

NZSAR Awards
New Zealand Search and Rescue Council



“With an average of six operations a day, SAR services are clearly in demand. To paraphrase the words of ex-All Black captain Tana Umaga – ‘this is not a game of tiddly-winks’. You certainly have to be dedicated and resilient to be in search and rescue.” – Lt Gen The Rt Hon Sir Jerry Mateparae, Governor-General of New Zealand

The 2014 NZSAR Awards were hosted by Lt Gen Rt Hon Sir Jerry Mateparae, Governor-General of New Zealand, at Government house for the first time.

The Governor-General paid particular attention to the high levels of commitment and skills that are required to be involved in search and rescue.

“Business as usual for volunteers means anything from traversing dense bush and steep cliff faces, to hanging out of helicopters to winch someone off a headland, to pulling people off rocks in stormy seas, to searching for days on end for missing aircraft on the land, in the air and at sea.

“Then there’s going above and beyond the call of duty. That’s what these awards celebrate – the people who risk their lives to save others, along with the people who dedicate hours of their time, sometimes behind the scenes, enabling the front-line folks to do their jobs better or in motivating and inspiring people to volunteer.”

He also recognised the 10 year anniversary of the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand, acknowledging its people for the work they do to coordinate all Category II SAR incidents in New Zealand’s Search and Rescue Region.

continued on page two



continued from page one



Nineteen awards were presented – the largest number to date – with a Gold Award and five Certificates of Achievement in both the Operational and Support categories. This year the NZSAR Council also awarded a special Certificate of Achievement.



Gold Awards for Operational and Support Activity

The NZSAR Gold Awards for Operational and Support Activity are awarded for a very significant contribution to search and rescue.



Gold Award – Operational

- Tai Kahn from Surf Life Saving Northern Region
- Peter Baltus
- Lincoln Baltus
- Tane Moore
- Mark Goodhew

from Muriwai Lifeguard Service

For the rescue of a surfer from the gannet colony cliffs at Muriwai Beach on 29 September 2014

This rescue was conducted in extreme conditions, with sea conditions and the position of the surfer adding to the complexity and challenge of the operation for the IRB and helicopter crews/teams. The teamwork, bravery and skills demonstrated during this rescue ultimately led to a life being saved.

Gold Award – Support

- Antony Groome from LandSAR Palmerston North

For his services to search and rescue in New Zealand

Antony (Tony) has been involved in SAR since his teenage years. He is an active member in both land and marine SAR in the Manawatu, where the SAR community relies heavily on his unwavering support. He has contributed to saving many lives and is often at the forefront of the approximately 60 annual SAR operations across the Manawatu and Horowhenua districts. Tony is an integral part of SAR management and continuous improvement projects throughout the region.



Certificates of Achievement – Operational Activity

The NZSAR Certificates of Achievement for Operational Activity are awarded for an important contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region during 2014.



Sergeant Peter Muldrew from Oamaru Police and Robert Borst *For the rescue of a trapped motorist from Fuchsia Creek on 18 April 2014*

It was apparent immediately that the motorist's life was in danger. Driving his 14 ton digger Robert picked up Peter and they made their way through deep and swift running floodwater to the car. When they were close, Peter climbed into the digger bucket, eventually getting hold of the trapped woman and pulling her into the bucket. Peter and Robert's quick thinking, local knowledge, practical approach, combined with good Incident & Risk Management saved the motorist.

Coastguard Houhora and Coastguard Northland Air Patrol *For the rescue of three fishermen in Rangaunu Harbour on 27 December 2014*

In the early hours, Coastguard Houhora volunteers began searching before being joined by Coastguard Northland Air Patrol at first light.

Both Coastguard Houhora and Coastguard Northland Air Patrol went above and beyond their routine work. The air patrol extended the search area and searched where others had not thought to, and the Coastguard Houhora volunteers used their skills as well as their own vessels in an excellent example of collaboration and coordination, which saved three lives at sea.

Mount Maunganui Lifeguard Service *For their efforts during the search for Jack Dixon, October 2014*

When five year old Jack Dixon was swept into the water from Mauao base, Mount Maunganui, it sparked the largest search operation ever involving the Mount Maunganui Lifeguard Service (MMLS).

They logged around 1,500 volunteer hours of search time while also carrying out a number of other rescues during this period – seven on the first day of the operation alone.

They were a critical part of the search as they were the only service capable of searching the areas where there may have been an outcome.

