

# megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

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**Manaaki Whenua, Manaaki Tangata,  
Haere whakamua.  
Care for the land, Care for the people,  
Go forward. Maori proverb.**



## ROBIN SONG RETURNS TO TE MOEHAU



MEG & friends at MEG's Port Charles Rat Attack release site.

The 8<sup>th</sup> of April was a very special day as Toutouwai, the North Island robin, were reintroduced to Te Moehau after becoming regionally extinct in the northern Coromandel around 100 years ago. Over 100 locals, MEG members, local and Pureora iwi, DoC, and Press, witnessed natural history in the making as 60 of these beautiful birds were released, 30 at Stony Bay and 30 at MEG's Rat Attack project at Port Charles. MEG volunteers and the Hauraki DoC team did a great job of catering for the crowd serving breakfast, morning tea and a hangi lunch in blustery conditions at Stony Bay.

13 MEG volunteers, an iwi representative and DoC staff worked together in mixed teams over two weeks training the birds for capture at Pureora leading up to the translocation. Over 23,000 meal worms were used in the training phase. Support was given by Massey University Wildlife Centre, Waikato University, DoC Auckland and the DoC Pureora Field Centre. Fine weather and great teamwork made the training and capture phase run like clockwork. Once captured the robins were housed in customised boxes and fed meal worms and wax moth larvae. 2 MEG volunteers drove the robins to Stony Bay and all arrived in excellent condition for release.

Both release sites have low rat numbers (less than 5% rat tracking). Following the release the robins were intensively monitored for 20 consecutive days at both release sites by 30 MEG volunteers and Waikato University PHD students who were carrying out sound anchoring research. They are settling in well and the next phase of monitoring will see nesting sites identified and hopefully rockin' robin chicks on Moehau this spring! *Great thanks to all.*

## HEAPS TO SMILE ABOUT

Shortly after the robin translocation MEG received a very productive visit from Alan White, manager of the Biodiversity Advice and Condition Funds. Upon arrival Alan was greeted by a very perky and PR conscious robin (these birds have a great sense of timing). He was extremely supportive of MEG's projects. MEG has since received a substantial grant for a possum and rat control project to be run over 3 years in the Waikawau Bay area.

We welcome Print House Ltd of Hamilton, MEG's new print partner and sponsor of MEGaphone. Throughout their operation Print House are proactive about sustainability with preferred use of papers that have 'chain of custody' certification, a recycled content along with the use of vegetable oil based inks.

My biggest smiles over the last months have come from running talks on kiwi with activities for new entrants and preschool kids. It's great to see the littlies so interested nature.

Cheers & stay warm - *Jonty Rutherford*

MEG Coordinator, mob: 021 410040, jonty@meg.org.nz



Local and Pureora iwi and guests at the Stony Bay robin release site - boxes with robins ready for lift off.

### MEGA STAT

**120,000+**

**Total times Rat  
Attack traps  
checked & reset!**



**moehau  
environment  
group**

## WHANGANUI DELIGHT

Travelling down the Whanganui River in a Canadian Canoe must surely be one of the best family adventures New Zealand has to offer. In the week after Easter Julian, Marie, Lisa and I set off with friends and their children on a trip from Whakahoro to Pipiriki through the heart of the Whanganui National Park. We rented four Canadian Canoes from 'Wades Landing', a Canoe rental business in Raurimu.

The scenery through the Whanganui National Park is truly fantastic! Lush green native bush lines steep riverbanks and alternates with tall limestone walls dropping vertically into the river, which are riddled with fossils from New Zealand's turbulent geologic past. The occasional easy rapids provide for some exciting moments. DOC has established great campgrounds in about 10Km intervals along the river with safe drinking water, toilets and cooking shelters as well as two lodges with up to 20 bunk beds.

Despite DOC's efforts to retain the native forest in the National Park, mobs of Goats roam the park and the river banks at will and watch the passing paddlers, while Possums and Rats checked our gear each night, seemingly unimpressed by all the poison notices posted by DOC around the camp sites.

Nevertheless the native wildlife and especially the bird life still seems to be doing reasonably well. We heard and saw many Robins, Bell Birds, Tui and even spotted an elusive Blue Duck.

If you think the Moehau is tough terrain, go and see the Whanganui. Practically the only part of the park that is accessible are the river banks, while most of the rest is riddled with narrow and almost vertical deep canyons, cut into the limestone over millions of years, bluffs and dense bush. This is one tough country and trapping would seem hopeless.



After four adventure filled days we arrived in Pipiriki and back in civilisation. This won't be the last time we go down the river! Thomas Everth.

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### 3D CRITTER CARDS ONLY \$12.00 EACH

Made from a postcard size piece of balsa these easy to post, easy to assemble models are a quick and quirky gift! We now stock 4 models: the tui (pictured below) and you can see the weta, tuatara, and fantail at [meg.org.nz](http://meg.org.nz).

Each one comes flat with an envelope for posting, and full instructions. They are easy to assemble, needing no glue, though small kids might need some help. You won't find them cheaper so order yours NOW!

Contact Tina Morgan at [t.morgan@colville.org.nz](mailto:t.morgan@colville.org.nz), or 1659 Port Charles Road RD4, Coromandel to order.



**moehau  
environment  
group**

## WAIKAWAU BAY WETLANDS & ESTUARY PROJECT HUMMING ALONG.

The ecological survey work being carried out over the past four months has leapt ahead, thanks in no small measure, to a wonderful bunch of volunteers.

