



ANNUAL
REPORT
2025

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Hon. James Meager, our Minister for Hunting and Fishing, with his first nanny tahr taken this year on a hunt with NZTF and DOC.

2025 Chairperson's Report

If last year people had been frustrated at the pace of progress, 2025 might have changed their opinion.

HERDS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

With HOSI's a real possibility, an election promise in fact, things are speeding up before the election. We've watched the FWF and SF run ragged trying to make the most

of the opportunity and the NZTF has stepped up our own journey. There's been a new minister and legislative change is under consideration as I write. The coming 12 months look scary and exciting in equal measures.

"...the fundamental truth is that a HOSI (regardless of location or scale) will deliver better conservation outcomes than what we're seeing now. And critically, it will be sustainable."

In July we formally notified Minister Meager that we intend to investigate a HOSI. We had always considered it as an alternative to the status quo, and that was acknowledged by Minister McClay, but after internal consensus we started a formal process this year.

To give that effect we employed a contractor group to help us with the exploration. I have to say, the early stages have been fun. Envisaging a blue-sky, best case scenario for tahr is a great exercise.

There are certainly some realities with adverse legislation and resistance from a few sectors, but the fundamental truth is that a HOSI (regardless of location or scale) will deliver better conservation outcomes than what we're seeing now. And critically, it will be sustainable. It will be resilient to the whims of changes in government. It will utilise the user groups involved.

We're in the process of scoping issues and will be engaging with

tangata whenua, and then starting conversations with stakeholders.

There's no denying it's a daunting amount of work, but I'd sleep easy for the rest of my life knowing I played a part in getting a HOSI across the line for tahr.

EXTERNAL WORK

It's pleasing to see the NZTFs mana growing outside of just the hunting community. We had a brilliant couple of days with DOC and Minister Meager tahr hunting on public land, staying in a backcountry hut, having discussions around the fire.

To see his genuine appreciation for a bull tahr on the hill brought a bit of positivity back to my mindset. You can't see one of those incredible animals and not recognise their appeal.

Despite seeing a couple of bulls they were all a bit young. The minister had an interesting stalk to 200m in 50kph + winds and killed a nanny with one shot. She was in prime condition, covered in fat with big growth rings and weighing around 40kg. We couldn't have had a better example of a product of a healthy environment. That reinforced discussions around the problems with the densities and numbers in the HTCP.

In addition we had a landowner reach out this year for some help with tahr control. It will be a limited



operation, but it was brilliant to see landowners acknowledge the skills available within the NZTF and actively seek our involvement, particularly in an environment of negativity from the likes of Federated Farmers.

It built on work planned in some boundary areas in Canterbury scheduled for this spring. We're working with landowners and DOC to plan operations leveraging volunteers on problem populations that flow across tenures, using our experience from Targeted Harvest on the West Coast. There's a lot of scope for NZTF members to help with this work in future.

GRANT

In early 2025 the Tahr Foundation Committee sought funding to provide an ongoing baseline for funding Targeted Harvest work, progress MU1 Hunter Led Management and enable our investigations of a tahr HOSI. The Committee was successful in

gaining a grant of \$190,000 from The Tahr Trust which will fund the projects over the next five years. The Committee records it's appreciation and thanks to Trustees of Tahr Trust for their support. The grant will be taken up as income as the projects are progressed, any unused grant funds will be reported as a liability in the Foundation's balance sheet.

TARGETED HARVEST

I encourage everyone to have a read of the Targeted Harvest summary this year. With several years of targeted control underway it's been pleasing to watch the programme develop.

This year we continued to control our core areas of the Jacobs and Mahitahi, but spelled the Mahitahi this autumn and plan to revisit this spring.

We also extended to operations in the Troyte, Paringa and Otoko. The Troyte was very worthwhile

population management, and the others were very valuable for different reasons. With high populations north and south the Otoko has always been a bit of an anomaly, never really reaching problem densities of tahr.

Our operation confirmed this, and gave us some experience of operations in lower densities – what we aim to achieve in the Jacobs and Mahitahi. Costs went from an average of around \$15 per tahr in general operations to \$22.80 per tahr for the Otoko.

The Paringa was a timely intervention to respond to a population of nannies developing in a localised area. Addressing this now helps manage population spread and make sure there is feed available for summering bulls.

GAC

The GAC has provided huge support to us this year. One of the key projects has been a ballot hunting module in the Better Hunting platform. We worked with DOC and the GAC to design a short, educational platform to encourage hunters within the ballot to target female tahr.

The reason we're in there is to provide for better conservation outcomes, that's the justification for special landing sites within the wilderness area, and I don't want hunters taking that for granted.

Currently ballot hunters consistently taking one nanny per bull. Hunters have still taken an impressive 682 animals off the landscape in 2025, but I think we can do better next year. If we're serious about improving vegetation outcomes (and rest assured, I am) then we need to bias the harvest toward females more.

If you want to learn more, flick to the article at the end of the report or check out the QR code below.

For some added incentive there's an awesome prize in 2026 – one lucky winner will win their first-choice ballot landing site!



GAC AMENDMENT BILL

The NZTF spent some time on submissions for the GAC amendment bill to allow for HOSI to exist National Parks. So much so that we rushed our own written submission a little.

In the first instance, this is to support the crucial work the FWF do in Fiordland National Park. The facts are categorical – this is the most successful and enduring deer control program New Zealand has ever seen, and the opposition can't suggest an alternative.

We did request to be heard by

"A huge growth area is our visiting DIY hunters. They're unable to contribute to game animal management in NZ without a tag system, so if you encounter one in the hills suggest they join a foundation or two!"

the Select Committee in an oral submission, and I was pleased with the result. The MPs present asked good questions and hopefully should be satisfied with our answers. A big thank you to all those who put the time in to written submissions. It's easy to assume someone else will do the work for you and put it in the too hard basket.

If you'd like to read our written submission and watch a recording of our oral submission please follow the QR below.



COMMITTEE

Internally it's been a good year for tidying up our own processes. Bruce is doing a fantastic job as secretary and bringing us into the 21st century with some tools to ease the paperwork burden of minutes and job tracking.

We've introduced a code of conduct



for committee members to make our expectations of behaviour clear. We've introduced a rolling conflicts and interest registers to address any concerns about the various hats our members wear.

It's been an interesting avenue to consider. Given all of the committee are subject specialists in one area or another, and have affiliations to a great many organisations, there could be a conflict of interest under every rock if you wanted to look at it that way, but it's good to bring the organisation into a clearer and more transparent space.

MEMBERSHIP

This year we borrowed Kim Prenter from the Sika Foundation to help manage out new membership system. This provides us with

critical operating income as well as a valuable conduit to our most dedicated hunters. This allows us to get information to them first, and provides a good route for receiving information back from our people on the ground.

A huge growth area for membership is our visiting DIY hunters. They're unable to contribute to game animal management in NZ without a fee system, so if you encounter one in the hills suggest they join a foundation or two! That goes for the guides too. If clients are looking for a way to give back and stay informed, sign them up.

I'm very excited to announce our winner of the 2025 prize is Ethan Coles. In 2026 Ethan will be enjoying a fully-catered hunt for a trophy bull with our very own legend, Snow.

Callum Mckenzie from Braided Creative will be along to record the hunt, and hopefully I'll be going too for some time in the hills! When (not if) we're successful the bull will be sent to Mark at Big Game Artistry for taxidermy. A huge thank you to these three for putting up this incredible prize.

Keep an eye out in coming months for our next prize, there's something exciting coming...

AATH

After a significant period of time waiting for DOC to conduct their

"The social licence of hunters depends on there being a quality environment. It sounds pat, it sounds simplistic, but it's true. There are places where tahr have had far too much impact on indigenous vegetation and that needs to be dealt with."

AATH review we've run out of patience and need to start moving forward.

Currently AATH makes a significant contribution to control via offsets. This component needs to be provided for in any HOSI design.

What is also undeniable is the inequity in access, the lack of trust in the system and the unknown of when and where you will encounter it. But, there could be separation in time and space.

The conflicts that arise when operators and foot hunters operate in the same space needs to be resolved. Hunters need confidence that they can choose to go in to a valley and not encounter AATH.

Compliance is another issue that needs addressing. Hunters need confidence that if they report misconduct, it will be investigated and if there's wrongdoing, there will be repercussions.

The way the current system is operated offers none of this.

It was disappointing to see that AATH permits had to be rolled over again despite a DOC 'systems analysis' that began in 2023. This should have been completed and the system reviewed before the existing permits expired.

OUR RESOURCE

I'll reiterate my usual cautionary tale. To some I might sound like a broken record but this message needs to sink in.

The tahr herd in the future will have fewer bulls.

In the years leading up to tahr-mageddon we had become accustomed to an unsustainable population of tahr. The herd undoubtedly needed management. It didn't need what Ms Sage proposed, but it certainly needed more than the baseline control that was happening before.

