

# NZSAR

New Zealand Search  
and Rescue Council



## NEW ZEALAND SEARCH AND RESCUE REGION



# Awards 2015

*The NZSAR Gold Award for Operational Activity is awarded for a very significant contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region during 2015.*



## Gold Award

**Silvano Lorandi • Mika Verheul • Richard John Walker • from LandSAR Nelson**

**For the rescue of two people from Robert Ridge, Nelson Lakes National Park on 5 September 2015**

Two tourists, insufficiently equipped, inexperienced and in dire need of rescue from Nelson Lakes National Park, called Police at 5.30pm. Weather conditions on Robert Ridge were atrocious, with extremely strong winds and heavy snow fall. One of the pair had fallen and could not proceed.

Three Nelson LandSAR volunteers, highly skilled in alpine conditions, began the long, hard walk in, carrying survival gear, shelter for themselves and the tourists, as well as a full medical kit.

They stopped en route at a hut and prepared hot water bottles, which later proved invaluable.

Their hourly weather reports described a wind chill factor of -20 degrees. Their fourth report was simply "this is atrocious... it doesn't get any worse".

Adding to the complexity of the rescue was the tourists' cell phone mapping system, which placed them 1100 metres

away from where they believed they were. The rescue team used great navigational skills to find the tourists in whiteout conditions at 3.15 in the morning. It took the team a further two hours to get to them.

Both hypothermic, the male was non-responsive and unable to move as his jeans had frozen solid. The rescue team split into patient care and rescue tent installation; pitching two tents was a major feat, let alone having to strip out a pack liner and slide the non-responsive, hypothermic male into the rescue tent.

The professional team work, with excellent role definition, was key to the successful outcome. Allowing the team doctor to provide outstanding care, including slowly warming the male, and the sound decisions made throughout were critical as conditions did not improve enough to evacuate by helicopter until the following afternoon.

*The NZSAR Gold Award for Support Activity is awarded for a very significant contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region.*



*Gold Award*

**Delanie Halton • from WanderSearch Auckland Charitable Trust**

**For her services to WanderSearch and the WanderSearch programme in Auckland**

Delanie Halton has been involved in the WanderSearch programme since 2009. She is a 20-year-long member of Auckland LandSAR and a member of its line rescue team.

Delanie is also the administrator for WanderSearch Auckland Charitable Trust, involved in applying for and sourcing corporate and private funding. She has helped establish standards for equipment and research that are presently being reviewed by WanderSearch New Zealand to become part of the national standards. She has also comprehensively researched wanderers to establish patterns in New Zealand, and to determine wanderers' needs within the community.

Delanie has built relationships with the Auckland District Health Board and facilitated the introduction and training of the WanderSearch programme into its high care unit at Auckland Hospital. She has liaised with rest homes,

highlighting what is needed to support potential wanderers and their caregivers.

She has assisted other WanderSearch entities in setting up and applying for funding, and with the continued training of their individual programmes. Delanie keeps New Zealand informed of issues and trends through her monthly newsletters, has developed the Auckland WanderSearch Charitable Trust website, and is currently working on a national WanderSearch version.

Delanie has continually supported the Auckland Police SAR squad and conducts WanderSearch training at SAREX's. She has developed extensive partnerships within Auckland with key stakeholders and actively promotes SAR and WanderSearch at public talks, promotions and displays.

*Support  
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 2015.*



**Clinton Miles • Simon Turner • from  
Tekapo Helicopters**

- Coastguard Mackenzie Lakes
- LandSAR Mackenzie
- Lake Tekapo Volunteer Fire Brigade

**For the rescue of a group of kayakers on  
Lake Tekapo on 25 September 2015**

## *Certificate of Achievement*

On the afternoon of 25 September, 11 young tourists hired kayaks and set out to paddle to Motuariki Island in Lake Tekapo.

Around 3.30pm the wind began gusting up to 30 knots with waves estimated to be 2 metres high. The kayakers were in trouble – some ended up in the water and were swept towards the western shore of the lake, while the others managed to make their way to Motuariki Island.

Reported overdue at 4.30 pm, Tekapo Helicopters' pilots Clint Miles and Simon Turner responded, as did Coastguard's Steve Binns, Gregor Staley and LandSAR's Hayden McDermott, launching Steve Binns's boat. Both water and air temperatures were extremely cold.

The first person located by the helicopter was deceased; however, they then found a female after following her footprints. She was hypothermic and in shock. After loading her on-board they continued to search, eventually locating six others, all in various stages of hypothermia.

The helicopter then located another deceased person and two kayakers.

Although it was extremely gusty and difficult to land, the pilot managed to manoeuvre the helicopter close to the two people, who were hypothermic, unresponsive and unable to walk. Simon carried them into the helicopter and they took them to Lake Tekapo Fire Station, where Fire Brigade members provided urgent medical assistance to the seriously ill people.

