for 2021 was positive with 86 forms filled out and returned. While this is a huge level of engagement compared to what has previously occurred (0 kea sightings reported by ballot holders over the previous 3 years), there is opportunity for engagement to be further increased. The NZTF will collaborate with the GAC and Kea Conservation Trust to consider options for increasing exposure and engagement by hunters in the Tahr Ballot for this project.

The data collected from 2021 will be added to the Kea Sightings Database as part of the larger kea monitoring scheme.

[www.keaconservation.co.nz/support-kea/kea-sightings](http://www.keaconservation.co.nz/support-kea/kea-sightings)



In addition, the NZTF and Kea Conservation Trust will collaborate to provide long-term assessments as we collect information over consecutive years.

It is clear that hunters care about kea, with an average value rating of 4.2/5. However, work needs to be done to reduce the impact of kea curiosity on hunter gear and by extension hunter safety.

## PRIZE DRAW

Mike Todd who was in Period 6, Eblis Tops is the winner of a \$500 gift voucher generously supplied by PointsSouth after filling out and returning his kea and tahr ballot forms. The winner was selected using a random number generator.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The NZTF, Kea Conservation Trust and GAC would firstly like to thank everyone who was a part of the 2021 Tahr Ballot and filled out the kea forms. The success of these conservation focused projects by hunters is essential for both the conservation of valued indigenous species and the future security of hunting in New Zealand.

Another huge thank you goes out to the helicopter pilots and ground crew who assisted in getting the forms to the hunters, in particular James Scott and his crew at HeliServices. These guys are the boots on the ground and essential facilitators of both hunting in the Tahr Ballot and the success of the 2021 kea sightings project. We appreciate their support.

## NEXT YEAR'S BALLOT

Applications for next year's ballot open 9 am Tuesday 5 October 2021 and close 4 pm Friday 29 October 2021.

[www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/hunting-seasons/hooker-landsborough-and-adams-tahr-ballot](http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/hunting-seasons/hooker-landsborough-and-adams-tahr-ballot)

Out hunting and see kea? Take a location and gather as much information about the birds, sex age and activity as possible. Register your sighting at:

[www.keaconservation.co.nz/support-kea/kea-sightings](http://www.keaconservation.co.nz/support-kea/kea-sightings)

And make sure you let them know you're a hunter! Keep an eye out for updates on next year's Kea Data Collection Project and be part of securing the future of hunting and indigenous species in New Zealand.



Did you see any ankle bands on kea?  
Yes  No

*(If yes, please use your spotting scope or camera to zoom in and check the colours and markings on bands)*

Hunting day	Bands observed i.e. two yellow strips on black band

Behaviour (tick those that apply):  
 Calling  Flying  Feeding   
 Resting  Preening   
 Interacting with:  
 Other kea  Humans  Non-natural objects   
 General areas observed (e.g., bush/ alpine zone/ at camp/ at tahr carcass)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other observations (i.e., feeding on tahr carcasses/ attacking your gear)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 How much do you value seeing kea on your hunting trip?  
 Not at all  0  1  2  3  4  5  highly value

**Prize Draw**  
 To enter the prize draw simply fill out your Kea sighting form during your hunt and place into the box located at your helicopter pad. Prizes will be drawn on 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2021.

Conditions of entry: One sighting form per hunting party. Prizes will be sent to the main applicant to be shared with their hunting party. Incomplete forms will not be eligible for this draw. If ballot permit number is unknown during the trip, leave blank and if drawn the NZTF will contact you.

**Fun Kea Facts**  
 The kea lineage, along with the kaka and the kakapo likely diverged from other parrots between 55 – 85 million years ago.

Kea play a vitally important part in maintaining the health of our alpine ecosystems through;  
 • distribution of seed in high country areas,  
 • potentially pollination of native vegetation  
 • consumption of larvae that live inside mountain daises which would otherwise predate on the flower  
 • scavenging carcasses, similar to the role held by wolves in Yellowstone National Park.

Kea are a highly social species which exhibit complex social and cognitive behaviours throughout all life stages. Studies on kea social interactions, neophilic behaviours and communication indicate a level of cultural learning in this species.

**TAHR BALLOT KEA SIGHTINGS PROJECT**



## Tahr Research

I TRAVELED ACROSS THREE CONTINENTS IN PURSUIT OF THE TAHR. IT SEEMS FUNNY NOW THAT THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW OF THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH A STRANGE MOUNTAIN GOAT.