We're still dealing with the legacy of those numbers. Commercial hunters built an industry around a bull resource larger than was sustainable. Recreational hunters set their expectations around the same. People expect to shoot a bull every time they go out.

The social licence of hunters depends on there being a quality environment. It sounds pat, it sounds simplistic, but it's true.



There are places where tahr have had far too much impact on indigenous vegetation and that needs to be dealt with.

The perpetual issue is the Himalayan Thar [sic] Control Plan with its limits on the number of tahr. Set in 1993 and never updated, 10,000 animals across all tenures in the feral range is an impossibly small number that will not provide an adequate hunting resource.

While we might near a sustainable number of tahr in coming years, the HTCP still calls for far fewer. Over the next five years, if DOC are still compelled by the plan to invest as much in control as they are now, we will have a problem.

We need something better. We're working on what that might look like via an HOSI.

This isn't an attack on DOC, it's an attack on the HTCP. As long as we

have the current HTCP DOC will always be at the whim of changing governments and priorities, whereas the Tahr Foundation and the GAC has a single focus on tahr and game animals.

THE COMING YEAR

I'll finish with sharing my excitement for the coming year. We have a great crew on the committee, members supporting us, and a hard-working GAC team to draw on when needed.

A big thank you to all of those involved in 2025. From hunters making good decisions on the hill, representing us well on social media, and to those who have gone a step further and helped us out with NZTF Targeted Harvest hunts, and the seemingly endless committee meetings, submissions and advocacy. The tahr hunting community can be proud of itself.

Luke Care



Commercial Hunting Update 2025

For this year's report on the commercial harvest of tahr, I have sought to expand our knowledge of who and by what methods commercial operators are harvesting tahr as well as exploring trends.

In collecting information for this report, I contacted outfitter members in New Zealand Professional Hunting Guides Association NZPHGA, helicopter operators, taxidermists and staff at

the Department of Conservation and some game estate properties that hold tahr within the feral range.

Finally, I have used some of my own information based on

conversations with those that work in the industry. For those who responded to my requests for information I am very grateful, as much of the information on the commercial harvesting of tahr in New Zealand is still unknown.

Not all those people I attempted to contact replied to my requests for information, but those that did have given me enough information to partially identify trends, even if it's not a complete picture.

In 2025, some outfitters reported a decrease in tahr hunts, some around the same, and only a few had an increase in demand. Around 80% of outfitters harvested tahr on foot and on private or leasehold land.

More of these outfitters are now required to cull nannies, with over a thousand reported—though actual numbers are likely higher since not all data was provided. Some of the control work is done on foot and some aerially.

Private and lease land holders are actively managing tahr populations.

About 25% of clients booking hunts with larger outfitters choose to harvest a bull tahr, while smaller outfitters like me have seen more bookings for free-range Red stag hunts.

Commercial costs for AATH tahr hunts and the offset obligation have been steadily increasing

mostly due to increased helicopter flight time. Many of the outfitters that responded to my requests for information stated that they were moving away from AATH or preferring to conduct them on private land, mainly due to increased flying time to find bulls and the extra cost associated with this.

There are still a few operators who do all their AATH on public land and consequently have considerable off set obligations to meet at the end of the season.

Other outfitters and helicopter operators have reported they had no problem finding harvestable animals using AATH this season.

This suggests some areas have coped well with increased pressure, while other areas haven't and are seeing population decline. In relation to helicopters doing offsets one experienced operator reported a decrease in the hourly kill rate on AATH offset operations.

Ground based tahr hunts on DOC land, sometimes referred to as wilderness hunts, are a very small part of the overall commercial tahr harvest. Only a few outfitters like myself specialize in this part of the harvest and DOC don't keep a record of these operators.

Additionally a few hunting guides that are not outfitters conduct these hunts and are not covered by the

NZPHGA concession and so are largely untraceable.

There are also several overseas outfitters that come to New Zealand to operate without a work permit (yes, I have personally met a few of them) this has been a bone of contention for the NZPHGA for some time now and their commercial harvest of tahr is also unknown.

Regarding game estates offering tahr behind the wire, I was only successful in contacting one property and they harvest around twenty bulls annually. DOC don't have a record of all those properties holding tahr and neither does the Games Estates Association.

Under the HTCP only those properties that fall within the current feral range as set out by the HTCP can hold tahr in captivity.

This is unfortunate as should game estates outside the feral range be permitted to hold male tahr it would seriously reduce the conflict of recreational tahr hunters and commercial operators competing for a shrinking population of harvestable bull tahr and is something that could possibly be address in a HOSI application.

Taxidermists report similar numbers of tahr trophies for 2025 with no clients complaining about difficulties obtaining trophies. Expediting costs to most destinations around the globe

"In a broad overall summary of the state of play in the commercial sector, I believe it is fair to say that there is increased competition among the various outfitters for access to trophy bulls."

remain mostly the same and no issues expediting, however many outfitters are now doing their own expediting, so my sample of taxidermist's was limited.

In a broad overall summary of the state of play in the commercial sector, I believe it is fair to say that there is increased competition among the various outfitters for access to trophy bulls.

Among the members of the NZPHGA there are many different models Guides are operating under, but we are all acutely aware that we are working with a declining resource that will ultimately affect everyone us.

I want to again thank all those who responded to my request for information, it was very gratifying to receive the detailed information you have provided and is very helpful to the Tahr Foundation in our efforts to navigate towards a Herd of Special Interest.

John Royle



Targeted Harvest Annual Report 2024/25

PURPOSE

This results report was commissioned by the NZTF management committee to outline the operational results of the spring and autumn ground-based targeted harvest of female tahr populations in the Makawhio, Mahitahi, Troyte, Otoko and Paringa Valleys.

OPERATIONAL PLANNING 2024/25

Ground-based hunts of 3-4 days were to be undertaken at each of the sites listed below. Nanny group sizes and distribution recorded, and vegetation status subjectively assessed at each site. Tahr population observed will determine

if further population management is required in the year ahead.

MANAGEMENT TARGETS

As per the NZTF Standard Operating Procedures only identifiable nannies were to be targeted. To achieve the management targets, hunting parties included a minimum of two experienced hunters, preferably one of each party having been engaged on management hunts at sites previously. Two-person parties are experienced hunters only.

SEASONAL MILESTONES:

- Reduce adult female tahr populations in the Makawhio Valley (Upper and Lower sites) as far as possible (recognising the difficulty in hunting bush clad environments).
- Reduce adult female tahr populations in the Troyte Valley as far as possible due to the National Park land status.
- Reduce migrating nanny tahr numbers observed in the McCullagh – Paringa headwaters
- Assess perceived nanny tahr migration in the Otoko headwater & harvest nannys observed

GROUND-BASED MANAGEMENT CRITERIA

- Mature nannies only to be shot
- Good shot placement
- Non-toxic (lead free) ammunition to be used
- Track logs to be recorded during hunting or drawn on map after each hunt should equipment failure occur.
- Record locations and numbers of tahr harvested onto the NZTF App or GPS
- Photograph kills able to be accessed without risk or significant time wasting
- Record numbers and approx. age /sex of observed of non-target animals
- Vegetation assessments to be conducted using the NZTF App or Camera.
- Volunteers are encouraged to salvage meat where possible

and sensible and where it does not impact significantly on hunting efficiency.

TAHR/VEGETATION MONITORING ACTIVITIES

Vegetation monitoring in both alpine and forest habitats is the responsibility of DOC. However, the NZTF hunters on site for management operations take notes and photographs of vegetation status. Further collaboration between NZTF and DOC for improved environmental monitoring is anticipated.

HEALTH & SAFETY

All volunteers were given a health and safety briefing before departure as per the Community Agreement DOC approved Health & Safety plan. Once on site the team had discussion to identify and discuss any on site issues identified. In addition, hunters were to abide by the following:

- Each hunter was required to carry a first aid kit and each party hold a more comprehensive first aid kit at the tent base camp.
- Each morning the teams were to confirm where they are going to hunt and expected routes of travel and return.
- Each hunter was required to carry either a Personal Locator Beacon or an In-Reach device.
- Each party was to have at least 1 In-Reach device so they can communicate with the NZTF Operational Lead as required, or

"To achieve the management targets, hunting parties were to include a minimum of 2 experienced hunters preferably 1 of each party having been engaged on management hunts at sites previously."

pilot directly if necessary.

- Each hunter was required to wear at least one hi-vis piece of clothing when hunting and away from camp.
- Immediately after returning from each trip volunteers were required to report to the NZTF Operational Lead, confirm their safe return and report any incidents.
- The Operational Lead was then to advise DOC that everyone has safely returned or of any incidents.

OPERATIONAL OUTCOMES

As expected in Spring, poor weather plagued operational planning efforts throughout late October / early November but a single partly marginal weather window allowed these sites to be hunted on the 10th – 13th of November, just prior to the 14th Nov. cutoff date.

March 2025 weather was a little more forgiving though volunteer hunters were difficult to muster at the the windows presented.