The boat went to the island where the remaining kayakers were and, despite difficult conditions, managed to drop Hayden and Gregor who provided assistance and clothing to the six kayakers until the helicopter returned, taking the rest of the survivors to the fire station.

On the island, Hayden and Gregor also worked on an out-of-control fire, which the six survivors had lit. The boat returned and, in testing conditions, Steve maneuvered to pick up Hayden and Gregor.

If it wasn't for all these rescuers' quick actions there is no doubt three of the kayakers would have died and the rest would have become seriously ill.



## *Certificate of Achievement*

**Emma Milburn and her dog Dart • from LandSAR Search Dogs**

**For commitment in the search for a missing person near Balclutha beginning 23 July 2015**

A 79 year old man didn't return home, near Balclutha, on 22 July. SAR personnel were deployed after his car was located the next day.

Emma Milburn is one of two operators of air scenting LandSAR Search Dogs in the area. Responding that evening, she searched with her dog Dart until around 1am. For the next three days Emma and Dart searched for many hours. Often the last person to return from the field, she was thorough and provided excellent debriefs.

Emma and Dart spent a further two days in the search area, when the search had been scaled down. She also returned the following afternoon, after finishing her paid job. Emma and Dart located the missing party after several hours of searching that day, but he had died. She preserved the scene until Police arrived.

Far exceeding expectations, she searched for more than 50 hours over 5 days, driving the three hour round trip to the search area each day. This is indicative of her high levels of professionalism and dedication.

Just two weeks later, Emma and Dart located a deceased person on the bank of the Ahuriri River, saving an unknown amount of further search resources.

Emma was deployed for more than 360 hours on operations in 2015 – almost half of the total operational hours for all Search Dogs handlers nationwide. Remarkably, Emma has also spent many hours training and as a committee member on both LandSAR Search Dogs and Dunedin LandSAR.

*Operational  
Activity*



**Jackson Henry Smith • from Red Beach Surf Life Saving Club**

**Duncan Clarke • from Piha Surf Life Saving Club**

**Nicholas Tomkins • from Orewa Surf Life Saving Club**

**Leilani Jesse Fuemana • Simone Hollier • from United North Piha Surf Life Saving Club**

**For the rescue of a swimmer on North Piha Beach, 24 November 2015**

Off duty lifeguard, Jackson Smith, was at Piha Beach when he was told a 19-year-old woman was missing in the rough conditions north of Lion Rock. After assessing the situation Jackson dove into the water to assist. The victim's friend, also in the water, told him she thought her friend was dead, further out to sea.

Jackson found the patient face down and unconscious, 50 metres further on. With the help of bystanders, Jackson managed to retrieve the patient and immediately commenced CPR. This swift action saved this woman's life.

The Beach Education instructor team of Nick, Leilani and Simone, plus Piha lifeguard Duncan Clarke, also responded by taking the IRB to the scene. Upon arrival, they helped with CPR, and liaised by radio with

the Police Eagle Helicopter. Duncan got in radio contact with the Westpac Rescue Helicopter, which was close to landing at the scene. The Westpac crew then took control, with the patient unresponsive but now breathing.

The lifeguards continued to assist, loading the patient into the helicopter and providing scene control. The patient was flown to Auckland hospital in a serious condition, but alive.

There is no doubt this patient would not have survived had Jackson and the other lifeguards not been around the Piha area at the time. The skills that all the lifeguards brought together were a credit to their training, and were commended by the Westpac Helicopter crew and Police post the incident.



## Certificate of Achievement

- Greenlea Rescue Helicopter • LandSAR Turangi • New Zealand Police SAR
- Ruapehu Alpine Rescue Organisation (RARO) • St John Ambulance Taupo

### For the rescue of four injured climbers from Mt Ngauruhoe, 17 June 2015

As the sun set on Mount Ngauruhoe on the evening of 17 June conditions changed rapidly, resulting in a thin, hard layer of ice forming. Four climbers, each attempting to descend, fell several hundred metres at different times and from different heights. Injured and scattered in a line down the mountainside, none were equipped to spend a night out, and with temperatures ranging between -13 and -8 degrees, they all began to suffer from hypothermia.

Constable Conrad Smith was advised around 6pm, but due to language difficulties it took skill and time for him to get the correct information.

Two plans were devised, the first using a helicopter. However, as the operation was conducted at night, in challenging weather with cloud and visibility coming and going throughout, substantive preparations for a Plan B were made in the event the weather finally closed in.

The helicopter crew made a reconnaissance of the mountainside using night vision goggles and quickly located the upper most climber.

Both the drop-off of rescue team members and the pick-up of the climbers were challenging. Pilot Nat Every had only a landing light to help maintain his hover reference cues, coupled with information communicated by crewman Sergeant Mark Bond. Eleven separate sorties were made in order to get rescuers to the scene and then to get the patients and rescuers off the mountain.

Conditions underfoot throughout the entire rescue were treacherous: ice thickness prevented anchoring screws being used, so the rescuers had to rely on their crampon and ice axe skills. They expertly rescued multiple injured victims scattered over several hundred metres down a treacherous ice covered mountainside, at night.

