

megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

SPONSORED BY

"To treat life as less than a miracle is to give up on it" — Wendyll Berry



Creating safe-havens on the mainland

One of two very rare Coromandel Striped Gecko recently discovered inside the Mahakirau Forest Estate on the 309 Rd (c) Sara Smerdon.

It's been ten years since our Rat Attack Project began. Over this time we've pioneered rat trapping techniques, managing to keep rodent numbers consistently low to allow treasured biodiversity to flourish.

We're celebrating the fact that we have kept rats tracking below 5% in our Small Mammal Index monitors since the project began, with mice tracking around 50% on average.

But what does that all *mean*? Well, essentially we've created a 350ha rodent-free haven for threatened birds, reptiles and invertebrates akin to a predator free island.

With less rodents to predate on them, more invertebrates and lizards are being detected in our monitoring tunnels. There's more food available for our birds- research from within the project demonstrated that kiwi chicks put on weight faster in the absence of competition by rats. Plus, forest regeneration is benefiting from less vermin munching on native fruit, seeds and seedlings each night.

The local birdlife is now raucous, with resident kereru, kiwi, kaka, banded rail, tui, bellbirds, warblers, cuckoos, and fantails. Tomtit and robin are also frequently sighted. And the pateke population has exploded. Brown teal are now more abundant on the Coromandel than anywhere else.

We are working towards future reintroductions of rodent vulnerable species such as Duvaucels gecko. We'd also like to undertake a comprehensive invertebrate survey to find out what else lives there.



www.meg.org.nz





ABOVE: The junior entrants line-up at the start of the 3.5km Little Bay Cabbage tree fun run. BELOW FROM LEFT: Koro the Kiwi, Raine and Jeff Williams and Mike Coley in front of the MEG stall at the Keltic Fair. Trained kiwi handler Diane Prince removes a kiwi from a burrow during an Upclose Kiwi Encounter. Two girls get to hold a live gecko during the 'Meet a Gecko' event at Driving Creek Sanctuary.



BELOW: A bunch of Junior Rangers make the hike up the hill at a Waikawau Bay



It was a sweltering summer on the Coromandel. But that didn't deter hundreds of visitors who took part in our 2015 Summer Programme.

More than 500 people took part in one of 24 events held during January. Thanks to everyone who attended and our fantastic volunteers who gave up their holidays to run events.

Campers at Waikawau Bay may have noticed a change this year, as MEG managed the camp store over the peak summer period. Working under a concession with the Department of Conservation, the partnership allowed us to generate revenue for our conservation projects. We are grateful to DOC for this opportunity and Travis and Mel for doing such a fantastic job.



KIWI CENSUS

Volunteers are wanted to take part in our 2015 Kiwi Listening Census.



Must be available for at least three nights during May to July.

10 years ago we undertook our baseline Kiwi census. We plan to repeat this census over winter to see how kiwi are benefiting from all the pest control undertaken on their behalf. There are 21 sites inside our Kiwi Sanctuary and a further 6 sites between Papa Aroha and the 309 Rd that we wish to survey. If you'd like to be involved email natalie@meg.org.nz.

Breaking records

A pateke cools off on a pond in Coromandel town (c) Elizabeth Mather

Wayne Todd muses on the ramifications of an unusually dry summer.

Checking back through rainfall records we've had 71mm of rain since 21 December 2014. That's the lowest rainfall for the past 7 years in the same period. My records don't go far enough back to say whether this has been the driest summer for a decade or so. For the tourists and holiday makers though, it's been a goodie, that's for sure.

The Waikawau Bay DOC campground was voted top camp in New Zealand this year. Our Summer Programme events held at the camp in January had more participants than ever before. A neat outcome this year was 45 people hearing kiwi and kaka for the first time (and a first ever for us) on the Nocturnal Walk. The male kiwi couldn't have been much more than 100m from us. It was quite a sight seeing 45 adults and children standing stock-still with looks of pure joy on their faces at the sound.

