

Impact *Report*

The Leslie Hutchins
Conservation
Foundation



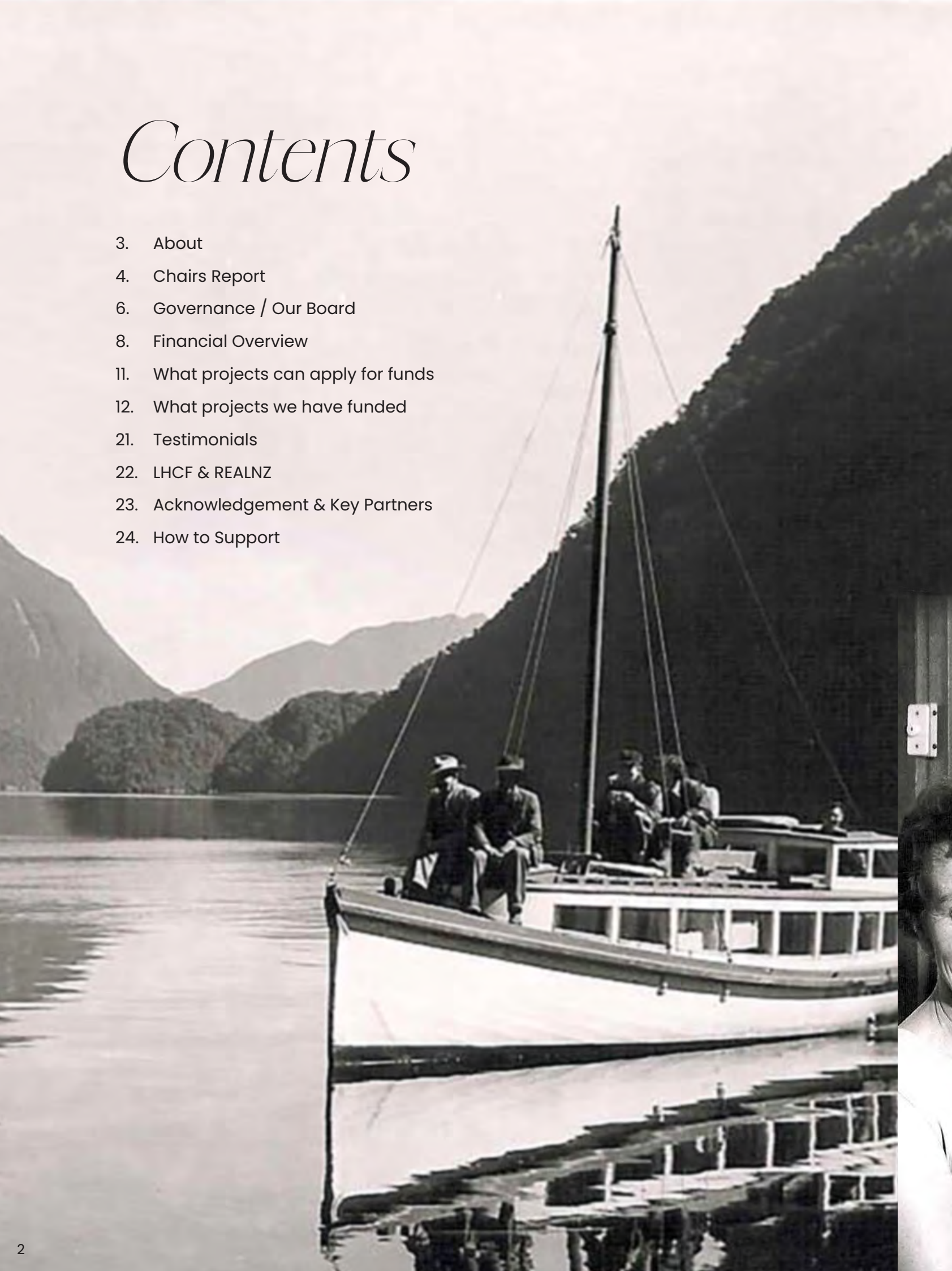
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About

The late Leslie (Les) Hutchins, DCNZM, OBE, JP, had a lifetime passion for Fiordland and conservation issues. He was a key member of what is widely regarded as the start of New Zealand's conservation movement - the successful "Save Manapouri Campaign" - which stopped the raising of Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri for power generation. As the small tourism company, he founded (with Olive, Lady Hutchins), began to expand, they started directing some of the profits into conservation work.

The Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation, founded in 1994, is a charitable trust that provides funding to support the running, maintenance, and attendance of nature-based programmes (including outdoor education camps) and conservation research throughout Southland and Otago. This includes support for initiatives within Fiordland National Park's World Heritage Area, Stewart Island, and Aotearoa New Zealand's Sub-Antarctic Islands.

"Les was happiest when he was sharing the beauty of Fiordland with his family, friends and visitors. He campaigned against issues that threatened the natural value of these special places and the opportunity for everyday New Zealanders like you and I to experience and enjoy them. His legacy lives on through his family, his company, and the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation."

-Olive, Lady Hutchins





Chair report

This year marks an important milestone for The Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation (LHCF) with the publication of our first Impact Report. We are excited to bring this forward and to share more openly the breadth of work the Foundation has supported over time, the outcomes achieved, and the direction we are heading.

While this report focuses on the past year, the Foundation's contribution stretches back much further. Since LHCF was established in 1994, it has quietly supported a wide range of conservation, education, and access initiatives across the South Island and beyond.

From funding postgraduate research and strengthening long-term education partnerships, to supporting school camps and access for families who may otherwise miss out, the common thread in our work is impact with purpose.

Our connection to Fiordland remains at the heart of the Foundation. As the birthplace of Fiordland Travel and RealNZ, this region holds deep meaning for LHCF and for the Hutchins family. We are proud to continue honouring that legacy through partnerships such as the Deep Cove Outdoor Education Trust and through conservation initiatives supported via the RealNZ Conservation Ball.

This year also marked a period of transition for the Board. I would like to sincerely thank Scott McNab, Sophie Fern, and Bryan Hutchins as they step away from their trustee roles. In particular, I want to acknowledge Bryan, one of the original trustees when the Foundation was established in 1994. His long-standing commitment, guidance, and belief in the Foundation's purpose have helped shape LHCF into what it is today.

Over the past twelve months, the Foundation has continued to focus on enabling practical conservation outcomes and supporting education pathways that connect young people with the natural environment.

On behalf of the Board, I extend my thanks to our trustees, partners, and support staff for their dedication and contribution over the past year. Your collective effort continues to ensure the Foundation remains grounded, effective, and true to its values.

Looking ahead, we are focused on raising the presence of LHCF, strengthening how we communicate our impact, and pursuing fewer, larger, and more strategic partnerships that deliver lasting conservation outcomes. We are excited about the opportunities ahead, including deeper collaboration with DOC, multi-year partnerships, and matched funding approaches that allow every dollar to go further.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Impact Report and for being part of the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation journey.

Ngā mihi nui,

Paul Norris
Chairperson
The Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation



Governance

The Foundation is governed by a Board of Trustees who meet quarterly to review applications and allocate funding to projects that protect and enhance our natural environment.



Alan Mark –
KNZM CBE
Patron



Roger Wilson
Trustee,
Hutchins family
Appointee



Tony McQuilkin
Trustee,
Hutchins family
appointee



Lou Sanson –
ONZM Trustee,
Independent



Paul Norris –
MNZM
Board Chair,
RealNZ
Appointee



Abbe Hutchins
Trustee,
Hutchins family
appointee



**Sarah
Bartholomew**
Trustee, RealNZ
Appointed



**Maddy
Whittaker**
Independent
Trustee



Nadia Stanton
Treasurer



Sally Norman
Administrator

Former members of the Board

Bryan Hutchins, Trustee – Trustee resigned Nov 2025

Sophie Fern, Trustee – Trustee resigned Nov 2025

Scott McNab, Trustee – Trustee resigned Feb 2026

Financial Overview

-  The Foundation reinvests approximately \$250,000 per year into funding applications.
-  The Foundation is not averse to considering larger-scale project investments.
- The Foundation provides both enduring contributions and one-off contributions.