While at veterinary school, the first I heard of this animal - half lion, half goat - was through the stories told by researchers studying this species in its native land: the Himalayas. As a student I couldn't afford a trip to Nepal. But, the stories my professors were telling me about the "lion-goat" sparked a hemitragus obsession that remains with me to this very day.

I remember my first ever tahr - a lager blond, 12.5-incher that I shot, sleepless; after a 36-hour plane trip, 7 collective hours to and from airports, and a 5-hour trek to the top of tahr country. I knew right there and then that I would be relentlessly hounding my wife for a relocation to New Zealand's South Island before too long!

Today, I am excited to introduce you to a new tahr research project which I am leading.

After multiple discussions with Prof. Luca Rossi from the faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Torino, we have emerged with a potential research project to study the sanitary situation of wild goats in New Zealand, and the possibility of this being a joint research project conducted in conjunction with the university.

From my own observations of several cases of infectious keratoconjunctivitis (IKC) on tahr and observations made by other local hunters of the same disease on tahr and chamois, we believe that pinning down this first objective of collecting data on the "pink-eye" would be a good start for this type of research.

Although chamois and tahr are abundant in New Zealand and have always been subject to hunting and to numerical containment plans as non-native species, they have only occasionally been the object of study as far as diffusive diseases and parasites are concerned. The information available in the official literature is now very scarce and rather dated.

In Europe, IKC has been the subject of numerous field and laboratory investigations that, over time, have clarified its clinical, epidemiology and etiology, as well as its impact at the population level. Outside Europe, the knowledge on IKC in native wild goats is as scarce as in NZ.

**This project has been designed so that hunters in the ballot can make a valuable contribution to the conservation of the world's only alpine parrot.**

The ballot area is particularly important as we know that Kea feed on tahr carcasses in the winter and this protein source may be important to their nesting success. By recording kea sightings and individually banded kea we gain a better understanding of how far and where they move, how many new birds are recruited into the population each year and lots more.

**Kea Sightings Project**  
 The Kea Sightings Project is run by small group of volunteers who are passionate about kea. They aim to make people aware of the plight of the kea, to encourage everyone to be actively involved in saving this amazing species, and to gather useful scientific information on kea ecology and behaviour.

For more information on our collaborative effort, links to the wider Kea project & how you can get behind it go to: [www.nztf.org.nz](http://www.nztf.org.nz)

**LIFE STAGES**

**Fledgling (FL): This year's chick**  
 Crown: very pale yellow  
 Cere and eyelids: bright pale yellow  
 Plumage: immaculate. Will not show moult

**Juvenile (Juv): Previous years chick**  
 Crown: still pale but not glaringly so  
 Cere and eyelids: rich yellow  
 Plumage: many worn feathers, may be moulting

**Subadult (Sub-A): 2-4 years old**  
 Crown: dark  
 Cere and eyelids: splotchy mix of yellow and black  
 Plumage: Generally tidy, may be moulting

**Adult: 4 years plus**  
 Crown: dark  
 Cere and eyelids: mostly dark. May have traces of yellow  
 Plumage: Generally tidy, may be moulting

**Adult Female:**  
 Generally smaller than male Weight: Up to 800g  
 Bill appears straighter and smaller than male  
 Bill length: 39mm - 50mm  
 Skull length: 59mm-67mm

**Adult Male:**  
 Generally larger than female Weight: Over 1 kg  
 Bill appears long and more curved  
 Bill length: (longer than female) 47mm - 55mm  
 Skull length: (also longer than female) 64mm - 70mm

**\*UN - unable to distinguish sex**

**Kea Sighting Form**

Ballot Block: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Period: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Permit #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Hunting day	Est. max number of Kea seen	Largest group of Kea seen	Number of Kea heard only
Saturday			
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			

**Sex and life stage descriptions**

Hunting day	Sex identified (number)				Life stage (number)		
	M	F	UN	FL	Juv	Sub-A	Adult
Saturday							
Sunday							
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							

Continued on the other side .....



The term “Citizen Science” is well suited to this situation. Citizen Science projects that deal with collecting reports of abnormal mortality episodes in wild animals are not many, due to a number of limitations, such as the low appeal of the topic for the average citizen. However, experience teaches us that the interest groups can be many and varied - more than we can imagine.

