



2022 Awards



*The New Zealand Search and Rescue Council and Secretariat
warmly congratulate our 2022 Award winners.*

*Whakataka te hau ki te uru,
Whakataka tō hau ki te tonga.*

*Kia makinakina ki uta,
Kia mataratara ki tai.*

*E hi ake ana te ata kura
he tio, he huka, he hauhunga.*

Haumi e! Hui e! Taiki e!

*The wind swings to the west
then turns to the south, settles down.*

*Making it prickly cold inland
Making it piercingly cold at sea.*

*The glowing morning will rise
on ice, on snow, on frost.*

Join! Gather! Intertwine!

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY



Gold Award

Kotahi te aho ka whati; ki te kāpuia e kore e whati

One strand of flax is easy to break, but many strands together will stand strong

The NZ Search and Rescue Gold Award (Operational) honours the people, groups or organisations who have made a very significant contribution through their work on a specific search and rescue operation in 2022. The recipients of the Gold Award have performed outstanding work, going above and beyond their normal duties.

Northern Rescue Helicopters

Northland Police SAR Squad

Police National Dive Squad

Maritime NZ Rescue Coordination Centre

The crew of *Florence Nightingale*

The crew of *Pacific Invader*

Kobe O'Neill

For the rescue of 10 people from the vessel *Enchanter* near North Cape/Otou between 20-21 March 2022.

On the evening of 20 March 2022, the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) received a distress alert from the charter fishing vessel *Enchanter*. The vessel, with 10 men on board, had capsized just east of North Cape/Otou.



The Rescue Coordination Centre immediately began tasking local search and rescue agencies, as well as appealing for help from nearby vessels. What followed was one of the largest search and rescue operations coordinated by RCCNZ, running for 46 hours before the last rescue unit returned to base.

Weather conditions in the area were extreme, with strong winds, large swells, heavy rain, and thick cloud.

The Whangārei Police SAR Squad provided exceptional local support, advice and coordination through the operation. This included establishment of incident control points, sourcing helicopter fuel, as well as preparation for coastal searches by local volunteers.

About three hours after the distress beacon was set off, helicopter ZK-HQQ from Northern Rescue Helicopters arrived at the scene. The crew performed a very difficult and hazardous winch recovery of three people from the upturned hull before taking them to the incident control point at Te Pua.

The helicopter returned to the scene shortly afterwards, recovering two more people and flying them to Kaitiāia Hospital. Conducting a winch rescue in the water, at night, in difficult weather conditions, required an incredible amount of skill and courage from the crew.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY

The actions of senior *Enchanter* deckhand Kobe O'Neill gave the occupants the best chance of survival; retrieving the distress beacon and additional survival equipment, as well as keeping everyone calm whilst awaiting rescue.

Over the following two days, four bodies were retrieved from the water. Search and rescue operations often rely on mariners coming to the assistance of others, and the crew of *Florence Nightingale* and *Pacific Invader* lived up to this long tradition. They both supported a long and challenging search operation and assisted with the recovery of the deceased men as they were found.

The Police National Dive Squad recovered the last body in an extremely difficult operation inside the hull of the *Enchanter*. Their efforts meant that all of those who were on board the *Enchanter* were accounted for, and the deceased could be returned to their families.

In extreme conditions, the determined and dedicated efforts of all those involved in the search and rescue operation resulted in five lives being saved.

The NZSAR Council would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the other agencies who contributed to this significant search and rescue operation, including the Auckland Rescue Helicopter Trust, the crew of Katrina and Kie La, HMNZS Taupō, No. 5 Squadron RNZAF, the fuel tanker operators, No. 40 Squadron RNZAF, LandSAR, Coastguard, Surf Life Saving NZ, and Skywork Helicopters.

SUPPORT ACTIVITY



Gold Award

He kotuku rerenga tahi A white heron flies once

The NZ Search and Rescue Gold Award (Support) honours the individual who has made a very significant contribution through their work over a sustained period. The recipient of the Gold Award (Support) has performed outstanding work that has had a marked impact on the search and rescue sector.

John Munro

Locator Beacons New Zealand

For his service and commitment to search and rescue.

John Munro has been involved with the Southland Locator Beacons Charitable Company, and its parent Trust, since its inception in 1996. He became the Chairperson of the Trust a year later and was instrumental in the initial development of New Zealand's first personal locator beacon hire agency, trading as Locator Beacons New Zealand.

In the early years, he was dedicated to growing the agency by setting up new hire outlets and raising the awareness of beacons among those who work and recreate in remote areas. John spent countless hours speaking to user and community groups to get the message out there that beacons were finally affordable and accessible.



Certificate of Achievement

Dunedin LandSAR

Fiordland LandSAR

Wakatipu LandSAR

Wanaka LandSAR Canyon/Swiftwater Team

Paul Rogers

Southern District Police

Police National Dive Squad

Southland AREC

Action Helicopters

Southern Lakes Helicopters

Milford Sound Volunteer Fire Brigade

For the search for a missing tramper near Milford Sound/Piopiotahi between 27-31 March 2022.