Money split between project

FY25*

Since inception**

100%



Education –
Outdoor Camps

27%

\$75,641

20%

\$212,640



Research

12%

\$33,957

8%

\$78,114



Conservation

49%

\$136,348

66%

\$682,701



Other

11%

\$30,000

6%

\$65,300

Total

\$275,945

\$1,038,755

Education – Outdoor Camps

To provide support to disadvantaged students and people of all ages to develop interest and understanding of conservation through experiences in the outdoors through camps and activities.



Research

To assist individuals in conservation scholarship research that protects and advocates for the environment.



Conservation

To support projects that raise conservation awareness, protect endangered species and protect ecosystems.



Other

To support specialised projects that contribute to protecting the environment and heritage.



* 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026 ** 1997–2026

What projects **can apply for funds**

The following are eligible to apply for funding:

- Charitable Trusts – registered with Charities Services.
- Schools and outdoor education providers.
- Individuals enrolled University Study.
- Non-Profit organisations.
- Community clubs or groups.



Funding Objectives, to assist:

- At risk school children to attend outdoor education camps.
- At risk persons including sick, aged and inform persons to experience Fiordland or other conservation.
- The establishment, maintenance and running of outdoor education facilities.
- In conservation in Otago, Fiordland, Southland, Rakiura/Stewart Island, or the Sub-Antarctic Island.

How to apply:

- Applicants can submit grant applications using the online form on the LHCF website.
- Applications are reviewed during quarterly funding rounds by the Board of Trustees.
- Funding round dates are listed on the LHCF website.



What projects has the Foundation funded



Enduring relationship



Single project



Research projects



Otago University Masters Research Awards

Support Masters students undertaking ecological research during their thesis/second year of study while enrolled in a Masters Research Programme at the University of Otago, with \$8,000 of funding towards their research. Up to three recipients can be awarded per year for a three year period - 2023, 2024, 2025.

Renewed through till 2030 & increased to four students - maximum \$30k funding per year



Southern Lakes Sanctuary - Giant Weta Monitoring

A \$15,000 grant awarded to Southern Lakes Sanctuary in November 2024 supported an exciting project to develop a monitoring strategy for the elusive Southern Alps giant wētā in Mount Aspiring National Park.

The research will help uncover more about where these remarkable alpine insects live, how their populations are faring, and what can be done to help protect them for generations to come.



Rakiura Seabird Masters Research - Felix Borrowdale

Supported research at the University of Otago investigating seabird populations in Foveaux Strait. The study aims to identify seabirds across the region and establish a baseline dataset for seabirds in the strait.

RealNZ also contributed in-kind support through the Rakiura Ferry, enabling field access and supporting the work of master's student Felix during the study period.

Funded \$3500



Fiordland Sponge Database - Francesca Stranton

Supported postgraduate research by Francesca Stranton through the Victoria University of Wellington focused on the identification of sponge species from Doubtful Sound.

The project aims to build a sponge inventory for Fiordland. This work will support future identification and monitoring of sponge biodiversity in Fiordland. Identified specimens will be archived in the national invertebrate collection at NIWA, contributing to long-term scientific conservation research

Funded \$1000





Education projects



Omaui Camp, Bluff

Funding to develop Omaui based environmental programme and resources that align with School Curriculum.

Funded: \$30,000 over two years from 2022. Resource developed and published.