In this case, local hunters will represent the foundations for any type of research development. Through their experience and time spent in the field in direct connection with wildlife, we could work with exhaustive information to better understand the existence and the dynamics of possible outbreak diseases.

A survey among hunters would be the first step for this project. This survey would be designed to collect information on individual cases and/or outbreaks of IKC observed in chamois and tahr since the year 2000. Respondents would be asked to fill out a digital form and to contribute, where possible, photos and videos.

All material will be validated by a panel of four veterinarians with expertise in IKC in wild goats. The results would be posted on a dedicated website, which all possible stakeholders will be able to access after registration.

All information and images would be explicitly attributed to their contributors, along with a Thank You note. The locations of the single observations will appear on a digital map, which would be updated in real time as soon as the data is validated.

The second step of the research will dig a bit deeper into the characterization of the “pink-eye” pathogen. In this step, samples collected in the field from the conjunctival sac of healthy and IKC affected chamois and tahr would be analyzed according to the host’s sex, age, geographical origin, season of collection, and any association to outbreak or individual cases.

Potential contributors will have access to precise instructions via pre-recorded video for the harvest, conservation, and correct submission of the eye swabs. Characterization analyses would be carried out in the laboratories of the Wildlife Ecopathology Service (SEFAS) of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), in Spain. The UAB would sponsor the cost of laboratory work for this project.

I strongly believe that the binomial hunter-researcher is a winning combination. To date, I have personally completed over 2000 autopsies - including many conducted on wild ungulates in the Italian Alps. I can tell you that the sheer amount of data that can be collected from ruminant carcasses is impressive. The hunter-research has a unique opportunity to examine the animals that forge the backbone of their treasured activity. In butchering their harvests - like autopsies - it is like reading a book of how these animals have spent their life in the wild.

The “pink-eye” project is more than disease research. It also has the potential to offer local hunters a specific training in regard to wild game management. At the same time, it may also give them a particular awareness of how precious their knowledge and observations are - matured through years spent in the great outdoors. In New Zealand, there is a massive opportunity here to develop, nurture, and benefit from a proactive and valuable wildlife management system, or even a novel vision of environmental science and its growth.

Thank you so much for your attention! Please keep an eye out for the aforementioned survey over the coming year. I greatly look forward to working with my fellow hunters in New Zealand!



## Difficult Treasure

THIS WAS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE TAHR FOUNDATION AND BLOOD ORIGINS AND WAS MADE WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF CAM HENDERSON OF THE HUNTERS JOURNAL.

**A** Difficult Treasure was a short video made to show case tahr, Robbie Kroger of Blood Origins with thanks to the Spiros family provided funding for the production and Cam Henderson produced the film. It received 800k views and was highly praised.

The article here was written for the Hunters Journal by Sophie Henderson, Sophie was one of the participants, in the article she captures the pure essence of tahr hunting, quite an achievement for someone on their first ever tahr hunt. Her story puts into words what tahr mean to us,

she nailed it and we want to share it with you.

It’s easy to not want to involve yourself mentally in every single news story fed to us via TV, social media and our timelines. It’s understandable that we have a limitation on how much we can take on and process, especially when right now it feels like there are so many things that are demanding our minds and attention.

The crusade against tahr is one of those things. There are so many wheels turning and unless you are part of the outdoor and hunting community it can fly by your radar. It flew by mine for years and before I met my now-husband, I had no idea these incredible animals existed. There was something in the way he told me about them in his stories – he was in awe of them. As a non-hunter myself – and I am sure there are so many who can relate – it’s easy to get pretty tired of your other half showing you pictures and videos of what they saw and what excited them while on their adventures. I was fascinated with this animal though and found their babies so damn cute, so those photos, videos and stories were always welcome.





*“When the sun started to disappear we set off up the valley to get a little closer to the ones we had been watching through the scope stopping on the way so Snow could point out plants they had been eating, beds they had made under the matagouri.”*

One thing I noticed when he shared his experiences with this animal is how much those moments and memories appeared to have shaped him. The species live mostly in alpine areas, so a trip to find them usually isn't a mellow one. Most of us call this character building; I call it sheer f\*cking dangerous when I see the terrain they are hunting on, yet he calls it therapeutic. To him, it's never been about shooting an animal. Sure, that's welcomed if they see the right one, but the journeys of hunting to kill aren't of much importance. The hunting to learn, for the challenges, the achievement, the admiration of another species, the vastness of the landscape, the sun whispering goodbye in soft gold, the infinite healing in the repeated refrains of nature, the dawn that comes after night, spring after winter, the snowmelt, being chilled to the bone, hot

coffee, blowing tents, knowing that nothing is guaranteed in the hunt but everything is guaranteed in the adventure.