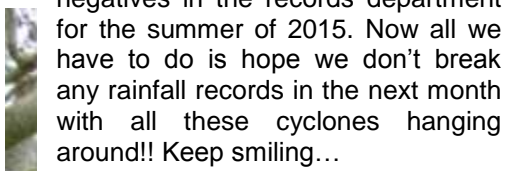
The second count for the pateke census has just been completed with the highest single recorded number ever at 209. That figure is thought to be a little on the low side as there was an extremely high tide when the counts were done. The birds were tucked up under vegetation along the river banks and hard to flush out. More pateke are being seen up streams far from estuaries this summer as well, with many now looking for possible nesting sites.

Seamus, John and Clinton, our three newest field team members

Pig damage at home is the worst this summer it's ever been, with fruit trees stripped and garden fences busted to get at compost bins. I suspect this could be a direct result of the very dry conditions and a shortage of food in the forests. There are obviously too many piggies in too small an area. The local hunter has been kept busy with at least 10 caught around our homes since Christmas. I wonder if it's been the same for other folk around our district?

Possums too have been coming down in numbers searching for food. Off 4 Timm's traps we have caught 20 plus in the last 2 months just around 2 homes.

So there you go: some positives and negatives in the records department for the summer of 2015. Now all we have to do is hope we don't break any rainfall records in the next month with all these cyclones hanging around!! Keep smiling...



INTRODUCING THE NEW FACES OF MEG

We'd like to welcome John Enright, Seamus Ebbs and Clinton Jackson as the newest members of our field team. These guys have been employed full-time since December to help upgrade tracks and traps in our projects and undertake predator control. So far they have been busy cutting 40km of track, baiting rat and stoat traps and replacing stoat traps in our Kiwi Sanctuary. In March they'll begin the groundwork for possum control in our Coast to Coast buffer.

Not to be out-done, our Coromandel volunteers have undertaken several track-clearing assaults on stoat-lines in the Coromandel Kiwi Project, clearing LUC, DAV and BUF line so far. We still have more tracks to open up, so if you'd like to join us email coromandelkiwiproject@meg.org.nz.



Meet Betsy Williams

Betsy is 93 years old and lives in a small town in Pennsylvania in the USA. Although she lives in a retirement community, that hasn't sunk in yet. She's still very active in the community and especially likes giving weekly manicures to the 'old folks'.



Betsy is a generous supporter of MEG and recently donated \$660 for the purchase of stoat traps. She hopes the traps will "save lots of birds". Thanks Betsy!

Shop Online

Our shop has a range of items for sale including traps, gift cards, key rings, and T-shirts.

100% of the profit of these items will fund local conservation projects.



Victor Rat traps \$6

Or for those who have it all, why not consider a 'trap sponsorship' - just \$65/yr.

To make a purchase visit www.meg.org.nz/support-us/shop/

Support our Work

Become a member of Moehau Environment Group.

You will directly help to protect the unique species and ecosystems on the Coromandel.

It's easy! Simply fill in the form below...

Name	
Address	
Phone	
Email	
I'd also like to volunteer	Please circle: YES NO

Annual Membership fees:

Single: \$10, Family: \$20, Corporate: \$250

I would like to donate a further:

\$ _____

Please include payment by cheque.

Cheques payable to: Moehau Environment Group, Port Charles, RD4, Coromandel.

You can also pay online here

www.meg.org.nz/support-us/membership/

Pleased note for accounting reasons we no longer offer direct debit as a payment option unless requested.

Members subs are now due 1 October.

Have you paid? If so, many thanks.

We really appreciate your support.

For further information please contact:

Natalie Collicott (our Coordinator)

Ph (07) 866 5337

E: natalie@meg.org.nz



Follow us on Facebook

'Like' Moehau Environment Group and help spread the word

Big thanks to our sponsors

Gotcha Traps

Thanks to Lois and Warren Agnew for offering a discount on the supply of monitoring cards for our tracking tunnels.

www.gotchatraps.co.nz



Welcome to the family Thames STIHL Shop

We're thrilled to announce our first 'Kiwi Chick' Corporate sponsor as the STIHL Shop in Thames. Jill and the team at STIHL see supporting us as a great fit with their brand, and have already supplied us with chainsaws and track-clearing equipment for our field team. Next time you're in Thames, stop in and say hi!



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Steel Craft

