
HOCHSTETTER

February 05

MEG Kiwi Sanctuary Opening.

Kieron Goodwin, Director, BNZ Kiwi Recovery Trust cuts the ribbon to officially open the Moehau Environment Group Kiwi Sanctuary.



29th January dawned overcast, humid, with blustery easterlies: a sure sign for a "big wet". By 10am the gazebos were up and all the photo and static displays in place.

By ten to eleven we were standing around praying it wouldn't rain and wondering whether any one would turn up.

Half an hour later, there were about a hundred people including children, waiting for the first speaker, and asking questions about the displays. The sun arrived also- briefly.

Leticia Williams, chairperson of MEG, thanked all those who had been involved in the setting up, and introduced the MEG committee.

There was a special thanks to all those landowners and residents who have generously given their support; and thanks to DOC for their supportive partnership; BNZ Kiwi Recovery Trust and Environment Waikato, for the significant financial backing and New Zealand Landcare Trust. Among other sponsors mentioned were

Fortress Fasteners and Coromandel Timber for providing materials.

Kieron Goodwin, executive director, BNZ Kiwi Recovery Trust, gave a brief run down on the role of BNZKRT, nation wide, to halt the decline of Kiwi, and also thanked all those involved. He announced that combined with the DOC Moehau Kiwi Sanctuary the area of kiwi protection on the northern Coromandel, at 25,000ha, was the biggest in the country, and most probably the biggest in the known galaxy!

Greg Martin, conservator for DOC Waikato, also thanked all those involved. He pointed out the huge benefits to the DOC Moehau Kiwi Sanctuary, of having MEG's buffer zone sanctuary to help reduce the number of stoats over the whole area. He felt that the area has huge potential for a World Heritage Site status, especially if it includes some of the closer off shore islands. He felt there was an exciting future ahead and congratulated MEG on the wonderful job they had done so far.

Roger Smith, of Environment Waikato, also congratulated MEG and said how impressive it was the amount this volunteer group had achieved.

People then moved to the first stoat box on the "Friends of Waikawau Bay" track, (a walking track created and supported solely by campers), where Kieron Goodwin cut the ribbon.

A group then set off up the track to carry in the last few boxes and open the first line of Moehau Environment Group's Kiwi Sanctuary.

Topping it off, at the end of the day we had a number of new members, friends and donations of time and money.

As we packed up at 3pm the first spits of rain arrived.

STOP PRESS!

First eight stoats have been caught on the first three lines opened and they have only been open a week!

Great news. Everyone here is absolutely stoked.



Ron Peters explains the workings of a stoat trap.

Summer Holiday Programme

The weather wasn't that good in the early part of summer and consequently numbers were down. However it didn't seem to dampen the spirits of the high percentage of children who turned up to some of the activities. "Close Encounters with Kiwi" was still one of the most popular as was "Kiwi by Night". Some were that keen they stood around in the pouring rain just so they could hear a kiwi call.

Some activities were unfortunately cancelled because of bad weather, but we still had 280-odd turn up to all events in total.

The trips to Cuvier Island and Great Barrier Island were fully booked and conditions couldn't have been better, with glassy sea conditions and sunny days. Dolphins were photographed in the harbour at Gt Barrier Is.

A very special thanks to DOC who have now allowed us to run our Summer Holiday activities across DOC administered lands under a formal partnership arrangement. More on this in a future article.



Junior Rangers explore the Tangiaro River.

Dotterels

It's been a wonderful nesting season for the dotterels at Waikawau Bay. Except for a couple of big sea-big tide washovers on the northern sandspit taking out some nests, the fledged chick survival rate is the best to date.

Ten of the twelve chicks have so far survived.

It's thanks to the voluntary work of our winter time stoat trapper, Terry, and the great work of our DOC dotterel protection summer volunteer, Nicola that has contributed to this success.

This year we have caught far less predators (especially stoats and hedgehogs) than in the previous three years. Hopefully we are starting to get on top of it!

The Peninsula as a whole has seen a 70% increase from 174 birds in 1996, to 274 in 2004, according to the last census in October. We're hoping for even greater things with the increased predator trapping of the MEG Kiwi Sanctuary, which surrounds Waikawau Bay.

Boosting Profile

We've had a couple of knock backs on some major funding applications in the past two months, and have found out that we aren't that well known out there.

It seems that to go for significant funding we'll need to get a little more professional in our approach.

We have hired a graphic design group- Studio Kirsch- to help us with branding and develop some consistency across everything from logo and T-shirts, to membership brochures and eventually our web-site.

In the meantime it's-"get out there and get us known" for me, with displays, Power Point presentations, workshops, and talking to as many people as possible.

So, you can help us, by just mentioning us in conversation and describe a little of what we are doing.

Totally open to suggestions—this is your group—we need to make it work, to make it work.

Email: wayne@landcare.org.nz

That's it for now .Would be great to get feedback. Give us a call or email me.

Till next time

Wayne Todd