All of those things, all of those wonderful things this wonderful animal offers. What a huge loss it would be for them to no longer exist here and instead be blown to bits on the side of the mountain by helicopters gunning them down. It's heartbreaking. It's inhumane. It's not us and we can't allow it.

It was an experience like no other heading on a trip to actually see these animals in person, and it was also something that I never thought I would do. Despite everyone assuming I also hunt (whenever I mention to anyone we publish a hunting magazine I have blokes launching into stories about their latest trips having no clue I just do the invoicing), I have actually never hunted before and I'll be pretty honest and admit I have next to no inclination to. I'm quite content on flat ground in the comfort of my own home and you'll most likely never catch me on these pages again! But, despite all of that, I was actually pretty excited to see what all the hype was about, plus there was the bonus of a heli flight and Cam told me the hut was pretty nice ... so I was sold!

After a couple of hours' drive south to Ben Mcleod Station, we met the rest of the team at the Station Air hanger. Here we were: a long-haired cameraman, a uni student studying to become a teacher, an Auckland based denim-clad photographer, a PE graduate, a blonde-haired wedding photographer and finally our absolute legend of a guide, Snow Hewetson. Probably the strangest mix of people he had ever guided.

While flying into Taffy Hut we got our first sight of tahr. They were crossing steep mountainscapes at speed, with such sure steps and agility it's hard to believe they didn't originate in our mountains. I think we were all in awe at this stage, seeing them cross this gnarly, rocky terrain like it was a flat, grassy, bouncy paddock. It was a pretty cool introduction into what we were going to be spending the next couple of days doing: learning about this species, seeing its impact on our landscape, and watching it in our environment.

After we landed and the sound of the helicopter faded away, we started with some ham and chicken buns, a coffee and an adjustment into how damn cold it was in the valley the hut was in. The sun reached the hut at about 2 p.m., and we got that glorious warm glow for a couple of hours before it cruised off again behind the

mountains by 3 p.m. Pretty much as soon as we arrived Snow was setting up the spotting scope and pointing out tahr to us on one of the faces behind the hut. I still have no idea how he could spot them without even looking through binos, my 25-year-old eyes couldn't see a bloody thing. I was so impressed. He did explain to us that we would see higher numbers of tahr on this trip due to being on private land. It was a wee thrill seeing them through the spotting scope, and we were all drinking up the info that Snow was sharing about them in their habitat: their movements and all these other wicked facts about this species he is so clearly passionate about. I think I learnt more on the first day there than I did in my almost three years of university. It makes such a big difference when the person you are learning from has such a great wealth of knowledge.

When the sun started to disappear we set off up the valley to get a little closer to the ones we had been watching through the scope stopping on the way so Snow could point out plants they had been eating, beds they had made under the matagouri, cool things like frost heave which we found super fascinating, and many other tidbits he had in his filing cabinet of information. While we were walking and yarning away, Snow stopped us to point out a wee face he could see on the ridgeline towards our left. Over the ridge, there was a nanny watching

this strange compilation of people walking along up her valley. We could just see the shape of her head and horns silhouetted over the hillside.

After a small climb up to a better spot, we saw the bulls we had seen earlier and we sat and watched them interact for a while. It was special, and I started to understand the feeling that so many chase. To be here in this beautiful place, surrounded by divine nature, the comfort of a running stream and the flow of freshwater nearby, cool air creating clouds as we exhaled, branches brushing our ankles, it was the beautiful opposite of urbanisation. It's innate in our core to feel this connectedness with our natural environment, and no matter how much we suppress it during our every day, the internal shift towards peace I felt being there was something I couldn't deny.

After a short time, we cruised back to the hut, got the heater cranking and began to defrost. I know on the scale of tahr trips this one was at the extremely mellow and comfortable end but damn the air was fresh! We settled in for the night, red wine was poured, Snow's EPIC tahr casserole (yeah super fitting and absolutely delicious) was demolished and we spent hours yarning about the most random things, from American politics to wine for beginners and a gazillion stories in between. I've heard about the random hut discussions before, and yeah, wow, tangent central.