DATA ANALYSIS

Track logs and waypoints where tahr were shot were recorded via different methods from diaries, mapping programmes on cell phones and the Tahr App. Hunter-days were calculated from the total hours hunting for the operation divided by nine (the average hours spent hunting on full days). Average nanny tahr shot per hour were calculated for comparative reporting.

SPRING 2024 SOUTH WESTLAND TARGETED HARVEST

Timing: 15th October – 14th November – subject to volunteer availability and weather.

MAKAWHIO /JACOBS

One team operating at each site (3 hunters at upper site and 2 hunters

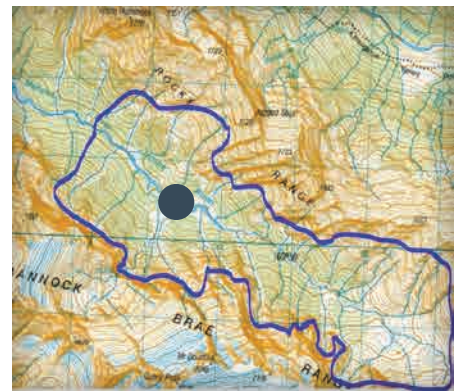
at lower landing site). The lower site is a challenging place to hunt, due to the scale of bush and alpine scrub between valley floor and alpine zone.

The upper site is less challenging to hunt but covers a much larger area, suitable for more hunters.

TROYTE

The valley was previously identified as a bull stronghold and an important recreational hunting area, but nanny populations are reported to have increased, potentially displacing bulls, hence this trial to establish numbers and methods to be successful.

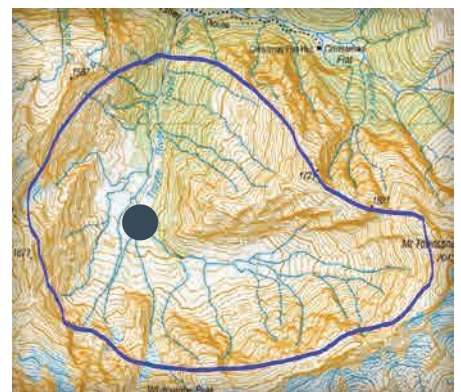
Timing: 15th October – 14th November subject to volunteer availability and weather.



Makawhio / Jacobs: Upper site – 3 hunters (1 helicopter load).



Makawhio / Jacobs: Lower site – 2 hunters (1 helicopter load).



Troyte: Single site – 2 hunters (1 helicopter load).

HUNTER REPORTING

At 1.35, the average tahr per hour shot was lower on average than that of the March hunts, mainly due to less nanny encounters in the upper part of the catchment.

This may indicate some improvement in the reduction of total animal numbers but also may reflect other environmental factors such as timing, seasonal distribution differences and unknown post winter AATH offset activity.

Weather conditions were cloudy on arrival on the 10th with rain that night clearing during the morning of the 11th. Some cloudy periods on the 12th, otherwise fine.

The reduction in numbers-for-effort in the Upper Makawhio, particularly true right (TR) side and TR of the Lower site, would seem to indicate either a seasonal distribution difference or that previous hunts are being effective at reducing number significantly, or a mixture of both.

Hunters are still shooting adult nannies in and around bush and scrub areas in the 7 – 14 year age bracket, but less older animals than previous operations.

Of note – significantly smaller nanny/juvenile group sizes were encountered in the upper Makawhio site compared to previous hunts, while bull numbers were similar or slightly up.

As was the case in March, hunters report increased encounters in the scrub margins and bush with less observations and encounters in the open alpine areas.

SPRING RESULTS

Operation	#Hunters	#Hours	#Hunter Days	Harvest total	Av. Per Hour
Makawhio Lower	2	57.5	6.4	91	1.58
Makawhio Upper	3	73.5	8.16	65	.88
Troyte	2	62	6.9	98	1.58
Totals	7	193	21.5	254	1.35

OBSERVATIONS VS KILLS

(OBSERVATION INCLUDES NANNY & JUVENILES)

Operation	#Hunters	Observed	Kills	% Kill
Makawhio Lower	2	184	91	49.5%
Makawhio Upper	3	131	65	49.6%
Troyte	2	187	98	52.4%
Totals	7	502	254	50.5%

By contrast, in the Troyte the vast majority of animals observed were in open alpine areas, noting that's where the hunting was focused as the lower valley is more able to be accessed by recreational hunters.

Although the kills per hunter effort in Upper Makawhio look poor by comparison to the other sites (above table) the kill rate for animals seen and encountered (overleaf table) is very similar across all three sites.

Overall, approximately 50% of nanny and juvenile tahr observed were shot (noting that a large percentage of animals not shot were juveniles and thus purposely left).

Bulls seen were recorded in diaries but not included in this report as they are not currently a target for NZTF operations.

"Of note – significantly smaller nanny/juvenile group sizes were encountered in the upper Makawhio site compared to previous hunts, while bull numbers were similar or slightly up."

A notable observation is that the majority of nannies seen and/or shot in the Makawhio were concentrated on the true left sides of the valley compared to a more balanced distribution during the March hunts.

My thoughts on this is it's a seasonal variation because the TL side was getting a lot more sun and the TR sides were still cold with little in the way of a spring flush due to less sun, with quite a bit of snow and ice,

huge avalanche filled gullies and active avalanche activity.

MARCH 2025 SOUTH WESTLAND TARGETED HARVEST

Timing – Month of March 2-3 hunters Upper Jacobs, 2 Otoko, 2 Paringa/McCullaugh

Otoko: 9th to 13th March 2025

Site was the headwaters, hunted from DOC's Otoko Ballot landing site. (see Tracking maps opposite page)

2 Volunteer Hunters: Shane Hall and Ronan Scott

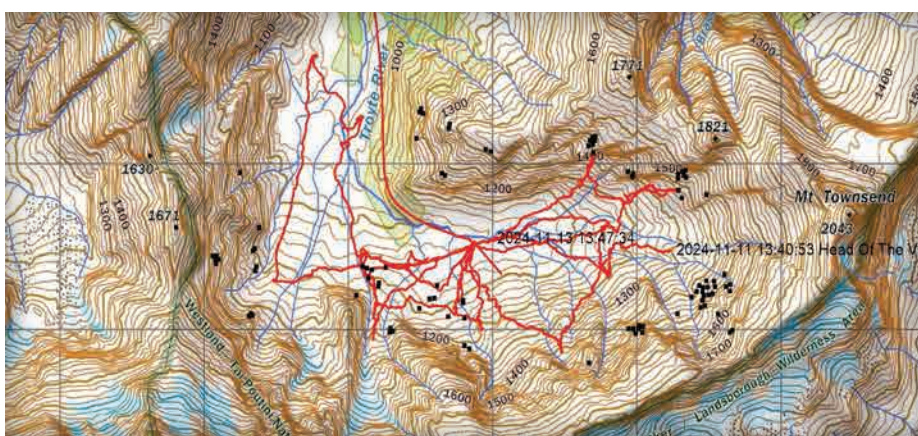
1 day lost to low cloud & rain. Hunting time restricted to 1 late evening & 2 full days hunting, however, all accessible ground was covered.

Few nanny tahr were observed and shot in this headwater catchment. The bulk of the tahr encountered were all in one side creek headwater and predominantly bulls. Little to no tahr sign was seen in bush, creeks, fans, caves or lower scrub zones.

What tahr were seen were high, on or above scrub margins. Approx 30 bulls seen approx. 50% 4-5yrs & older, 12 tahr shot (8 nanny and mistaken 4 juvenile bulls) the later accidental on new hunters' part – learning to identify young bulls which isn't always easy.



Makawhio/Jacobs 2024 spring coverage and kill locations.



Troyte 2024 spring coverage and kill locations.

43 deer were seen and 19 chamois. The majority of vegetation damage was from deer, especially noticeable on stream / gravel slide scrub margins.

Several kea & 2 Rock Wren seen.

McCullaugh/Paringa: 9th to 13th March 2025

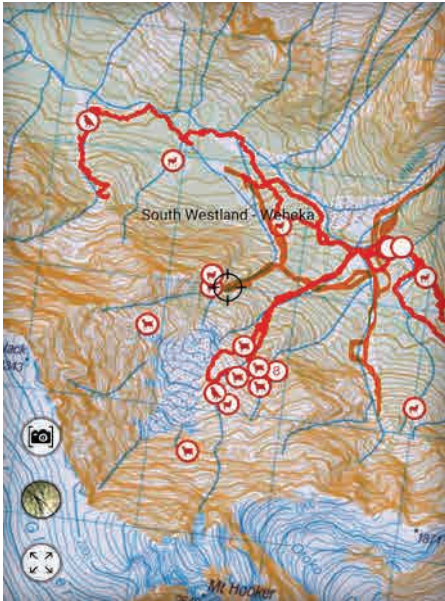
2 Volunteer Hunters: Greg & Fiona Duley

1 day lost to low cloud & rain so a late evening & 2 full days hunting

and a morning badly interrupted by AATH. 37 nanny tahr shot. More tahr encountered and observed in McCullaugh than thought to be there. 34 shot at ranges from 200 to 800yds.