Six St John Ambulance staff were on-site to assist with the patients and all four victims were taken to Taupo Hospital. Had they not been rescued that night some, if not all, would have died from hypothermia.

*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.*



## *Certificate of Achievement*

**Shane William Beech • from Coastguard Maketu**

**For his commitment and services to search and rescue**

Shane founded the Maketu Volunteer Sea Rescue Service in 2002. He was instrumental in founding Coastguard Maketu, and the establishment of the Coastguard building, in a community of just over 1000 people.

He was Coastguard Maketu's first President, and is still in this vital role eight years on. He is also a Senior Operational Crew member and media officer.

Shane manages projects to upgrade the unit, including the building of the Coastguard Rescue Vessel Eastpack Rescue in 2013 and the Coastguard facility at the Kaituna Cut where it berths.

Since its inception, Coastguard Maketu has spent 822 hours on Coastguard operations, taken 86 direct calls for assistance, and assisted 275 people. They have participated in 7 search and rescue operations, resulting in the rescue of 18 people and saving the lives of 7.

Shane's continued passion for the betterment of the community carries into his involvement with Youth in Emergency Services (YES), which encourages and strengthens the ties that youth have with their community through volunteering with emergency services.

He has received numerous awards for his commitment to Coastguard and his community.

*Support  
Activity*



## *Certificate of Achievement*

**William John Funnell**

**For his commitment and services to search and rescue in New Zealand for nearly 50 years**

John has been involved in saving thousands of lives, as well as promoting safety within both the aviation industry and the SAR community. He is a pioneer in the use of helicopters to rescue people in remote or difficult places.

Before helicopters, John used fixed-wing aircraft, participating in land and close to shore searches. He then went further afield on long-range helicopter flights to the remote islands off New Zealand, to Indonesia following the 2004 earthquake, and to vessels at sea.

John initiated the first helicopter and SAR operators' workshop in Taupo 25 years ago and also developed the Air Observers training course. He helped set up the Philips Search and Rescue Trust with bases in Palmerston North,

Taupo, Rotorua, Tauranga and Hamilton. He has also been Chairman of the Helicopter Division of the Aviation Industry Association and President of the Aviation Industry Association.

John has been an advisor to the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand during searches. His knowledge and skill has significantly assisted its ability to conduct efficient and effective searches that lead to finding crashed aircraft in rugged and difficult terrain.

During his flying career, John has logged 19,000 hours of flying, many of which have been search and rescue missions.

*Support  
Activity*



**Murray Miskelly • from Coastguard Northland Air Patrol**

**For his leadership and services to search and rescue**

Murray is Coastguard Northland Air Patrol's Unit President for a third term running. He is an operational pilot and a representative on the NorOps committee for the last three years. Murray is a dedicated, committed leader to Northland Air Patrol.

He has been the operational pilot in all but one of the callouts throughout the year and participated in every unit training session, as well as the lion share of all fundraising events. In all, he has contributed well over 200 volunteer hours towards administration, operation and training.

Murray spends considerable time with the non-pilot members teaching them basic operations in the aircraft. He was instrumental in

transitioning the units to a digital tablet-based navigation and planning system, including writing its operational manual and conducting regular training sessions on it.

Murray motivates members in fundraising activities, and leads by example. He has secured unit participation in a number of local fundraising activities, including efforts towards funding a replacement aircraft.

As a pilot, president, and ambassador for Coastguard, Murray's exemplary leadership can be credited for the ongoing success and sustainable operation of Coastguard Northland Air Patrol and the service they provide to the people of Northland.

*Support  
Activity*



**Lynn Stuart • from Coastguard Wanaka Lakes**

**For his commitment and services to search and rescue**

Lynn is a master at Coastguard Wanaka Lakes, which covers both Wanaka and Hawea Lakes.

Lynn's hours of service exemplify his dedication and professionalism. His contribution this year alone exceeds 175 hours, and without his driving support the unit would not have achieved its goals. As skipper, in the last year he has taken part in 29 on-water training evenings and 8 of the 11 search and rescue operations carried out by the unit.

As a Unit Instructor, he runs the new recruits' induction, developing an outstanding relationship with each and every member from an early

stage. His outstanding skills and ability to lead by example helps ensure the new recruits get maximum support and stay.

As the Unit Safety Officer, Lynn has ensured that the Coastguard vessel and its equipment are fit for purpose, and the appropriate inspections are carried out. He has also carried out basic maintenance and repairs on the vessel.

Lynn took part in the summer community awareness programme, and continues to be involved in unit fundraising activities.

**Support  
Activity**



*The NZSAR Council and Secretariat congratulates all our 2015 winners.*

Do you know an organisation, a group, or an 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 these two categories, the NZSAR Awards and the simple nomination process can be found on our website at [www.nzsar.org.nz/awards](http://www.nzsar.org.nz/awards).

The 2016 Award nominations close 31 January 2017.