The next morning we were gone by around 8 a.m. and set off for a 'wee walk up the hill next to the hut'. I knew deep down it wasn't going to be a little wander but chose to stay naive and not think too far ahead. We climbed until we got to a good vantage point which enabled us to look right across the neighbouring ridges, and Snow pointed out to us a bull tahr and a couple of nannies which were about one kilometre away on the same face. Once we saw those, that was it. It was game on and we began the mission to close the gap between us and them, with a goal of getting as close as we could.

It began to get exciting when Snow told us to lower our voices and keep low. We went through about four gullies like this. Being careful to not disturb rocks and communicating at a whisper. Each time we travelled through a gully we would reach the next ridge and check to see if our friends were still there, and most of the time they were but we were starting to see more and more over different parts of the mountain which made it even more exhilarating.

We finally poked our heads over the last ridge between us and them. And it was insane, they were right there in front of us. It was what we came for. We were all just beaming at each other and Eden and I were trying to keep the excitement out of our voices (we are quite loud expressive people, not ideal in this setting). Snow was

able to gauge size and age and we just sat and watched them move up the valley and over the top. It was surreal and something I'll never forget. We celebrated our successful hunt with OSM's and snickers and set off back to our hut to pack up for home. We were all buzzing with a sense of achievement and exhilarated by the chase and reward.

Something I mulled over a lot during those two days was the kind of message that needs to be sent out to the general public and how the situation should be communicated to everyday non-hunting folk. I am all for what you as hunters do, your passion, and the fire that's been ignited in the hunting community to save this species. It's truly admirable and I take my hat off to all of those fighting the battle. I believe strongly though, that in order to raise public awareness and to get non-hunters onside, the conversation needs to involve less hunting stories and trophy photos, and instead more wicked imagery of these animals. Tell your family and friends tales of your experiences seeing them, talk of their agility, beauty, their history and story. Talk of their fate under the current plan, the lack of consultation, the lack of evidence. Remove hunting from those of conversations, instead, speak of the extinction of a species. We got this.

Snow's words

"For me this experience reinforced just what an amazing species the tahr is and confirmed my conviction that anyone who is given the opportunity to view tahr in the wild will be blown away by the experience and the animal."

"Basically all I did was take them tahr hunting without a rifle. We went through the whole process of glassing for tahr in likely habitats and then once we had found some bulls and nanny groups we assessed them for the right big male that could showcase what a big maned bull in all his winter splendour really looks like."

"I had a very powerful sense of having really given these guys something special that morning – something they would never forget. That satisfaction and fulfilment was as strong as ever regardless of not having actually taken a trophy. I have always enjoyed sharing what I have learned about tahr and hunting them, and I have come to realise that when you love something, sharing that brings twice as much pleasure and double the reward of doing it alone."

*Snow Hewetson - Chairman of the Tahr Foundation*

## Tahr Foundation Ballot Form

THE TAHR FOUNDATION ASKED THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION IF WE COULD TAKE OVER THE RUNNING OF THE WILDERNESS AREA BALLOT.

**W**e did this because we wanted to be able to better connect with hunters and start to work with those hunters to gather more information on tahr.

This was in no way a reflection on how Doc have been

running the ballot or the job that Doc staff in this role have been doing, in fact we would be happy to work with Doc staff who administer the ballot and maybe that would be a way forward in the future. For now, Doc have declined to let us take over the running of the ballot but have indicated that might change sometime in the future.

To make a start we decided to create our own ballot return and asked hunters to work with us and begin to collect information that will aid us in future understanding of tahr and tahr hunters.

We hope to have a report on this available in the near future, for now if you haven't seen the return forms including the kea data collection form, we have included them here.





## THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING HERE

HOOKER/LANDBOROUGH & ADAMS WILDERNESS AREA'S

Congratulations on securing a landing site for the 2021 Tahr ballot. The Tahr ballot was introduced to allow recreational hunters access to the Landsborough/Hooker and Adams Wilderness areas. Access to the Wilderness areas is a privilege and is provided to manage the herd toward the Tahr densities set out in the 1993 Himalayan Tahr control plan. Access relies on hunters contributing to the management of the herd and gathering harvest data is crucial to maintaining this access. Although many of us view the Tahr ballot as a trophy hunting opportunity it is important to remember we need to balance the herd, and shooting nannies is crucial to this.