Queenstown Scout Group

Funding provided for Queenstown Scouts to attend the New Zealand Scout Jamboree in Waikato in January 2024

Funded: One off - \$5000 - 2023

Status: LHCF logo on new supporters board on Frankton Track.



Central Otago Secondary Schools Grant

To provide financial support to underprivileged students to develop interest and understanding of conservation through experiences in the outdoors. Schools - Wakatipu, Mt Aspiring College, Dunstan, Cromwell, Maniototo, Roxburgh

Funded: Multiyear - \$20K per year for an initial 3 year period, 2024, 2025, 2026



Deep Cove Outdoor Education Trust

Realnz provide the services of professional nature guides who spend two days delivering conservation education to school groups. LHCF to fund 50% guides annual wage costs over a multiyear agreement.

Funded: Multiyear - Up to \$15K per year for three years as of 2022. extended through till 2027.

Status: LHCF acknowledged.

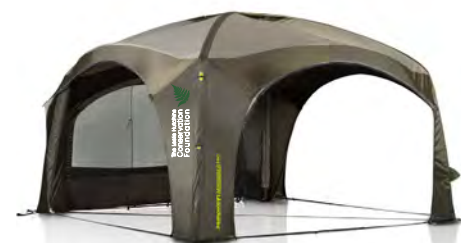


The Branches Trust - Outdoor Camp

To provide funding for food tents to be utilised on Wakatipu High School Camps at Branches Station.

Funded: One off - \$5430 - 2023

Status: Tents branded with LHCF logo



Southland Secondary Schools Principals Association

Yearly grant to Southland Secondary Principals Association to administrate on the Trusts behalf to go towards specialised equipment for students outdoor education programmes.



Fiordland College Secondary Schools Grant

To provide financial support for the College to invest in outdoor equipment for school camps, helping students to access outdoor experiences and develop a lasting interest in conservation.





Cooper Island Conservation Project

LHCF has helped fund the Cooper Island Conservation project which aims to make the island predator free and re-introduce little spotted kiwi.

A \$100,000 donation from the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation helped to kick off the project to remove introduced predators. The \$100,000 was primarily used to put in 12 km of tracks, opening up the inland section of Island for trapping programme.

LHCF continue to support the project.



Cardrona Foundation

1. The Kārearea Project

Funding to support the long term scientific study into the endemic Kārearea/NZ Falcon.
Up to \$32K over multiple years

2. Predator Free Maunga

Funds awarded from LHCF were used to expand the Cardrona traplines by purchasing 48 kea proof single DOC 200s and 10 x AT220 self-resetting possum traps
Funded "with partners": One off payment - \$6540



Southern Lakes Sanctuary

1. Threatened Lizards Species

Funding to assist with threatened species eDNA monitoring study.
Contact: Paul Kavanagh, SLS
Funded: One off - \$15K (Boyd's funding)

2. Mohua Monitoring

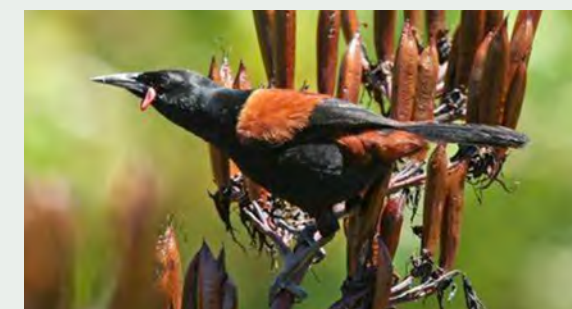
Funding to assist with Mohua Monitoring for labour, project planning, field staff, and reporting.
Funded: One off - \$23K - (Boyd's funding)



Orokonui Ecosanctuary

Support the translocation of Tieke / South Island Saddleback back to the mainland at Orokonui Ecosanctuary from the Tītī Islands southwest of Rakiura. Once widespread across the South Island, Tieke are now largely confined to predator-free offshore islands and sanctuaries.