Her Majesty's New Zealand Ship Otago *For the rescue of the crew from the yacht Django on 8 July 2014*

Approximately 200 nautical miles north of Cape Reinga and in heavy weather, the yacht Django's rudder broke below the water line and she lost steerageway.

Her Majesty's New Zealand Ship Otago (Otago) altered course and, in heavy seas, went to the aid of Django's crew.

This award recognises the professionalism, skill, teamwork, communication and determination shown by the crew of HMNZS Otago, both during the transit to the stricken yacht, but especially during the rescue operation, which involved a trained Navy diver swimming to the life raft to help the yacht's crew to safety.

Wanaka Alpine Cliff Rescue *For the rescue of climbers from the Quarterdeck, Mt Aspiring, on 10 September 2014*

In response to a beacon activation a Wanaka Alpine Cliff Rescue (ACR) team was helicoptered into the vicinity of the Quarterdeck, at 1.30 in the morning. Dropped off just above the bushline, they had to climb 1,100 metres to reach the beacon's location in dark and freezing conditions. During the night four more Wanaka ACR members were called in to prepare and activate contingency plans. The patient and his two family members were found at 6.30am by the initial team in a shallow crevasse.

The skills, bravery, and teamwork demonstrated by Wanaka ACR in reaching the patient in poor weather and in the dark, as well as the effective coordination and planning, were hallmarks to this successful rescue.

continued on page four

continued from page three

Certificates of Achievement – Support Activity

The NZSAR Certificates of Achievement for Support Activity are awarded for an important contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region, either during 2014 or over an extended period.



Brian Boyle from Coromandel Peninsula Search and Rescue

For his services to land search and rescue

Brian began his long-standing commitment to SAR in Taranaki, before eventually settling in Thames where he has made a significant difference since joining the local LandSAR group.

He was instrumental in forming a wider Coromandel Peninsula SAR committee to align and steer the five local groups. Brian has established and now leads the Coromandel Wander Search Charitable Trust. Brian's changes have had a positive impact, making the Coromandel Peninsula a much safer environment with better outcomes.

Senior Constable Peter Comer from Police Maritime Unit, Auckland

For technical innovation in marine search and rescue

Peter designed a SAR coastal datum computer programme that can be used by Incident Management Teams to provide a graphical presentation of a search area. The programme greatly assists the Police Maritime Units' SAR Managers during operations.

Peter's programme is intuitive, easy to use, and significantly improves timeliness and response. It can be up and running in minutes, saving on time and costs in identifying areas of interest, adding real value to marine search and rescue operations.

Rowan Leck from Dunedin Marine SAR

For his services to marine search and rescue

Rowan began his life-long involvement with Surf Life Saving when he joined the Oreti club in 1958. Rowan was instrumental in the formation of the Dunedin water rescue squad. Among his other contributions Rowan has been involved in writing standards for training manuals and has organised several public displays to raise awareness of safety messages. As a marine SAR adviser to Dunedin Police for the past 25 years, Rowan has responded to about 750 Marine SAR emergencies.

Heather McDonald from Sumner Lifeboat

For her services to marine search and rescue

Heather has been a crew member of Coastguard's Sumner Lifeboat unit for 23 years, holding a large number of volunteer roles. She is a vessel Senior Master, a SAR coordinator, a Duty Officer, a Practical Masters Course tutor, and a regional instructor. Heather also serves on a number of boards.

Heather's dedication, drive and passion for Coastguard through her 'hands on' leadership, education and coaching roles makes her an invaluable asset to the organisation.

Geoff Wilkie from Coastguard Northern Region

For his services to marine search and rescue

Geoff has been a quietly committed leader who has affected lasting change. He has helped to improve radio operators' skills by revitalising training programmes while making vast improvements to the volunteer experience and unit culture. He has also brought new members on board in response to declining volunteer numbers.

Geoff has identified weaknesses and taken a position of leadership to drive change, improving the services Coastguard provides to the boating public.

This NZSAR Certificate of Achievement – Special Award – is awarded for an important contribution to international search and rescue during 2014.

5 Squadron RNZAF

For their efforts during the search for MH370, March-April 2014

5 Squadron flew 27 search missions, totalling 285 flying hours and covering 1.55 million square kilometres, over the duration of the search. Some aircrew cycled through the detachment twice, and flew the equivalent of 6 months' flying in 7 weeks.

