**Project Hotspot Summary**

* The aim of Project Hotspot is to **capture local knowledge on four coastal threatened species in Taranaki (orca/kera wēra, reef heron/matuku moana, little blue penguin/kororā and New Zealand fur seal/kekeno) and use this information to better protect these species and their habitats**.
* The project is run through schools and is supported by scientists and community groups.
* The following questions are being addressed:
  + **Where are the hotspots for these species?**
  + **Why do these hotspots occur?**
  + **What are the greatest threats to these species and their habitats?**
* Students capture local knowledge by interviewing coastal recreational groups and users.
* Sightings are recorded using online cloud-based data collection and mapping tools.
* Hotspots are identified through data analysis.
* Students investigate why species hotspots occur where they do and what are the main threats to these species. This part of the project involves formulating and testing hypotheses and includes an element of field work.
* Schools hold a workshop to communicate their findings to people who can make a difference.
* The project provides a two-way learning process whereby the community, government authorities, conservation groups and industry (end users) learn from the students’ findings.
* The information gained through using this citizen science approach can be applied by end users to better protect threatened species and their habitats.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

***How is Project Hotspot funded?***

The project is funded by the government as part of A Nation of Curious Minds, an initiative to encourage community groups, schools and scientists to work together.

***Who came up with the idea for Project Hotspot?***

The project idea was hatched by members of the Nga Motu Marine Reserve Society in collaboration with a range of partners, keen to encourage community awareness of the coastal environment by education.

***What will the findings of the project be used for?***

The sightings data are available to everybody and can be used for a broad range of applications including school projects, local conservation work, oil spill response, submissions, environmental impact assessment and resource management. Check out the interactive maps available on the Project Hotspot website.

***How can I report a sighting?***

Go to the Project Hotspot website ([www.hotspot.org.nz](http://www.hotspot.org.nz)) and either enter the sighting directly into NatureWatch NZ (you will need to register first time around) or get in touch using the contact details on the website.

***Can I download the sightings data?***

Yes you can. Use the ‘Report Sightings’ buttons on the website to enter the NatureWatch NZ monitoring pages. To the right hand side of the sightings map you will see the option to ‘Export Observations’ as a CSV file. Feel free to get in touch if you need help.

***How can I get my school involved?***

It is envisaged that more schools will be recruited to the programme in future, particularly coastal schools. If your school might be interested in joining the project please get in touch.