One off - \$25,000 (Boyd's funding)



Whakatipu Reforestation Trust

Application for funding, total funds of \$10,001 to become a Platinum Sponsor of the Educate for Nature Program for an initial 3-year period.

Funded: \$10,001 per year for three year period. Status: 2024 & 2025 paid, final year 2025.



Fiordland Trails Trust

Funding towards the Ecological report for leg 5 of the Lake2Lake multiuse trail that links Lake Te Anua to Lake Manapouri.

Funded: One off – \$15K

FTT install a new seat on site in recognition of LHCF.



SIRCET/Rakiura – Protecting Taoka Species

Funding for equipment to promote awareness, collect data and encourage the public to protect taoko species, bats, and moths, on Rakiura.

Funded: One off –\$3107.58.



Whakatipu Wildlife Trust – New Arrow Traps

Funds to expand trapping network by purchasing 12 x new AT220 self-re-setting traps.

Funded: One off payment – \$5619.24



Forrest Hill Conservation Trust

Supported support to upgrade Forest Hills predator control network with state-of-the-art AT220 automatic traps. Traps installed are helping to bring native bird life back to the region.

Funding \$6,535,56



Predator Free Wānaka

Predator Free Wānaka (previously known as Wānaka Backyard Trapping) received a grant to put towards new traps to add new trap lines to enhance trapping networks.

One off – \$7200



South Catilins Charitable Trust

Funding to purchase new traps to protect wildlife at Curio Bay.

One off – \$5540



Fiordland Sponge Project

Funds from the LHCF allowed Professor James Bell, sponge expert from Victoria University to research a sponge bleaching event in Fiordland.

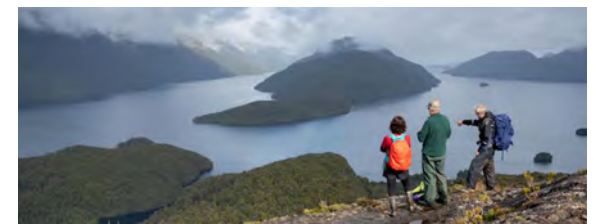
Funded: One off payment \$7500



Ulva Island – Predator Free Rakiura

LHCF has been a vital partner in supporting the Department of Conservation (DOC) to eradicate rats on Ulva Island. The Foundation helped fund critical efforts to remove rodents to protect endangered species like mohua and saddleback. Ongoing, strict biosecurity is used to maintain a predator-free status.