Unlike the roar blocks there are no boundaries in the tahr ballot, what is being offered is the exclusive right to fly to a specific landing site for a particular period. Anyone is free to walk in and hunt in these areas if they have an open area Hunting Permit for the region.

However it is courtesy to only hunt the area around your landing site bounded by its natural boundaries.



## TAHR HERD



To maintain a balanced and stable herd we need to ensure we control the breeding population (nannies), whilst allowing bulls to fully mature. This is now more important than ever with the pressure the herd is now under. The main reason the ballot blocks have continually produced trophy class bulls is because of the limited hunting pressure year-round, which allows bulls to reach their full potential.

When aging and judging bulls it is a good idea to use a number of indicators, both physical and behavioural.

### JUVENILE 6-18 MONTHS

These bulls can be difficult to separate from nannies and will be light in the body (narrow), the older juveniles might have a wee scruffy neck but show no real indicators of being a bull. The bulls will be smaller/same size as nannies. These animals are best ignored, or if you are after a quick pot filler these animals can be a good option. But shooting juvenile nannies is certainly the better option for the meat hunter.



### IMMATURE 2.5-4.5 YEARS

These bulls will have a large variation across the age group, but all will be relatively 'narrow' in the body and light in colour. Immature bulls will have manes varying from a scruffy neck through to a smaller light-coloured mane. Of note is the colour of these bulls which is generally uniform across the body, with no real defined dorsal stripes. These bulls will usually be with the nanny groups and are often seen harassing nannies. These bulls will not get a chance to breed (in a natural herd structure), and will be slightly larger than nannies, but lack the real bulk of a mature bull. Horns on these bulls are 9-12+ inches with light bases and annuli will be noticeably spaced far apart. Ridging will be defined, and horns will look like they come straight back off the skull, with no 'stacking' to the bases.





# MANAGEMENT

## MATURE 5.5-8.5 YEARS

These are your typical herd bulls and bulls most often shot by hunters. Mature bulls will have full manes, and dark hind quarters. Manes can vary from bright blonde/golden through to grey/black. The colour of manes is more of an individual thing, rather than an indicator of age. Hind quarters and the face of mature bulls will be black/almost black. Kidney/dorsal stripes will be noticeable on mature bulls, these are light coloured lines on either side of the spine, which extend from the back of the mane to the rear quarters. A Mature bull will be 1.5-2 times the size of a nanny and should look 'heavy' on his feet. During the rut these bulls will usually be seen in the nanny groups, showing classic signs of rutting (posturing, flehming/lip curling). Horns will be anywhere from 10-14+ inches, ridging and tips are normally in good order, and will be starting to show some 'stacking' of the base.



## OLD BULLS 8.5 YEARS +++

There is very little that separates a 'mature' bull from one who is truly old, the bodies are similar, with only slight changes in body and horn shape/style. You will need a good eye, patience, and practice to distinguish the two. These bulls generally carry more bulk in the body, especially if viewed from behind, he should be wide across the back. During the rut these bulls will often isolate themselves with one nanny. If you see a lone bull with one nanny, get close and have a good look.



Horns are often the best way to identify old bulls, a large percentage of these bulls will have broken or broomed tips and worn chipped ridging. Old bulls will have distinct 'stacking' to the bases of their horns, this is true regardless of the size of their horns.



# BALLOT RETURNS

WIN A \$500 FIRST LITE VOUCHER

For future management decisions it's imperative that we have good data on our tahr resource, and your ballot returns form a big part of this and an even bigger part in maintaining our landing privileges in the future.

You will note there is a returns form on the following pages, we have attempted to simplify this for you to fill out with the hope that we will get more valid data as a result. Please note that this return is for the Tahr Foundation and will help them continue to advocate for better management of our tahr hunting resource. So please show your support by taking the form seriously, and make sure you hand it in to your pilot or place it in the box once you land back at the hanger.

This year we also have a Kea Conservation Trust returns form where you can note the details of any kea sightings. With the addition of this form hunters will now be the biggest monitors of kea in New Zealand, and this serves as yet another strong reason for us to continue enjoying this privileged aerial access to our wilderness areas.

All party members that complete the forms and hand it in will go into the draw to win a \$500 voucher for First Lite clothing generously donated by PointsSouth.