While this search was conducted outside the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region, the NZSAR Council has decided to award 5 Squadron a Special Certificate of Achievement in recognition of their significant effort and contribution to this international search. ●

The NZSAR Council and Secretariat congratulates all our 2014 winners. Full citations of all these awards, plus all the details about the NZSAR Awards and the simple nomination process can be found on our website at www.nzsar.org.nz/awards.

The 2015 Award nominations close 31 January 2016.

◉ SAR IN ACTION

Low Occurrence – High Consequences



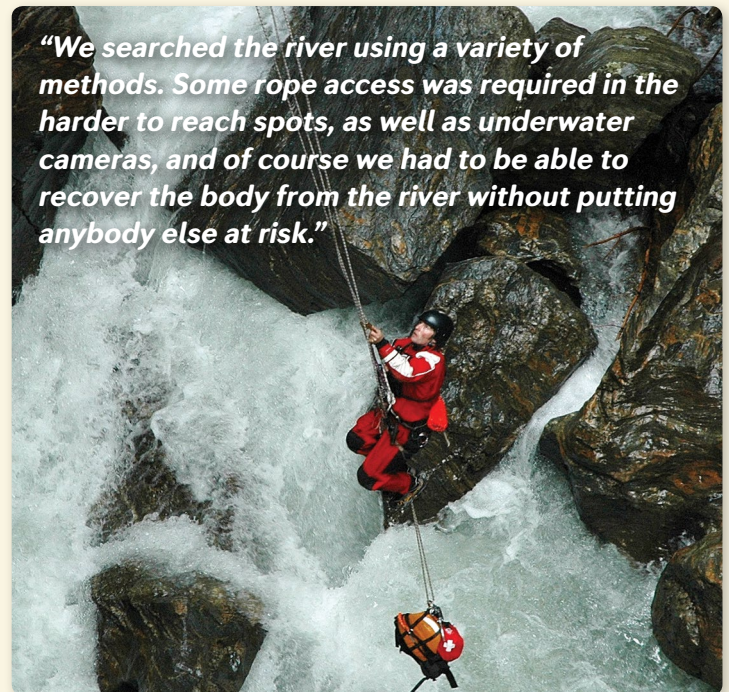
Niche but necessary best describes RiverSAR. Wanaka RiverSAR is the most active team in the country, and like most RiverSAR units, their members are specialists who are fully integrated into their local LandSAR unit, similar to alpine cliff rescue or cave teams. Wanaka LandSAR, averages around 40-50 operations annually so they are deployed fairly regularly, but specific RiverSAR makes up just three or four of those.

Formerly known as Swift Water Rescue, RiverSAR was renamed to better reflect what is; namely a search tool with rescue capability that covers any waterway, not just swift ones. Wanaka RiverSAR's Team Leader Roy Bailey established the unit and says that although the number of operations are small, there is definitely a need for the specialist skillset.

"Waterways are potentially really dangerous environments, and are often underestimated. When coordinators need to get a river or stream searched they need to know that the people tasked can 'A' – do the job effectively, and 'B' – do it safely so that everyone comes back. Our team members often join teams searching river banks so that they can keep everyone safe."

Roy says he started Wanaka RiverSAR to ensure that volunteers weren't asked to go into dangerous situations. Given a land-based search can quickly become a water-based search, Roy believes having RiverSAR members in the field is hugely beneficial. A case in point was the recent search for missing American Student Allison Willen: "This operation started as a land search of the Gillespie Pass area, in Mount Aspiring National Park, but quickly turned into a river search once we found a few articles of clothing in the upper Young River.

"We already had four RiverSAR personnel spread amongst the search teams, so were able to quickly reform and start a detailed river search. It was really useful for the Incident Management Team to be



"We searched the river using a variety of methods. Some rope access was required in the harder to reach spots, as well as underwater cameras, and of course we had to be able to recover the body from the river without putting anybody else at risk."

able to get information from us on how to approach the next phase of the operation and pinpoint the most likely spots to find Allison. We were also heavily involved in planning the search and recovery phase.

"We searched the river using a variety of methods. Some rope access was required in the harder to reach spots, as well as underwater cameras, and of course we had to be able to recover the body from the river without putting anybody else at risk."

RiverSAR practioners will have been river people for many years before becoming involved with SAR. They come from a mix of backgrounds, predominantly kayaking or rafting. As the popularity of activities like canyoning, pack-rafting and SUPing increase more people with these skills will become desirable.