A number of tahr were observed by thermal on the last morning on the Paringa side of the saddle – 3 shot but the hunt was aborted due to AATH interference.

Upper Makawhio/Jacobs: 5th to 9th March 2025. As Per map for Spring.



Otoko March tracking and kills/ observations.

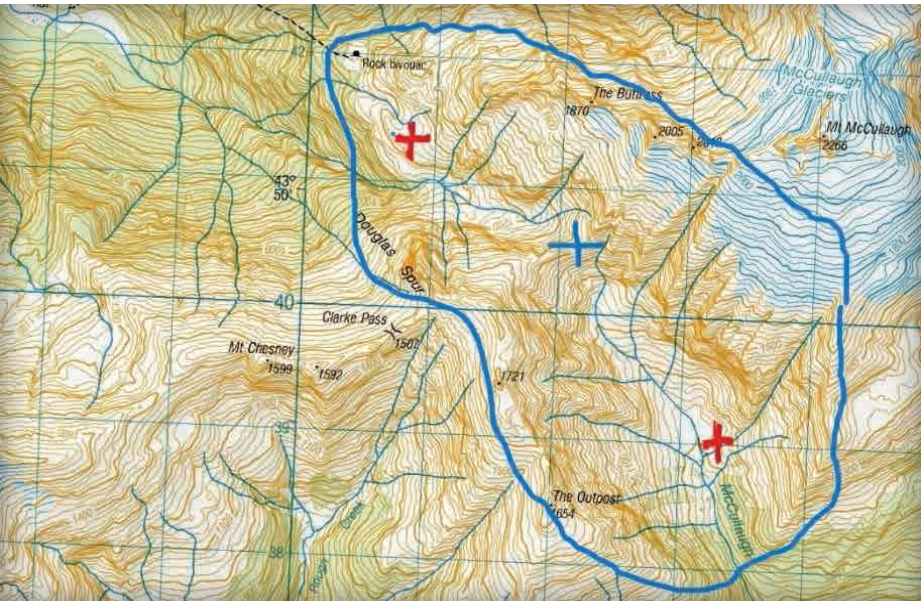
2 Volunteer Hunters: Nigel Jordan & John Royle.

Reasonably good weather allowed an afternoon, 3 full days hunting plus a morning before pick up. Similar numbers to previous autumn visits though an additional day was spent hunting with one less hunter.

Numbers seen & not shot and/or

MARCH RESULTS

Operation	#Hunters	#Hours	#Hunter Days 9hrs	Harvest	
				Harvest total	Av. Per Hour
Makawhio Upper	2	72.5	8.05	144	1.99
McCullaugh/Paringa	2	46	5.11	37	.8
Otoko	2	40	4.44	12	.3
Totals	6	158.5	17.6	193	1.03



McCullaugh/Paringa site.



McCullaugh/Paringa kill locations.

observed through a thermal, would indicate we are still treading water here.

Observations in relation to kills

would have been similar to the March results. With DOC & NZTF harvest work in neighbouring areas (Lower Jacobs, Zora & Troyte) it will be interesting to see if numbers

decrease as a result of reduced migration in the next targeted harvest hunts.

134 animals shot – included several small (late) kids.

Rock Wren, Kea & Falcon observed.

PHOTOGRAPHIC CONFIRMATION

Kills were confirmed by visual observation of death or confident shot placement. As was reported in previous years, photographing tahr shot is challenging and as in previous years only animals easy to get to were photographed.

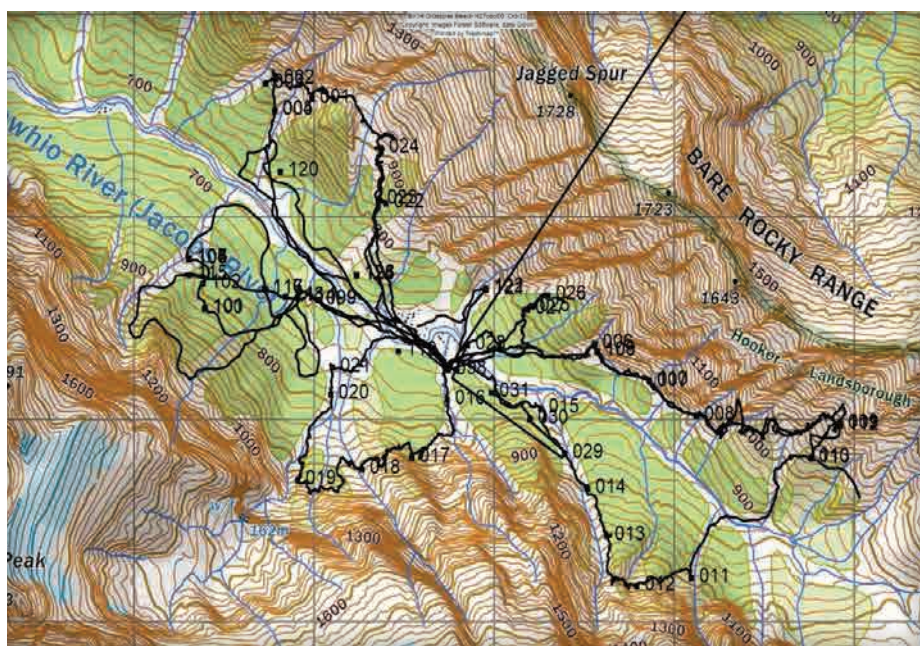
Hunters take photographs only when safe to do so and when the effort taking a photograph doesn't result in disturbance or time wastage that would reduce efficiencies.

A selection of some of the kill photos is included in the photo montage on page 17:

COSTS

Total cost of the spring operation was \$3825 (excluding GST on heli-hire). This does not include cost of ammunition, provided by DOC at no charge. This is equivalent to \$15.06 per tahr over the three sites. A small increase on the last hunt.

Cost per kill had increased in the Jacobs (\$16.50) due to reducing numbers but considerably lower in the Troyte (\$12.75) being the first



Makawhio March tracking & shooting locations to kills.

NZTF ground hunt there.

Costs of the March operations was \$4400 (excl GST) an increase on spring hunts due to increase hourly rate and longer flights to Paringa and Otoko.

Cost per tahr over the three sites was \$22.80/tahr, more expensive due to the lack of nannys to harvest in the Otoko. Excluding the Otoko the average over the Makawhio and Paringa was comparable at \$15.52/tahr

Total spring and March harvest cost: \$8225

VOLUNTEER TIME

40 hours (5 days) of volunteer time were used outside of hunting operations, in addition to the March hunts, by the hunt organizer.

"Kills were confirmed by visual observation of death or confident shot placement. As was reported in previous years, photographing tahr shot is challenging and as in previous years only animals easy to get to were photographed."

Setting up the operation and documentation were approx. 30 hours, including communication, procedure development, health and safety development, and hunter inductions.

With a further 10 hours on reporting (DOC & HFC). A similar amount of time would have been spent on organization and reporting for the March hunts, possibly



Photographic confirmation examples.



Total is conservatively, a further 68 days of voluntary contribution to this work.

KEA AND OTHER WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS

Makawhio Upper - 6 Kea and 1 Falcon were observed and 2 Whio.

Makawhio Lower - 1 Falcon, 3 Kea and 2 Whio seen (the later below the camp flat).

Troyte - 12 Kea were observed as well as 2 Whio and 2 Rock Wren.

Otoko - Kea & Rock Wren observed and McCullaugh - 2 Kea & 2 Rock Wren observed.