These intensive surveys are funded by the Habitat Protection Fund of WWF and the Environmental Initiatives Fund of Environment Waikato. This is to look at the flora and fauna of the area and the impacts from animal and plant pests. Of special concern is the Saltwater Paspalum (*paspalum vaginatum*), an introduced weed species which is fast spreading throughout the estuary from the upper reaches to the inner dunes.

Predator, possum, and rodent control continues, and our monitoring is still showing decreasing numbers of animal pests, and increasing numbers of fernbirds, weta, and skinks and other wetland bird species. The animal pest work is still being done on a volunteer basis and is a mix of trapping and toxins, covering about 200ha.



Wilde and Hanna-smiling in a howling gale-shellfish counts

What has been found so far? Not all doom and gloom, that's for sure, as the list below will show. It's quite amazing to get stuck in and have a really good look at it all and this is some of what has turned up.

- Shellfish densities as great as the largest recorded in other surveys in NZ - 4000/sq m!
- Large numbers of skinks (albeit our aggressive Australian egg-laying cousin - the rainbow skink).
- Increase of Pateke (Brown Teal) from 2 birds five years ago to a population of 90-100.
- Bittern, banded rail, and spotless crane all seen or heard (banded rail have increased in the past five years and are now seen daily).
- Fern bird population steady at 60-70(Monitor due now for this season's breeding success.
- At least two species of ground weta.
- Five species of native land snails found so far.
- A huge range of saltwater fish species present and fresh water species abundant in all streams surveyed.
- Increasing size and distribution of mangroves (remember: this is a native plant!).

As mentioned earlier all of this could not have been done without the help of volunteers. Many of them have come from overseas. Two need special mention: - Hanna from Italy, and Wilde from USA, who gave such good energy day after day and with such wonderful good humour (see photo). They are much missed.



BOP Polytech students carrying out vegetation surveys at the estuary.

It has also been a particularly exciting time, with the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic bringing 22 students from the Environmental Management Studies course up for four days, to train in terrestrial monitoring techniques. After some sorting of logistics (22 is a lot of organizing and impact all at once!), a huge amount was achieved. We have gained a large amount of valuable data which now needs to be written up and had a real fun time! ~ Wayne Todd.

**760** **MEGA STAT**  
**Volunteer hours worked at Waikawau Bay since Feb.**

**MEG INFO BITES**  
**Pateke** (Brown teal) have recently been discovered feeding on cockles. Tricky when you think how firmly those two shells are closed! Great for us as we have so many in our estuary, which means the birds have plenty to eat!  
**Rainbow Skinks** are Australian migrants which have now spread through many parts of the upper North Island, including Coromandel. There is strong evidence to suggest they are displacing our small copper skinks and taking over their habitat. This is sad as we have discovered there are large numbers of rainbows' in the wetlands but few, if any, coppers.  
**Grey Warblers:** it is now not uncommon to see small flocks of these tiny birds feeding at this time of year. Thanks to extensive animal pest control, especially rodents, possums and mustelids, populations are dramatically increasing.

**600** **MEGA STAT**  
**Volunteer hours spent monitoring robins in their 1<sup>st</sup> 20 days on Moehau**

# megevents

## KIWI CALL MONITORING SEASON IS NOW

Yuri Forbs is coordinating MEG's annual kiwi survey so call him on 07 866 7237 if you would like to wrap up warm and spend an evening kiwi listening.

## MEG'S ANNUAL TRIP TO THE MAUNGATAUTARI ECOLOGICAL ISLAND

Date TBC soon. We will email members and post the date at [meg.org.nz](http://meg.org.nz) once it is confirmed.

## CORO PENINSULAR KIWI GROUPS HUI

At the MEG Ecobase, Waikawau Bay, early spring '09.

Date TBC. We will email members and post the date at [meg.org.nz](http://meg.org.nz) once it is confirmed.

## COLVILLE: REAL KIWI COUNTRY DANCE

Thanks to all who came to the Real Kiwi Country Dance on Kona Colville Connection race day and made it so much fun!



MEG committee members Lettecia Williams and Lillian Gamble (in the kiwi suit) collecting donations on Kona race day.

MEG welcomes Print House and thanks BNZ Save the Kiwi and Fortress Fasteners for their ongoing support and 360 Discovery Cruises for their support of The MEG Summer Programme.

## MOST MEMBERS PAID UP, THANK YOU.

Thanks to all those members who have paid their subscription for 2009. And to those who haven't, a friendly prod that subs became due on January 1 this year.

Subscriptions remain at \$10 per person, \$20 per family and \$50 for company membership.

Please send to Tina Morgan Membership co-ordinator 1659 Port Charles Road RD4 Coromandel 3584 OR pay direct into BNZ account 020304 0342229 02. If you choose this option please email Tina on [t.morgan@colville.org.nz](mailto:t.morgan@colville.org.nz) and let her know.

For new memberships please download the form at [www.meg.org.nz/pdf/2707\\_Meg\\_Brochure\\_Member.pdf](http://www.meg.org.nz/pdf/2707_Meg_Brochure_Member.pdf).

Donations will, of course, be willingly accepted at any time!

Thanks for your support.

## YOUR DONATIONS AND GRANT BUY SCOPE



UK volunteer Nina Egleton working with MEG's new spotting scope.

With your generous donations and a grant from the Colville/Coromandel Community Board MEG has purchased a Kowa spotting scope. The scope allows us to observe close up with less intrusion and less impact on habitat. It has been trialed on artificial ponds to assess whether the Pateke were pure breeds or cross breeds and used in the Waikawau Bay estuary to look for Fernbird roosting sites and watch their behaviour. This spring the scope will be used as we monitor the robins nesting. Thank you!