On 27 March 2022, a fit, well-prepared, and experienced solo tramper failed to return from a climb of the Devil's Armchair, a 1627m high peak near Milford Sound.



Over five days, a complex search operation took place, with teams and assets responding from across the lower South Island. These included alpine cliff rescue, tracking dogs, boat searching, canyon rescue, subalpine field teams plus helicopters using night vision goggles and thermal imaging technology. The search area stretched over a vertical mile, from the sound to the summit, with terrain varying from sub-alpine tops, to near-vertical Fiordland jungle and a deep, inaccessible river gorge.

The Police incident controller of nearly 30 years' experience described this as probably the most exceptional display of overall teamwork, leadership, professionalism and expertise he has ever witnessed in a search and rescue operation. With so many people and capabilities coming together in a short time, the dedication and talents of all those involved was critical to the effectiveness of the operation.

The missing person was located, but sadly had not survived. He was recovered in a challenging team effort from the Giant Gate River gorge by the Police National Dive Squad, canyon rescue personnel from Wanaka LandSAR and Southern Lakes Helicopters.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY

Aoraki/Mount Cook Alpine Rescue Team Otago Rescue Helicopter

For the rescues of two climbing groups from Aoraki/Mount Cook between 11-16 September 2022.

In the early hours of 11 September 2022, two climbers took the wrong route whilst descending in the dark from the summit of Aoraki/Mount Cook. Seriously fatigued, stranded and with an incoming storm approaching they activated their personal locator beacon.

The Aoraki/Mount Cook Alpine Rescue Team was notified by the Rescue Coordination Centre. Together with the Otago Rescue Helicopter, they conducted a very challenging rescue operation utilising a winch recovery at 3,500 metres above sea level. Due to the extreme terrain, the rescuer on the winch was deployed beneath the climbers. He remained on the winch hook while ascending to the stranded climbers, before extracting them one at a time.

Late in the morning of 16 September 2022, a beacon was activated in the vicinity of Aoraki/Mount Cook. Initially the coordinates were changing, and several helicopters searched around the massif. When the missing party's intentions were eventually found, the Aoraki/Mount Cook Alpine Rescue Team and the Otago Rescue Helicopter deployed to the central gully of the Sheila Face of the mountain. At 3,350 metres above sea level they conducted a difficult 140-foot winch, with the helicopter only eight metres from the mountainside. Together they rescued one climber from a party of three, who had a fractured hand.

Both operations were extremely difficult and technical, conducted at high altitude in very cold conditions. The team and helicopter crew drew on their combined professionalism and expertise to manage the operation in a very high-risk alpine environment. In addition, the rescuers overcame the cumulative physical and emotional fatigue of the first operation to effectively carry out the second only a few days later.



OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY

Pauanui Surf Life Saving Club
Paid Lifeguard Service – Tairua
Paid Lifeguard Service – Pauanui
Pauanui/Tairua SAR Squad
Waikato District Police
Coastguard Tairua-Pauanui

For the rescue of three adults and two children from the Tairua Harbour bar on 5 January 2022.

On the afternoon of 5 January 2022, a member of the public alerted the Pauanui Surf Life Saving Club that a boat carrying five people had overturned on the Tairua Harbour bar. The crossing is notoriously dangerous, especially in the low tide and large swells present on the day.

In rapid succession, the Patrol Captain dispatched two lifeguards in an inflatable rescue boat, closed the beach to the public, deployed two more lifeguards to the nearby shore in an all-terrain vehicle and alerted the Police and the Pauanui/Tairua SAR Squad coordinator to what was unfolding on the bar.

Upon reaching the boat, the lifeguards discovered two adults attempting to reach under the boat, where a third adult and two children were trapped. The two children were recovered fairly easily and taken to shore.

The Coastguard vessel *Pauanui Rescue* arrived on scene and together with the lifeguards, devised a plan to right the overturned vessel to gain access to the adult still trapped underneath. Coastguard volunteers attached lines between the two vessels and used *Pauanui Rescue* to manoeuvre the overturned boat back upright.



On the beach, the lifeguards worked with crew from Fire and Emergency New Zealand and Hato Hone St John to resuscitate each of the three occupants who had been trapped beneath the boat.

Hundreds of members of the public had gathered near the scene as the rescue was unfolding, and responders had to manage the crowd to allow three rescue helicopters to land. The adult and two children were transported to hospital, where the adult sadly died a short time later.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY



No. 5 Squadron Royal New Zealand Air Force

For the search for two missing boats near Kiribati on 23 May 2022.

On 17 May 2022, a small fishing boat with three people on board was reported overdue near Kiribati. On 19 May, after initial search efforts were unsuccessful, the Kiribati authorities requested additional help from New Zealand.

Completely unrelated, a second boat was reported missing in an adjacent area on 22 May, with four people on board.

Later that day, a formal request was made to dispatch a P-3K2 Orion from No. 5 Squadron Royal New Zealand Air Force to assist the search effort. The Orion departed Whenuapai air base at 6am on 23 May. The Orion crew flew three and a half hours to Nadi, Fiji to refuel, then a further three hours before reaching the search area.