VEGETATION

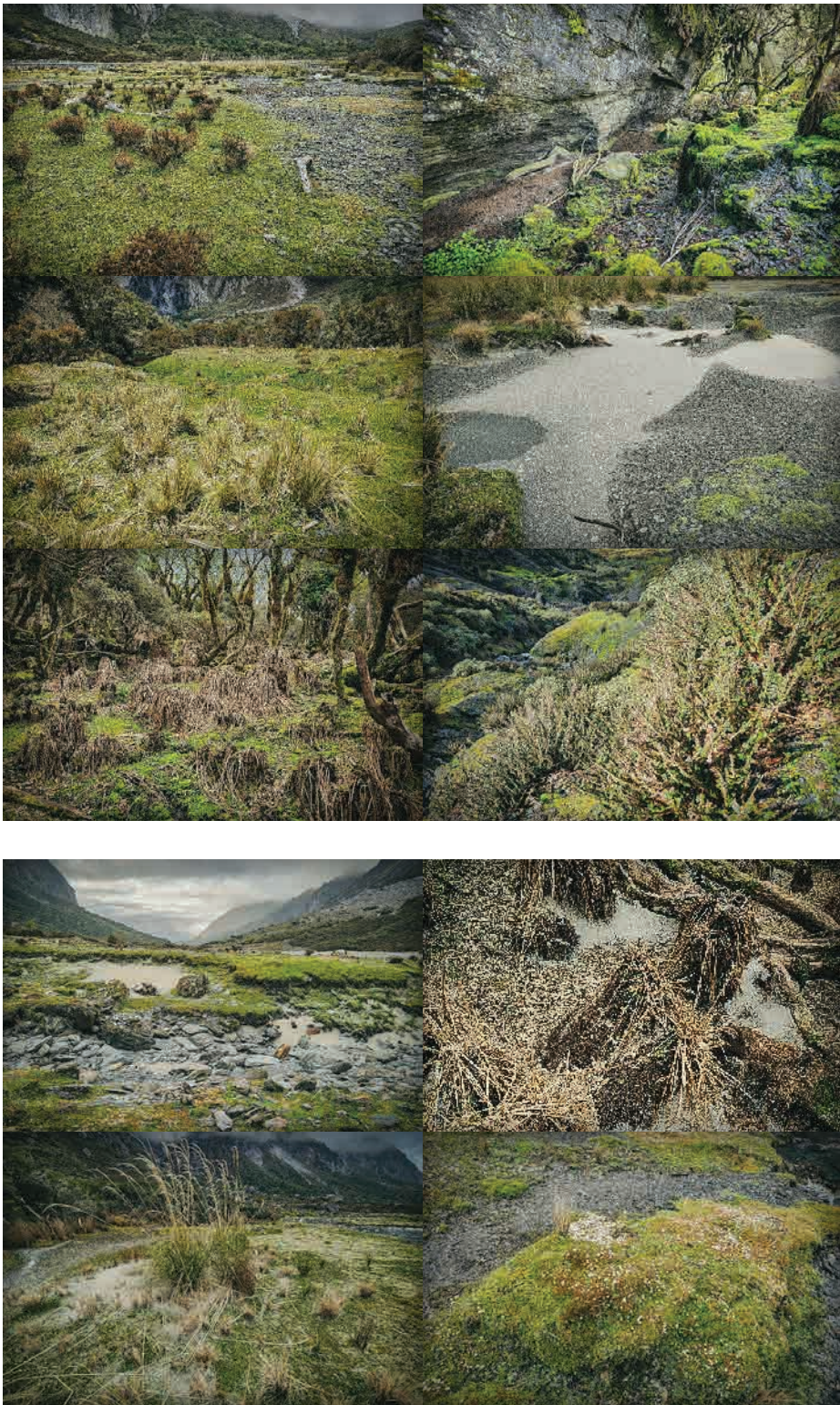
Tahr impacts on vegetation in the

more due to dual reporting for DOC and NZTF purposes (5.5 days).

Volunteer hunter commitment during the spring operations totalled 21.5 hunter days (based on 9hr day) across the three sites

excluding onsite downtime and travel to and from site. Travel time for hunters to and from the sites estimated at approx. 12 man days.

A further 17.5 days hunting and 7 days travel for the March hunters



Examples of tahr browse on vegetation.



Photos showing unusually heavy spring flowering from river flat ground cover plants in Upper Jacobs/ Makawhio – mounds of small flower seeding accumulated on the lee of banks as well as inside bush margins

Makawhio was reported to have not changed significantly since the 2022, 2023 and March 2024 Targeted Harvest operations on the TL but improvements are starting to be seen in some places on the TR.

Again, more animals were being encountered in the bush and less animals observed above scrubline during the day, except some very high on bluff faces out of range.

At the lower campsite flat there appeared to be no recovery to tussock stumps from 2023/24. Of note was some isolated bark stripping not observed before, which may be season related, was

"Tahr impacts on vegetation in the Makawhio was reported to have not changed significantly since the 2022, 2023 and March 2024 targeted harvest operations on the TL but improvements are starting to be seen in some places on the TR."

observed in the lower site bush (spring hunt – images RHS page 18).

No vegetation photos from the Troyte were available at time of writing this report but the snow tussock was reportedly in good condition in the upper basin of the Troyte.

The majority of vegetation impacts observed in the Otoko were from Red deer with streamside vegetation shrubs heavily impacted in places.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Spring operations can be worthwhile if weather conditions permit, it seems however that effort should focus on the TL sides of the valleys due to seasonal climatic conditions, animal concentrations and snow avalanche issues on the TR sides.
- Long-range, high-powered rifles are a necessity in open headwaters and high faces,

each party should if possible have a least one capable long-range rifle and a hunter practiced at long range shooting.

- Makawhio/Jacobs needs continuing attention to achieve reducing target harvest numbers and achieve some vegetation recovery. Also worth trialing a partial Upper Jacobs operation in March i.e. 2 hunters in the upper Jacobs basin (new site in the headwaters) to cover ground not undertaken in spring due to bull concentrations and to maximize benefits of on-site early morning/evening hunting time.
- Revisit Troyte in either spring 2025 or March 2026
- Consider trialing a hunter with a well-trained indicating dog to focus on the bush area of the sites, if such a hunter/dog combo is available (Mahitahi and Lower Jacobs).
- It is difficult to explain the lack of nannies in the Otoko – possible slow migration there or AATH offsets being very successful in the high alpine zone. Based on the small number of nannys observed in the Otoko a revisit could be left for 3 – 5 years.
- Paringa/McCullaugh maybe worth a revisit in a year or two if able to accommodate after the other priorities are on track (Jacobs, Mahitahi and Troyte).
- It would be very useful if DOC could inform AATH operators where and when we are operating in future to avoid disturbance, though it is

acknowledged this would often be short notice.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- 2025 DOC/NZTF Community agreement
- Health and Safety agreement
- Standard operating procedures
- Field Safety Information sheets (FSI's)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The NZTF would like to acknowledge the Department of Conservation for its approval and support to undertake these trials over the period of the first Community Agreement, specifically Tom Brookman and Wayne Costello. Also for arranging approval for work in the Troyte Valley of Westland National Park (WNP) and for providing the non-toxic ammunition.

A further thanks to the hunters who gave up their time to participate in the spring and March nanny harvest for providing their experience and skills to target identifiable females. (Nigel Jordan; Johnny Royle, Dave Keen; Hamish Norton; Shane Hall; Ronan Scott; Cam McKay; Derek Johnson; Greg & Fiona Duley)

A special thanks to Makawhio Iwi for their ongoing support of the NZTF work in South Westland.

S. B Hall (NZTF Committee member and South Westland Targeted Harvest organizer).



Duke of Bedford Award

This year we have shifted our AGM forward to better align with our balance date. This has meant that we haven't had the Sika Show yet, so we can't yet announce the 2025 winners!

For now let's take another look at the two 2024 winners. Hunter Thompson, the spot prize winner, has been busy in the hills with his brand new Swarovski Optik

ATC 17-40x56, he says it has been hunting for nearly two whole months this year and the spotting scope has been 'mint compared to the big one I used to lug around'.



Check out the awesome kea photo he took using his phone through the spotting scope.

Ben Searle, the 2024 award winner, is looking forward to seeing the work done by Big Game Artistry on his wall this year, he says '*it will be fantastic to have this shoulder-mount to remember such a special animal by*'.

We're very excited to see what incredible bulls turn up this year. If you can't make it to the Sika Show in any given year, get the heads to our AGM to be scored in advance, or reach out to the foundation to arrange a special scoring.

It's a special part of what we do, being able to handle the beautiful bulls taken by tahr hunters throughout NZ.

We're excited to announce Swarovski Optik and Big Game Artistry have returned to supply more incredible prizes for the 2025 Duke of Bedford award, so make sure you get your big 8 year plus bulls in to be measured!



Recreational Hunter Update 2025

This year marks 100 years since the first Tahr was legally shot in New Zealand, some 21 years after their introduction to Aoraki Mt Cook and long before the area even became a National Park.

Move forward 100 years to now and it's fair to say a lot has changed but the vision of the Duke of Bedford has very much come to life with Tahr in New Zealand being a valued local and international hunting resource.

There are a range of reasons hunters chose to go after tahr, a trophy bull in most cases, an alpine

hunting experience for others but there are a lot of local and international hunters that will happily shoot several young bulls in an outing and don't think they are doing anything wrong because they're getting numbers down – which is what they have heard or misinterpreted through media in the past.

If they took their time to assess and get one good bull then went after a few nannies they would be on the right track to maintaining sustainable hunting resources.

I personally encounter a fair few hunters going out for their first bull as a bucket list item which is great, generally they will have an idea of what they are looking for and the equipment required to negotiate the terrain but have that mindset of taking the first bull they see, and this is generally just down to their lack of understanding.



Access to educational information is key especially for new comers, NZTF are proud to be working in this space with the GAC on a ballot hunting learning module with that all Tahr Ballot applicants complete this when applying however it is accessible to anyone via the GAC better hunting platform.

This first and foremost informs the users of the ballot system of the intent for these landing sites which of course is for conservation through control of tahr numbers, and knowledge of selection, preparation and safety etc...

On the subject of Tahr Ballots given the 2025 rut is behind us now,

we have seen return data coming through and analysis shows some interesting trends.