<b>TAHR FOUNDATION BALLOT RETURN</b>			
<b>NAME:</b>		<b>LANDING SITE:</b>	
Dates Hunted:		No of Hunters:	
All Party Names:		Email/Phone#:	
<b>Bulls Seen</b>	<b>Nannies Seen</b>	<b>Tahr Shot</b>	
Day 1	Day 1	Day 1	
Day 2	Day 2	Day 2	
Day 3	Day 3	Day 3	
Day 4	Day 4	Day 4	
Day 5	Day 5	Day 5	
Day 6	Day 6	Day 6	
Day 7	Day 7	Day 7	
Average Group Size:			
<b>COMMENTS: Dead tahr seen? Rubbish? etc</b>			

## BEST PRACTICE

Tahr inhabit a formidable environment and hunters must be physically and mentally prepared for this. They are usually found on or near steep rocky bluffs. Tahr usually set out to feed in the late afternoon, returning to cover the following morning. The terrain in most of these areas can be unstable and the area surrounding the sites is usually steep, broken, rocky and mountainous.

There may be heavy snowfalls and disruptive westerly storms during the Tahr hunting period. Avalanches are a potential hazard. Snow and ice usually become heavier towards the end of the season. The West Coast is well known for heavy rain and hunters should be well equipped and prepared. River crossings can be difficult and dangerous when water levels are high and or discoloured.

Good communication devices are essential. Satellite phones and personal locator beacons are recommended and the Mountain Radio Service provides an excellent weather forecast and communication service. It is recommended that each hunting party take in a mountain radio.

Have everything you need for an unexpected night out with you when setting off for a hunt, as there's very little of the wilderness area's that are able to be safely navigated in the dark.

Have an axe AND crampons for those higher elevation landing sites, and be sure you are comfortable using them. Or quite simply just don't go into the more serious terrain.





## EXTRA TIPS

- ➔ It's important to remember bull's can control their mane/hair, much like a turkey can with his tail. If a bull has his mane puffed out, or flat to his body it will have a huge difference to the perceived size of his body. Don't let this fool you into thinking a bull is bigger than he is.
- ➔ The more bull's you look over and pass up, the higher the chances the next one will be that monster you are looking for. This might seem counterproductive, but it is the law of averages. You won't shoot big old bull's if you keep shooting small young ones.
- ➔ A bull's horns always look bigger from behind, try and get a view from all angles. If you're in doubt about a bull, GET CLOSE. Get as close as you can and spend as much time as you can evaluating the situation.
- ➔ Older bull's are bigger, some bulls will reach 'trophy' size at a young age, but in general most of the 13" + bull's will be 8+ years old. 'Average' bulls can grow into big bulls. Bull's have been seen in the 12-14-year age bracket that measure 14+ inches. As 5-6-year-old these bull's were 11.5-12 inches.
- ➔ If you have shot a number of bull's be aware that there are people who have not and try and focus your efforts on finding truly old bull's.



## CAMPSITES

Landing sites are in areas within walking distance of tahr herds and often have reasonably sheltered campsites nearby. At most of these sites, poor weather could prevent aircraft access. Careful planning and weather forecasting is essential. Ensure you have sufficient supplies to cope with delayed pickups.

Although the designated landing area's are the only places where parties may land (some sites have two options), hunters can also walk from these landing sites to their own chosen campsite if they wish. If you are leaving the campsite ensure you have enough food and a suitable shelter as conditions can change and you may be out longer than expected.

Hunters should be aware of natural hazards such as dead overhanging trees when selecting their campsite. There will be kea at some sites; do not feed kea, and ensure campsites are kept as tidy as possible so as not to attract their attention. The best way to stop kea making a mess of your campsite is to firstly keep it tidy, but also to not interact with them at all as it quickly becomes a game for them. And throwing things at them will only make it worse!

Be aware that campsite locations may change due to flood or avalanche damage, changes to water channels or other issues. Ensure that all rubbish is flown out with you and remember to keep the campsites tidy and free from animal and human waste.

Human waste should be buried at least 15-20cm deep and 50m away from any streams or campsites







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**Address:** c/- 2763 SH 63, RD1, Blenheim, 7271

**Phone:** +64 3 324 2300 / **Email:** [info@nztf.org.nz](mailto:info@nztf.org.nz)

**For inquiries to make donations:**

[finance@nztf.org.nz](mailto:finance@nztf.org.nz)