At approximately 5pm, nearly 12 hours after departing New Zealand, the crew of the Orion located the first missing boat. The Orion crew then began a search of the wider area for a vessel of opportunity to undertake the rescue, locating one about 10 nautical miles away. On investigation, it turned out to be the second missing boat. After dropping survival packs and locator beacons to each boat, the Orion crew was able to contact two merchant vessels and arrange a rendezvous with the missing fishing boats.

The Orion crew's commitment to vigilance after nearly 12 hours of open ocean searching is a testament to their skills and professionalism. Altogether seven lives were saved due to their efforts.



SUPPORT ACTIVITY



Certificate of Achievement

Detective Senior Sergeant John Wilson

New Zealand Police

WanderSearch Rotorua

LandSAR Rotorua

For his service and commitment to search and rescue.

Detective Senior Sergeant John Wilson has served the Bay of Plenty search and rescue community for more than two decades.

During that time, he has proactively improved the region's search and rescue capabilities through supporting individuals and teams as well as innovating with equipment and resources.

John was instrumental in establishing Water Rescue Squads in Rotorua in 2005 and 2009 with the aim of increasing efficiency in helicopter rescues over water, where every minute counts. Similarly in 2008 after a difficult search and rescue operation, John introduced the WanderSearch technology to the region, enabling people with cognitive impairments to be found more rapidly. He founded the Rotorua WanderSearch Charitable Trust and continues to serve on their board.



John worked as Rotorua Police search and rescue coordinator until 2016, but has since been seconded back to the role for periods of up to nine months when incumbents were out of the area. In addition, John has spent time as Chair and Deputy Chair of Rotorua LandSAR, mentoring upcoming generations of search and rescue professionals.

He was responsible for the 2022 district search and rescue exercise being hosted by Tūhoe, at the culturally and historically significant location of Maunagapōhatu in Te Urewera. This led to several Ruatāhuna residents expressing an interest in joining LandSAR.

John is held in high regard across the region for his passion, drive, and commitment to search and rescue.

SUPPORT ACTIVITY



**Senior Constable
Peter Cunningham**
New Zealand Police

**For his service and commitment to
search and rescue.**

For more than 40 years, Peter Cunningham has been a dependable, loyal and consistent contributor to search and rescue in the Wairarapa region.

Peter's involvement with search and rescue began as a teenage volunteer from the Wairarapa Branch of the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association (NZDA).

After Peter joined Police in the late 1990s, he pursued a role in the search and rescue squad as soon as he was eligible to apply. Since then, he has been a loyal and dependable member, who is quick to volunteer for whatever tasks need doing, from cooking and transport through to leadership decisions within the incident management team.

His long association with the Wairarapa NZDA as a firearms instructor has resulted in a steady stream of search and rescue volunteers coming from that club.

Peter is entirely devoted to search and rescue, attending Wairarapa LandSAR meetings and events whether on duty or not. Likewise, he regularly volunteers his plumbing skills to help maintain the LandSAR base building.

As a member of a small Police search and rescue squad, he has willingly accepted the need to be on call, including stints of up to a month at a time when he cannot leave the district or enjoy his own time in the hills.

His loyal dedication to search and rescue has earned him the respect of his colleagues and local search and rescue volunteers alike.

SUPPORT ACTIVITY



Rosie Musters

**Coastguard New Zealand Tautiaki
Moana Aotearoa**

**For her service and commitment
to search and rescue.**

Rosie Musters is a highly valued volunteer member of Coastguard, serving for over 20 years.

She initially joined Coastguard in January 2002, setting up and running the Coastguard Air Patrol service for the upper South Island. During this time she served as an air observer, as well as running and developing training programmes and resources. When that Air Patrol service ceased operating in 2013, Rosie transitioned to volunteering on board the rescue vessels.

An experienced sailor, she holds both the Yacht Master Coastal and Ocean qualifications and has played a key role as head of Coastguard Nelson's training arm. In her role as Regional Coastguard Instructor, she trains and assesses volunteers from their first visit right the way through to vessel master, both in her unit and across the district. Rosie is also responsible for unit-level training activities with other local SAR agencies, and an annual weekend-long search and rescue exercise. For the public, she provides training as a tutor through Coastguard's Boating Education arm.

She is an invaluable incident manager, both on the water for her unit and on loan to local agencies during other events.

Rosie is well regarded for her efforts in recruiting, training, and mentoring women as volunteers, as well as her recent contribution to upskilling Coastguard Nelson members in the operation of their brand-new rescue vessel.

Rosie's contribution to Coastguard, both locally and nationally, over more than two decades of volunteering is exceptional.



Do you know an organisation, group or individual who you think should be acknowledged for their contribution to search and rescue?

There are two categories – operational activity and support activity. More information about each category, the NZSAR Awards and the nomination process can be found at nzsar.govt.nz/awards.

The 2023 Award nominations close on 31 January 2024.