Tahr sightings are averaging just under 4 per hunter per day fairly consistently over recent years and each hunter on average has been taking bulls and nannies at a ratio of roughly one to one.

This is good that nannies are a focus given the purpose of the ballot but we feel that with some better education, the ratio could be shifted more toward nannies particularly where we see individuals taking multiple bulls out or worse, shooting and not recovering bulls.

"Access to educational information is key especially for new comers, NZTF are proud to be working in this space with the GAC on a ballot hunting learning module with that all Tahr Ballot applicants complete this when applying however it is accessible to anyone via the GAC better hunting platform. "

Outside of the ballots, despite many access limitations there are still many quality recreational hunter opportunities, there are good numbers of bulls on both the east and west in many places.

DOC have some information available on their web site showing where bulls have been sighted, and also where control operations have been conducted, this can be useful if you haven't been to an area before although noting that bulls move around a lot throughout the year.

There is a lot going on in the hunting community right now with some potential changes on the horizon. For now we just have to keep the right messaging going with both new and experienced hunters to look after the future trophies.

Bruce Hansen



Minutes from the Annual General Meeting 2024

Date: 07/12/2024

Location: New Zealand Deerstalkers Association Clubrooms – 599, McLeans Island Road, Christchurch.

Time: 12pm

1. ATTENDANCE:

Luke Care
Sheene Ottmann
Gerald Telford
John Royle
Greg Duley
Snow Hewetson
Dave Keen (on-line)
Marcus Pinney
Kaylyn Pinney
Shane Hall (on-line)
Bruce Hansen

Guests:

Garry Ottmann
Geoff Kerr
Cameron Stokman
Clyde Rogers
Andrew Walton

Apologies received:

Gwyn Thurlow – NZDA

2. APPROVE MINUTES OF AGM 23/01/2024:

Moved: Gerald Telford
Seconded: Shane Hall

3. APPROVED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

Moved: Sheene Ottmann
Seconded: John Royle

4. APPROVE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT:

Moved: Luke Care
Seconded: Bruce Hansen

5. COMMITTEE APPLICATIONS:

NZTF Officers:

Luke Care – Chairperson
Sheene Ottmann – Treasurer
Gerald Telford – Vice
Chairperson (newly elected)
Bruce Hansen – Secretary
(newly elected)

Committee Members:

Greg Duley
Shane Hall
Snow Hewetson
David Keen
Kaylyn Pinney
Bruce Hansen - NZDA
John Royle - NZPHGA
Marcus Pinney - SCI

6. COMMITTEE APPROVED: (BY SHOW OF HANDS)

Moved: Snow Hewetson
Seconded: John Royle

7. SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Reduced rate for shorter membership period at \$50 (inc GST) for period to 31 July 2025.

Meeting closed 1pm.

*The New Zealand Tahr
Foundation Incorporated
Performance Report
For the Year Ended
31st July 2025*

The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated
ENTITY INFORMATION
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2025

ENTITY INFORMATION

Legal Name	The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated
NZBN	9429043411740
Incorporation Number	2655152
Date of Incorporation	3 November 2016
	Re-registered under the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 on 1 February 2024
Bankers	Westpac
IRD Number	123 960 801

PURPOSE

The primary purposes of the Foundation are to:

- Education – to increase the understanding of Tahr and the Tahr herd through provision of information and education.
- Co-ordination among stakeholders – to achieve and maintain consistent, appropriate harvest levels of healthy Tahr by better co-ordination of recreational and commercial Tahr hunting.
- Herd Management – to advance a management regime that involves a collaborative partnership between Recreational and Commercial Tahr hunters, the Game Animal Council, affected Local and Central Government, local Iwi, interested landowners and businesses with an interest in Tahr.

ENTITY STRUCTURE

The Foundation has a single entity structure. The Foundation is governed by a Committee. Officers of the Committee and elected annually from the membership.

RELIANCE ON VOLUNTEERS AND DONATED GOODS OR SERVICES

The Foundation is entirely reliant on volunteers with funding from donations, grants, subscriptions and other fundraising revenues.

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.
These financial statements have not been subject to audit or review.

The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated
STATEMENT OF SERVICE PERFORMANCE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2025

Description of medium to long term objectives

Please refer to the Annual Report accompanying this Performance Report.

Description of Key Activities

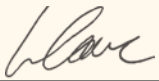
Please refer to the Annual Report accompanying this Performance Report.

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The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2025

	Note	2025	2024
		\$	\$
REVENUE			
Donations		2,251	270
General Grants		190,000	2,174
Government service delivery grants		-	2,000
Membership subscriptions		6,600	61
Interest Received		745	696
Revenue from merchandise sales		1,591	5,374
Total Revenue		201,187	10,575
Less Expenses			
Expenses related to activities		5,642	7,597
Other expenses related to service delivery		5,081	7,844
Other expenses		321	183
Total Expenses		11,044	15,624
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) BEFORE TAX		190,143	(5,049)
Transfer Unused Conditional Grant Income to future periods		190,000	323
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR		\$143	\$(5,372)

This performance report has been approved by those charged with Governance.

Name: Luke Care  Name: Bruce Hansen 

Position: Chairperson Position: Secretary

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The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated
STATEMENT OF MOVEMENTS IN ACCUMULATED FUNDS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2025

	Note	2025	2024
		\$	\$
ACCUMULATED FUNDS AT START OF YEAR		48,522	53,894
SURPLUS & REVALUATIONS			
Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the Period		143	(5,372)
Total Recognised Revenues & Expenses		143	(5,372)
ACCUMULATED FUNDS AT END OF YEAR		\$48,665	\$48,522
RESTRICTED RESERVES AT START OF YEAR		39,182	42,671
SURPLUS & REVALUATIONS			
Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the Period		(2,874)	(3,489)
Total Recognised Revenues & Expenses		(2,874)	(3,489)
RESTRICTED RESERVES AT END OF YEAR		\$36,308	\$39,182
GENERAL RESERVES AT START OF YEAR		9,340	11,223
SURPLUS & REVALUATIONS			
Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the Period		3,017	(1,883)
Total Recognised Revenues & Expenses		3,017	(1,883)
GENERAL RESERVES AT END OF YEAR		\$12,357	\$9,340

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The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2025

	Note	2025	2024
		\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Bank – Cheque Account		206,339	9,398
Bank – Savings account		27,857	27,740
Accounts receivable		1,061	11,440
Prepayments		-	1,279
Merchandise stocks		1,897	1,279
GST refund due		149	354
Taxation refund due	6	405	197
Total Current Assets		237,708	50,408
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Other Assets	5	10,400	10,400
TOTAL ASSETS		248,108	60,808
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Accounts payable		264	-
Deferred revenue	7	199,179	12,286
TOTAL LIABILITIES		199,443	12,286
NET ASSETS		\$48,665	\$48,522
Represented by;			
ACCUMULATED FUNDS		\$48,665	\$48,522

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.
These financial statements have not been subject to audit or review.

The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated
STATEMENT OF CASH MOVEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2025

	Note	2025	2024
		\$	\$
Cash From Operating Activities			
Donations and other		2,251	331
Activities		18,570	5,374
Interest		745	643
		21,566	6,348
Cash Applied to Operating Activities			
Payments relating to activities		14,713	20,997
Net GST paid		(205)	1,255
		14,508	22,252
Net Cash Movement from Operating Activities		7,058	(15,904)
Cash From Financing Activities		190,000	-
Unused Grants		190,000	-
Net Cash Movement from Financing Activities		190,000	-
Net Cash Movement		197,058	(15,904)
Opening Balances			
Bank Accounts		37,138	53,042
CLOSING CASH BALANCES		\$234,196	\$37,138

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.
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The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2025

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1. BASIS OF PREPARATION

The performance report is prepared in accordance with the XRB's Tier 3 (NFP) Standard. The entity is eligible to apply these requirements as it does not have public accountability and has total annual expenses of less than \$5,000,000. All transactions in the performance report are reported using the accrual basis of accounting. This performance report is prepared under the assumption that the entity will continue to operate for the foreseeable future.

Specific Accounting Policies

In the preparation of this performance report, the specific accounting policies are as follows:

(a) Goods & Services Tax

The 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) Donations and Grants

Donations and Grants received are included in operating revenue. If particular conditions are attached to a donation or a grant 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.

(c) Income Tax

The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated is wholly exempt from New Zealand income tax having fully complied with all statutory conditions for these exemptions.

(d) Changes in Accounting Policies

There have been no changes in accounting policies during the financial year. (2024: Nil)

2. AUDIT

The Performance Report has not been audited.

3. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

At balance date there are no known contingent liabilities (2024:\$0). The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated has not granted any securities in respect of liabilities payable by any other party whatsoever.

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.
These financial statements have not been subject to audit or review.