Roy says RiverSAR teams ought only to be established where there are pockets of need, "However, I think the Swiftwater Awareness Course should be a core course for all LandSAR volunteers. I am also keen that every group is aware of where their nearest specialist RiverSAR team is so that they can be called in.

"I don't think there is any LandSAR group in this country that doesn't have a stream, river, lake or waterway in it, so even if it is sporadic, we have specialist, advanced skills. RiverSAR is about low occurrence – high consequences." ●



SAR INSIGHT

Wander Search

After a spate of searches for wandering Alzheimer and autistic sufferers in 2012, Coromandel Peninsula Search and Rescue (CPSAR) determined the demand was only going to increase, so they went in search of a solution and found WandaTrak.

Within months they had cut search times dramatically as Brian Boyle, CPSAR's Wander Search Coordinator, explains.

"An Azheimers sufferer had wandered from his home and LandSAR teams spent the night searching for him – it took 630 volunteer hours to locate him. Nine months later, having heard about WandaTrak and set up a charitable trust to purchase and distribute the pendants, we located a wandering male wearing one in just 16 minutes."

The WandaTrak device is a sealed unit that constantly emits a radio frequency pulse every 3-4 seconds. Each device lasts about 7 months before the battery needs replacing.

They currently come in three designs – wrist, pendant and keyring. The wrist and keyring have an internal aerial and the pendant has an external aerial.

Each device has an individual frequency and, when tuned into the tracking receiver, the pulse being emitted can be detected up to five kilometres (kms) away. The wrist and keyring devices have a shorter range of approximately 3-4 kms.



The detection works in line of sight and can be affected by various factors such as terrain and buildings.

Although search procedures may vary from area to area, when a person goes missing, the caregiver contacts Police to advise them that the person is wearing a tracking device and to send a search and rescue team.

Police communications are able to access all of the pre-loaded missing person's details including pendant information on the Police computer system.

The Police SAR Coordinator will then coordinate the search using the receiving devices. If no pulse is detected, then the searchers will go to high points in the area to see if they can detect the pulse.

Background information on the missing person (preferably stored on the Police database) is required so details such as where they have lived in the past, where they have worked and places they have been found before are known.

Auckland's three Police Districts have the largest number of searches in the country for people living with dementia, with an average of two people being reported missing every day.

The WanderSearch Auckland Charitable Trust was formed in 2013 to manage the WanderSearch Auckland tracking programme, which includes raising funds, distributing devices and replacing the batteries. The Trust is independent of Auckland LandSAR. They have 245 tracking devices in use and their wander searches have gone from an average of six hours involving 20 personnel to one hour involving 3 people. Delanie Halton is the Trust's WanderSearch Coordinator and she says establishing the Trust has delivered an effective vehicle that not only provides transparency and legitimacy to funders, but also support and peace of mind to cognitively impaired people and their caregivers.



Brian Boyle won a 2014 NZSAR Certificate of Achievement for his services to land search and rescue. His major contribution to wander search was noted as part of this award.

“It recognises that we can be pro-active and prevent complex, time-consuming searches. It also highlights the fact that we have a role to play in educating the community in cognitive behaviour. We can work productively alongside like-minded organisations like Alzheimer’s NZ, and of course the Police, which is crucial.”

Despite working in quite different population and geographical locations both Delanie and Brian agree the growth and complexity of wander behaviour demands a creative, flexible and coordinated solution across the country. They say more can be done by working better together. Brian cites the example of an autistic child:

“Like many autistic children he wouldn’t wear a pendant, so the answer came in consultation with his family and our local constable. We gave him just one pair of shoes to wear all the time. We cut a hole in the sole of his shoe and stuck a device in there. Understanding his idiosyncrasies, as we do for all our users, and sharing creative solutions, as well as utilising the national Police database, means we are systemically preventing a huge demand on our LandSAR manpower.” ●

➔ Insights

Costs:

The pendant – \$287.50

The tracking unit – \$2085.50

Battery refurbishment – \$28.75

Setting up a charitable trust:

A charitable trust enables you to attract funding for the specific purpose of purchasing and maintaining WandaTrak devices.

It provides transparency and legitimacy, which assists with promotion and fundraising.

www.societies.govt.nz/cms/charitable-trusts/starting-a-trust has extensive information on setting up a charitable trust.

Entering the user’s information into the Police computer system (NIA):

This provides vital information when a user goes missing, such as what they understand themselves to be called, or old addresses they may visit, etc.