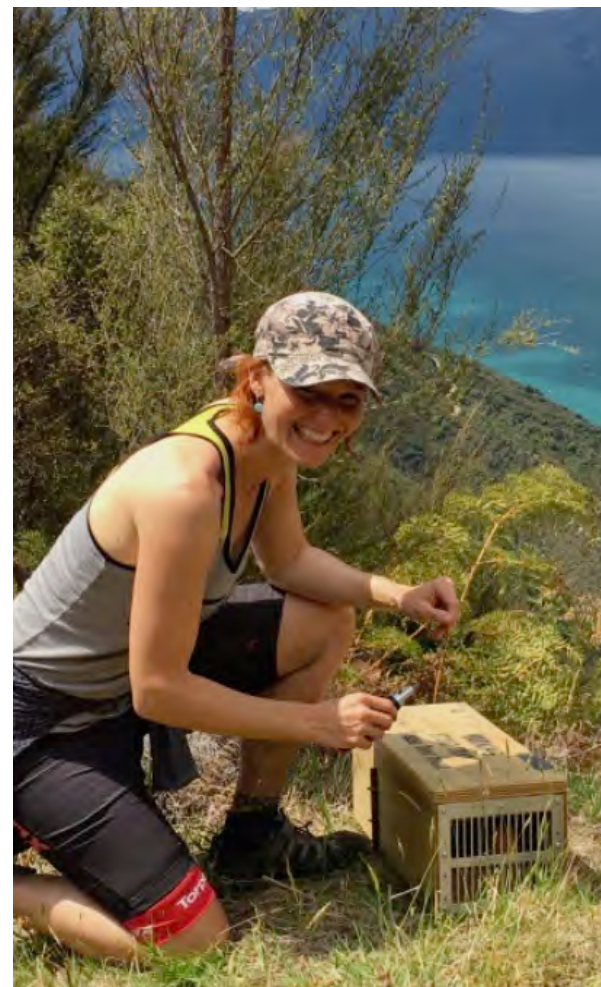
Funded: \$23,000



Te Araroa Trust – Longwoods Forest Boardwalk

Support the construction of 1,000 metres of raised timber boardwalk in Southland's Longwoods Forest, part of the national Te Araroa Trail. This high-use section suffers from persistent wet and boggy conditions, causing ecological damage and safety concerns. The boardwalk will prevent trail widening, enable forest regeneration, and make this iconic stretch safer and more accessible.

Funding \$10,000



Wānaka Multisport Trapping Group – New Traps

Funding to support new traps for the Rumbling Burn. The trapline begins near the Rumbling Burn and extends up Daniels Spur on the Buchanan Range. Access is by boat or one hour bike up the west Wanaka track and the highest trap is above 1100m on the rumbling burn. Traps are checked by volunteers of the Wānaka Multisport Trapping Group.

Funded: One off payment \$1200

Testimonials

“On behalf of all the Central Otago high schools, thank you for your support of students being able to engage with the outdoors and all the learning that entails from those experiences and opportunities. Through the support of LHCF we were once again able to support a range of students to participate outdoor education opportunities.”

**Oded Nathan,
Principal Wakatipu High School**

“We are deeply grateful to receive a Leslie Hutchins Conservation Fund grant, which will support the expansion of our AT220 self-resetting possum and rodent trap network. With guidance from Southern Lakes Sanctuary, we are rolling out these innovative traps on our community-led traplines to further the Predator Free 2050 mission.”

Wakatipu Wildlife Trust

“We are thrilled that Wanaka Backyard Trapping has received generous funding and support from the Les Hutchins Conservation Fund. With this support we can expand our efforts to reduce predator numbers and help us deliver on our mission to protect and restore the native biodiversity of our beautiful region. This funding will enable us to add additional trap lines to enhance our trapping network. We are deeply grateful to LHCF for their commitment to conservation and their belief in our vision. Thank you for standing with us.”

Predator Free Wānaka

“We are grateful to the LHCF for generously supporting our mahi since 2015. This ongoing support enables us to run our community nursery, helps towards our ongoing expenses such as potting mix, fertiliser, plant protection and much more. Our future vision is to continue working with our local community to restore native trees and shrubs throughout the Whakatipu, so our biodiversity can thrive again, creating a legacy for future generations.”

Whakatipu Reforestation Trust

LHCF & REALNZ

While The Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation stands alone, it is associated with RealNZ and receives support from RealNZ Group.

The charitable trust Les began in 1994, with a generous initial donation, continuing to receive an annual contribution from RealNZ, as a levy collected from every Doubtful Sound visitor.

Acknowledgements & Key Partners

Realnz



David and Eryth Boyd



Support Conservation That Lasts

You can help protect some of Aotearoa's most special places through a one-time, monthly, or annual donation of any amount via our website.

Donors can choose to support a specific conservation initiative:

Deep Cove Education Trust:
inspiring young people through hands-on environmental education in Fiordland

Cooper Island Restoration Project:
restoring a remote island sanctuary in Dusky Sound and creating a safe habitat for native species.

The Kārearea Project:
protecting and monitoring New Zealand's native falcon, one of our most remarkable birds of prey.

Alternatively, you can choose to donate to the Foundation's priority fund, allowing us to direct your contribution to the conservation project that needs it most at the time

Contact for more information: lhcf.co.nz





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