The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2025

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES (CONTINUED)

4. RELATED PARTIES

There were no transactions with related parties during the financial year. (2024: Nil)

5. OTHER ASSETS

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Bronze Trophy Tahr Sculpture 350mm High with Rimu Base		
At cost	10,400	10,400
Total Other Assets	\$10,400	\$10,400

6. TAXATION

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Tax Payable		
Interest Income	745	643
Less tax exemption	1,000	1,000
Taxable Income	-	-
The Taxation Charge is Represented by		
Current year tax	-	-
	-	-
Tax Payable		
Balance carried forward		197
RWT credits	208	197
Total Tax to be Refunded	\$405	\$197

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.
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The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2025

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES (CONTINUED)

7. CONDITIONAL GRANTS AND DEFERRED INCOME

			HOSI + MU1 Projects + Targeted Harvest
Projects:	Tahr App	Targeted Harvest	Targeted Harvest
Grants carried forward	(9,179)	(3,107)	-
Grant received this year	-	-	190,000
Less Costs Incurred this year		7,857	-
Less Surplus Grant carried forward	9,179	-	190,000
Net Expense	\$ -	\$4,750	\$ -

Deferred Grant Revenue	Date Expected To Complete	Original Grant	2025	2024
			\$	\$
Tahr App Development	July 2026	12,174	9,179	9,179
Targeted Harvest Trials	July 2025	15,339	-	3,107
HOSI, MU1 and Targeted Harvest Projects	July 2026/2030	190,000	190,000	-
Total Deferred Grant revenue			\$199,179	\$12,286

*The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.
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The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2025

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES (CONTINUED)

8. ANALYSIS OF EXPENSES

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Expenses related to Activities.		
Ground Harvest Trials	4,750	3,851
Merchandise Purchases and postage	2,789	3,746
Less merchandise stocks on hand at balance date	(1,897)	-
	5,642	7,597
Other expenses related to Service Delivery		
Duke of Beford Award expenses	-	110
Annual report design and printing	1,458	1,500
Sika Show (booth, travel and accommodation)	571	2,185
Other Travel	1,802	3,314
Annual General Meeting expenses	105	-
General expenses	410	-
Website and Domain Hosting	735	735
	5,081	7,844

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.
These financial statements have not been subject to audit or review.





INTRODUCING THE NEW TAHR APP

Important - Your personal information will be held in confidence and information you provide will only be used to support improved management of tahr by the Foundation

Harvest and observation information will only be shared in generalised formats, e.g. in reports to:

- keep hunters up to date on management and overall hunter contributions to management
- advocate for improved access or more appropriate management objectives
- support the revision of the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan (HTCP)
- achieve Herd Of Special Interest (HOSI) status for tahr
- assist hunter education
- assist stakeholder coordination

Links to reports which your submissions contribute to will be shared with you by email. Photos may be used by the Foundation to describe problems or successes in reports or in the media. Photos with identifiable people will not be shared without permission from the submitter.

Logged bulls harvested 8 years and older are eligible for entry into the **Duke of Bedford Award**, details coming soon.

Logged nannies harvested for meat (pic must display taking of meat from nanny) go into draw to win a **meat processing prize**.

All photos submitted are automatically included in an **annual prize draw**, details coming soon.



IPHONE



ANDROID

BACKGROUND

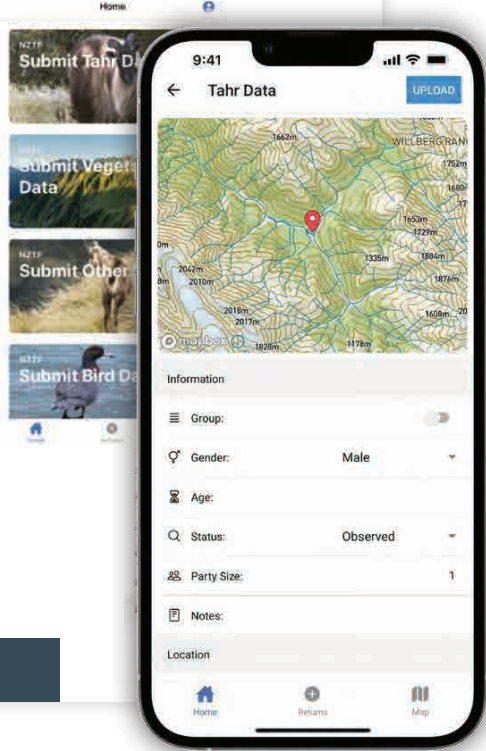
For too long recreational hunters' contribution to tahr management has been a glossed-over add on to the Departments Tahr Control Operational Plan (TCOP).

Providing observations of tahr, tahr harvest and the state of the vegetation gives the Foundation the information it needs to manage the tahr population to support hunting. We can work towards improving access, trophy potential and apply management to minimise official control and wastage. Observations of vegetation through time can show where we need to focus hunter management efforts and where hunter efforts are making a difference. We can tell a story of hunter management and success in the years to come.

The Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 specifies populations far below what the Foundation considers a huntable population of tahr, but we need your help to prove it. If we know what hunters take now, we can run models to show what we need to support a huntable population, even down to a regional scale. We can't change the HTCP until we have a process that is better than what is currently in place.

If all hunters use this tool to report in the tahr range, we will collectively eclipse all other forms of monitoring. It's hard to argue against hunting if it is the biggest contributor to conservation in the area. It's hard to argue about having a huntable resource if you need hunters to support conservation initiatives and sustainable tahr management.

But we need a facility to make hunter harvest and hunter observations valuable and count, enter the Tahr App.



KEEP UP TO DATE WITH THE TAHR FOUNDATION ON FACEBOOK

RESEARCH

HORN ROT IN CHAMOIS

Hunters joining the fight through citizen science

WORDS: **FRANCESCO FORMISANO**

The first time I heard about 'horn rot', I was sitting in a lecture hall in France back in 2018, attending a mandatory course to get my chamois hunting authorisation. What struck me most was when the lecturer admitted that nobody really knew what caused this strange condition affecting these magnificent alpine animals.

It wasn't until my first hunting trip to New Zealand that I actually saw horn rot with my own eyes. Local hunters shared photos of chamois they'd harvested, showing obvious, sometimes severe damage to their horns. What I initially thought was a European curiosity had found its way to the other side of the world.

A HUNTER'S OBSESSION BECOMES SCIENCE

My fascination with mountain game, particularly Himalayan tahr, led me to

spend two full years hunting and studying these creatures in their adopted New Zealand habitat. I wanted to understand everything about these animals, from their daily habits to their health challenges.

This passion caught the attention of professors at the University of Torino's Veterinary Medicine department. Together, we launched a citizen science project studying 'pink eye' disease in both tahr and chamois populations across New Zealand. Working with the NZ Tahr Foundation, we asked hunters to report sightings or harvests of animals showing signs of pink eye infection.

Between January 2022 and May 2023, we received 50 reports through our online system - 37 for tahr and 13 for chamois. Something unexpected emerged from these submissions - many of the chamois photos not only showed pink eye but also significant horn rot damage.

WEST COAST MYSTERY

During countless conversations with Kiwi hunters, I learned that horn rot is

particularly prevalent among chamois populations along New Zealand's West Coast. Two years ago, I returned to the country and joined a professional hunter on a tahr culling operation. He showed me several chamois skulls displaying clear horn rot damage, giving me my first close-up look at this mysterious condition.

Curious for more information, I visited Christchurch Central Library and discovered D. Bruce Banwell's book 'The Alpine Chamois'. Inside was a detailed report from 2011 describing the examination of a specimen provided by Marcus Pinney from South Westland:

"A defect in the keratinised layer was evident grossly on the anterior aspect at the base of both horns... The keratinised layers at the base of the horn were separated in some areas by the presence of basophilic granular material with features of bacteria and larger oval structures resembling yeasts.



Occasional structures resembling fungal hyphae were also present... Although there appeared to be a mixture of bacteria and fungi in the keratinised layers at the base of the horns, it was not clear from these sections whether the organisms were primary or secondary."

Despite this analysis, the mystery remains unsolved - no definitive research has determined whether bacterial or fungal agents are causing this horn degeneration.

FROM NEW ZEALAND TO EUROPE AND BACK

Back in France, I shared my findings with colleagues, and we began asking hunters and wildlife managers throughout France and Italy about similar cases. Through social media, I connected with a hunter who had posted photos of European chamois with identical horn damage to what I'd observed in New Zealand.

This revelation sparked an idea: What if we applied the same citizen science model we'd used for the pink eye study to investigate horn rot internationally?

RESEARCH

THE INTERNATIONAL HORN ROT PROJECT

In January, the Italian delegation of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) launched its citizen science Horn Project. A few months later, the Association des Chasseurs de Grand Gibier in France, joined the initiative. Now, the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association (NZDA) is preparing to participate, and hunters will soon receive instructions on how to contribute to the online survey.

This represents an extraordinary opportunity for hunters across three different countries to participate in genuine scientific research. It also highlights the critical role hunters play in monitoring and detecting changes in wildlife populations and their health status.

WHAT EXACTLY IS HORN ROT?