It allows them to holiday elsewhere, as their device frequency number is readily available to Police.

Liaise with your local Police SAR personnel to have an alert entered in the NIA.

Include pertinent information that will assist in locating a wanderer.

Update the frequency number when pendants are changed, and when it is next due, for battery refurbishment.

Cancel the alert when the pendant is no longer required.

SAR Helicopter Workshop



A good mix of helicopter operators, Rescue Coordination Centre staff, Police and Ambulance representatives attended the recent SAR helicopters workshop.

A number of issues were canvassed with the 56 people who attended. With new legal requirements becoming a reality, Occupational Health and Safety was a key focus.

A presentation on lessons learned, specific to the R44 ZK HBQ, provided analysis of the characteristics of large-scale searches from appropriate landing spots as well as refuelling and effective air observation. It also sparked discussion on embedding what works well and building on what can be done better, including the Rescue Coordination Centre’s initiative of

situating a liaison officer on-scene to enhance the operation’s coordination.

Proposed changes to air observers training and qualifications met with general agreement. The key aspects being the relationship between air observers and the helicopter operator, tightening up the quality of training and running a more effective team during the operation. Options for improving the tasking and debrief processes were also discussed. This workshop enabled information sharing and multilateral discussions among operators who rarely have the opportunity to spend time building on and shaping their vital contribution to search and rescue services across the country. ●

Thank you!

Where would search and rescue be without volunteers?

As National Volunteer Week approaches (June 21 – 27), I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and thank every one of our 14,000 people who make up this highly skilled and dedicated SAR sector.

‘Going well above and beyond the call of duty’ may be a cliché, but it certainly sums up the many hours spent training and upskilling, out in all manner of weather and conditions, to help people who find themselves in need of search and rescue. So on behalf of the Council – and in fact the country – I would like to say thank you SAR volunteers.

Martin Matthews
Chair NZSAR Council

Duncan's desk



Winter has arrived – and with it our sector's non-operational activity ramps up considerably. It's worth noting, especially to people who don't know us well, that we spend more time preparing for SAR operations than actually conducting them.

In recent weeks NZSAR has been heavily involved in both the 2015 Helicopter workshop and the combined Police SAR Coordinators and SAREX Planning workshop. It was evident at both events that New Zealand is fortunate to have highly dedicated, passionate and capable SAR people throughout the country. Workshops such as these are excellent opportunities to air and solve issues collectively. They also serve to create and reinforce the all-important relationships between individuals, teams and organisations.

A range of topics were covered at each event, but health and safety matters dominated discussions at both. We are certainly making positive progress on health and safety issues, but there remains quite a bit for us to do to bring it into an everyday part of how we operate at all levels.

The Rauora series of mass rescue exercises is now in full swing, and if it hasn't already, one will be coming to a Police District near you.

These table-top exercises are proving invaluable, not only to test and adjust mass rescue plans but also to promote SAR matters to senior leaders in regions throughout the country.

We are currently closing out this financial year and planning projects for 2015/16. In the spirit of continuous improvement, most of these projects build upon previous work. These projects include: a SAR evaluation seminar; completion of the SAR data standard and other IT projects; training for air observers; formal search planning (land and marine); research into fatalities; prevention knowledge; the Outdoor Safety Code; continuing with a range of AdventureSmart initiatives; developing a 'NZ Inc' Recreational Safety Strategy; SAREX support and a host of other projects.

I'm sure this will keep us busy. We look forward to working with you all to get the job done.

Duncan Ferner
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Queen's Birthday Honours

Congratulations to Peter John Masters of Taupo, who became a Member of The New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to search and rescue, conservation and cycling.

CALENDAR

SAREXs and SAR training - see:

<http://searchandrescuecouncil.org.nz/nzsar-calendar>

LandSAR AGM - 18 July, Wellington

Combined NZSAR Council and Consultative Committee - 27 August, Wellington

Coastguard AGM - 17 October, Auckland

WEBSITES

www.nzsar.org.nz - New Zealand Search and Rescue Council
 This newsletter is available as a PDF on this website

www.adventuresmart.org.nz - Safety information and tips for the public planning outdoor activities

www.beacons.org.nz - Information about 406 Beacons, including where to purchase, rent and register a distress beacon

www.moas.eu - Migrant Offshore Aid Station

www.international-maritime-rescue.org - International Maritime Rescue Federation