



SOUTHERN
LAKES
SANCTUARY

Listening at Landscape Scale

A proposed partnership between Hark and
Southern Lakes Sanctuary

Deploying 1,000 Hark devices across one of Aotearoa New
Zealand's most significant conservation landscapes.

Delivering conservation at scale

Southern Lakes Sanctuary is one of New Zealand's largest landscape-scale conservation initiatives, working to restore and protect the extraordinary natural environments of the Southern Lakes.

Bringing together six major conservation groups and more than 100 community organisations, landowners and businesses, we're building a connected conservation landscape where native species can flourish once again.



**Protecting 33 threatened
native species**



**Restoring nature across
850,000 hectares**



**Uniting 100+ groups across
the region**



The opportunity

Southern Lakes Sanctuary (SLS) proposes a landmark partnership with Hark to deploy 1,000 Hark acoustic monitoring devices across the Southern Lakes, to combine advanced AI-powered technology with one of New Zealand's largest landscape-scale conservation projects.

The deployment would focus on two priority wilderness catchments — the Mātakitaki and Rees valleys — alongside peri-urban environments in Queenstown and Wānaka.

Together, these landscapes offer an opportunity to explore how continuous acoustic monitoring can support threatened-species conservation, improve our understanding of biodiversity, and connect remote ecosystems with the communities living alongside them.

By combining Hark's technology with SLS's established conservation network, ecological expertise and operational reach, this partnership could demonstrate what becomes possible when innovation is deployed at meaningful ecological scale.



Why the Southern Lakes

The Southern Lakes is a globally significant biodiversity landscape, encompassing ancient beech forests, alpine ecosystems, braided rivers and wetlands that support rare and threatened native wildlife.

Part of SLS's 850,000-hectare project area lies within Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand, a UNESCO World Heritage Area recognised for its outstanding universal value.

An independent ecological assessment concluded in 2020 that protecting biodiversity across the Southern Lakes could achieve outcomes with no equal elsewhere in New Zealand.

Our programme combines sustained predator suppression, threatened-species recovery, emerging technology and community-led conservation.



Three deployment environments

1. Mātakitaki Valley | Threatened-species stronghold

An internationally recognised wilderness landscape within the wider Te Wāhipounamu World Heritage region, Mātakitaki supports important native forest and alpine ecosystems. SLS and its partners are working to restore threatened species, including mōhua, alongside wider predator-control operations.

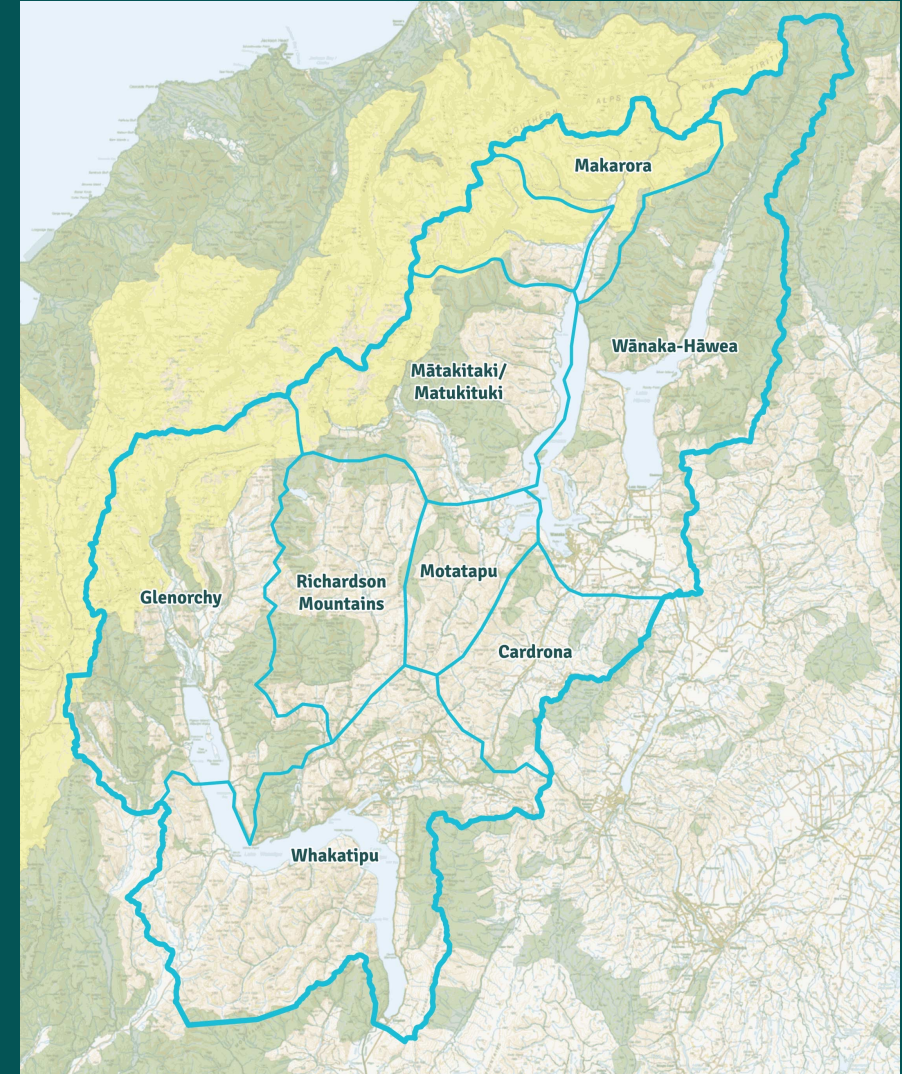
2. Rees Valley | Restoring a living landscape

In our Glenorchy hub, the Rees Valley is the site of SLS's takahē recovery programme, where the return of this nationally treasured species represents an important milestone in restoring a landscape from which it had long been absent.

3. Queenstown and Wānaka | Where nature meets people

The peri-urban edges of Queenstown and Wānaka present a different but equally important opportunity. These areas connect towns, gardens, reserves and regenerating habitats with the surrounding mountains and forests.

Together, these environments provide a valuable opportunity to deploy Hark's technology across different ecological settings, build a repeatable evidence base to inform conservation decisions, support technology development and demonstrate the potential of acoustic monitoring at landscape scale.



Combining Hark's technology with SLS's ecological expertise and landscape-scale conservation network

Technology at scale

Work together to design a strategically distributed monitoring network. Hark's team and SLS's field practitioners would collaborate on deployment protocols and practical learnings from operating across different environments.

Innovation and development

Create a real-world environment for testing, learning and refining Hark's technology. Field experience could inform future product development, species-recognition capability and applications for conservation organisations working in challenging environments.

A shared evidence base

Develop a repeatable, longitudinal dataset to help understand biodiversity patterns and changes over time. Explore how acoustic detections can complement existing monitoring methods and predator-control, and identify opportunities to improve conservation decision-making.

Joint storytelling and global visibility

Develop a shared programme of communications, case studies and media opportunities. The combination of globally significant biodiversity, threatened-species recovery and advanced technology offers a compelling platform to demonstrate the potential of innovation in conservation.

Kā mihi nui

This partnership offers Hark the opportunity to demonstrate its technology in a substantial, active conservation landscape - not simply as a monitoring device, but as part of a wider system working to restore biodiversity.

For SLS, it offers the potential to strengthen our ability to understand and protect the ecosystems in which we work.

Our shared ambition is simple: to combine technology, evidence and conservation at a scale that makes a meaningful difference for nature.

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