Horn rot typically appears as a lesion on the lower dorsal or lateral part of the horn. Initially small, these lesions enlarge over time and, in many cases, cause the horn to break, leaving an irregular stump. The degeneration doesn't just affect the horn sheath but appears to damage the underlying bone as well.

According to several hunting friends in New Zealand, finding chamois with normal, undamaged horns is becoming difficult in certain West Coast areas, suggesting the problem is widespread.

THE GOALS OF THE PROJECT

The International Horn Rot Survey aims to:

- 1. **Determine** the existence, distribution, and incidence of horn rot in Alpine Chamois populations across the three countries
- 2. **Evaluate** if and which epidemiological, population, and environmental factors may influence the appearance of this condition

Hunters: The Foundation of Wildlife Research

CHAMOIS HUNTERS REPRESENT THE FOUNDATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS RESEARCH.

Thanks to their experience and time spent in the field in direct contact with chamois, hunters can provide invaluable information that will help scientists better understand both the existence and dynamics of the horn rot phenomenon.

As this project demonstrates, modern hunters are more than just harvesters - they're field biologists, conservationists, and now, citizen scientists helping to solve one of the most puzzling wildlife mysteries affecting mountain game across multiple continents.

If you're a chamois hunter and want to participate in this important research, contact your local hunting organisation, for details on how to join the international horn rot survey.

HAVE YOU SEEN OR TAKEN A CHAMOIS WITH HORN ROT?





Tahr Ballot Briefing

Better Hunting is a free online training platform built by the NZ Game Animal Council to help hunters improve their skills and knowledge, while helping them understand their obligations and responsibilities as hunters and firearms users.

The courses and resources are intended to provide a pathway and support hunters who go on to do practical training, such as the NZDA HUNTS courses.

The content is designed by New Zealand hunters, for New Zealand hunters. You can do the courses on your phone and even download them for offline viewing using the app.

For new, inexperienced and casual hunters, the two main

courses, Hunting Essentials and Firearm Essentials, cover foundational hunting and outdoor skills. There's also an Introduction to Pig Hunting course.

More experienced hunters will still find useful information throughout many of the modules, in maps, forecasts, hunting and ballot calendars, intentions form or games. Each module has a short quiz and there's assessments you can do to ensure your knowledge is up to date

Visit betterhunting.nz to check it out. If you enjoy using it, please share it around.

BETTERHUNTING.NZ

The Game Animal Council with support from the Department of Conservation and the NZ Tahr Foundation developed the Tahr Ballot Briefing on Better Hunting to help hunters achieve the goals of the annual tahr ballot and make the most of this unique hunting opportunity

Hunting tahr in a wilderness area is a unique experience and a rare opportunity for many hunters. The decisions we make as hunters while in the mountains are important.

The tahr ballot opportunity is only available because of the contribution that hunters make to conservation through their hunting activity. The Tahr Ballot Briefing on Better Hunting has been developed to cover key information on tahr selection, conservation, safety and more. While it's been designed to support those hunters heading into a tahr ballot block, there's information in it that's useful for all hunters with an interest in tahr and

tahr hunting.

Let's have a look at some of the things covered in the briefing.

PURPOSE OF THE TAHR BALLOT

The tahr ballot was established to enable hunter contributions to tahr management. While tahr can be hunted year-round in New Zealand, the ballot provides access to helicopter landing sites in remote wilderness areas that are challenging to get to by foot.

Hunters can apply for ballots through the

Department of Conservation website. They usually open around September for the following year.

Once the application period for the ballot closes, names are drawn randomly for each ballot block. Successful applicants are assigned aerial access for a specific landing site for one week between April and July.

Part of successfully drawing a ballot means hunters are expected to target nannies and complete accurate ballot return forms to track tahr numbers and demonstrate their contributions to tahr management.

PICKING THE RIGHT ANIMAL

NANNIES

Being a hunter brings with it great reward, but also a high degree of responsibility to pick the right animal when tahr hunting. Your

harvest decisions can support a healthy herd for hunting as well as a healthy environment.

This means targeting nannies to keep mobs small. Five or fewer nannies per mob is a good ratio to aim for.

Fewer nannies aren't only good for the environment and the herd; it also helps build quality bull options and social licence for hunters.

Fewer nannies mean:

1. More food for bulls – bigger mature bulls who reach their potential.
2. More rut competition for bulls – an intense hunting experience.
3. Population control – the effort by recreational hunters is working and protecting future hunting opportunities.
4. Better biodiversity and vegetation - improved social licence for tahr to inhabit our mountains and hunters to take a leading role in their management.

JUVENILES

Juvenile tahr are young tahr who aren't dependent on their mother's milk and it's practically impossible to tell a juvenile male from female. By targeting adult nannies, you can be sure you're not shooting a potential future monster of a bull.

BULLS

Go for older bulls/males, so that younger bulls are left to reach their full potential and spread their genes throughout the pool. By holding off shooting immature bulls and instead shooting more nannies, it lets us reap the rewards with stonker bulls in the future.

There are a few key indicators for identifying older, more mature males:

- Stacked horn annuli, or growth rings .
- One and a half to two times bigger than nannies.
- A mane to rival Mufasa. Older bulls have full capes hanging down to knee height, with a mane filling out along their back too.
- Bulky, not just tall.
- Dark coat with stripes.
- Heavy deliberate movement.

The NZ Tahr Foundation have some bull tahr ageing guides available online.

BALLOT RETURNS

Taking part in a tahr ballot means

BULL MATURITY INDICATORS



you must submit a hunting return. It is important that you provide accurate information so that the benefit of hunting within the blocks is recorded and counted. You'll learn how to do your ballot return in your pre-ballot briefings.

HUNTING IN KEA HABITAT

If you're tahr hunting, you're visiting the natural habitat of kea. They are unique to New Zealand and are a fully protected, endangered species. Kea are cheeky, curious and intelligent birds that LOVE exploring anything new. If they spot a campsite, they will actively seek to investigate it.

While kea behaviour can be destructive and annoying, it is illegal to harm them. While there are currently no approved kea deterrent products available for hunters to use, below are some actions that you can try for minimising kea interest and impacts while out hunting:

- Where possible, set up camp

under forest canopy or scrub cover.

NZTF RESOURCES

- Hide and/or bury organic food scraps away from your campsite, to prevent kea associating hunters' camps with novel foods.
- Ignore kea as much as possible. Don't feed them, follow them around, talk to them, throw things at them, shout at them or bang things – they may think you're trying to play with them.
- Pack up your camp each morning (especially items that are movable like shoes or clothing) to prevent kea destroying everything while you're away. Covering things with a tarp can also help.
- Eating any lead can kill kea so consider using lead-free ammunition or hiding any lead bullet damaged animals that you have shot to minimise the risk of poisoning kea.

Always ensure your safety remains the priority.

KEA HABITAT TIPS





Tahr country is an extreme environment, go prepared

HELP KEA RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Information on kea populations, movement and behaviours in our wild places is limited. Hunters regularly explore areas of the backcountry very few others go, making hunting a critical activity for supporting kea research and monitoring. Help kea research efforts and the support the social acceptance of hunting by logging your kea sightings in one of the following:

- Kea observation section of your tahr

ballot return booklet.

- NZ Tahr Foundation app.
- Kea Conservation Trust website.

The NZ Game Animal Council has more guidance for hunting in kea habitat if you're interested, including information about lead and kea and lead and meat. Head to nzgac.org.nz/guidance-for-hunting-in-kea-habitat

SAFETY

To make the most out of your hunt, proper preparation is crucial. Tahr hunting takes place in alpine areas from late May to mid-July, which means colder weather that can change quickly.

Better Hunting has tools and resources that can support your hunt preparation, including intentions forms and mapping functions.

BEFORE YOU SET OFF

Fitness is crucial to ensuring you have a good time. You can find fitness resources through the Mountain Safety Council and check out the Hunting Essentials and Snow Skills courses on Better Hunting.

Connecting with seasoned tahr hunters around their experiences is also a good

idea to help you understand what to expect.

Some key safety risks to keep in mind when you're in the ballot:

- **Slips, trips and falls are by far the biggest risk to hunters.** Even if a tahr is skipping across steep bluffs and rocky faces, doesn't mean you will be able to. Don't risk your life for a good shot or animal recovery.

- **Snow, ice and avalanche is a considerable risk in tahr country.** Keep mindful and maintain a healthy level of respect for alpine areas. Make sure you have the correct gear and clothing, and emergency communication devices if you need to get out.

- **Remote, unknown and isolated areas.** Always carry an appropriate overnight survival setup, comms device and PLB.

GIVE IT A GO

Now that we've covered some core content on tahr hunting through, head to Better Hunting and give the Tahr Ballot Briefing module a crack.

Complete the briefing before 3 November 2025 for your chance to win a tahr ballot landing site and period of your choice for the 2026 ballot .







**MANAGING TAHR TO PROVIDE
SUSTAINABLE HUNTING WHILST
CONSERVING ALPINE VEGETATION.**

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