

# megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

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*"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world."*  
~John Muir

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## FROM THE COORDINATOR...

### The summer that wasn't

After avidly awaiting my first summer in the Coromandel, I must admit it was a little wet for my liking. But the rain did not put off our dedicated bunch of volunteers, who spent the first few weeks of January out in the bush, guiding activities, and sharing their wealth of experience with the community.

Now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, the summer programme is run annually by MEG volunteers. All funds raised go towards protection of Kiwi Habitat in the Northern Coromandel.

Activities this year included an evening walk through bush with two insect experts, night tours at Port Charles to hear kiwi in the wild and see a kiwi nest, and a Junior Ranger programme at three local campsites, where kids were given an opportunity to explore and encounter what lives in the bush. Thanks to everyone who took part. While turnout was down on previous years, those who did take part had a lot of fun.



Moehau Environment Group has had a presence at a couple of major Adventure Races during March. We ran an information stall at the Colville Connection on Saturday 10 March. We also gave a presentation at Tangiaro Kiwi Retreat on Friday 16 March, at the infamous Adventure Racing Coromandel 24/12/8 hour race. We would like to thank Adventure Racing Coromandel & Spirit of Coromandel Trust for their generous offer of sponsorship.

*Cheers - Natalie Collicott*

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## POSSUM CONTROL IN WAIKAWAU BAY

We will be undertaking possum and rodent control in 593 hectares in the Waikawau Bay catchment area from late March through till May 2012. This is a repeat of a successful cyanide operation undertaken in 2010 which dramatically reduced possum numbers in the area. The project provides a 'buffer' of protection against reinvasion of possums into the Moehau Range and the removal of rats allows for the successful breeding of native bird species.



[www.meg.org.nz](http://www.meg.org.nz)

## Waikawau Wetlands Restoration Project

The past three months has seen a steady improvement in tracks and upgrades of traps. We have finished the two critical three monthly monitors- one for rodents and one for invertebrates and reptiles. Both are indicators of effectiveness of our work and give us an idea of improvements made (or otherwise!).

This monitoring round has been rather sobering with indications of mice in very large numbers and a rat presence- there haven't been any rats for over two years. We suspect the mild and moist summer may have played a part in this. There have also been more stoats and weasels around with four stoats caught in a small area of the estuarine wetlands, and a weasel caught well up into the heart of the wetlands proper. Having to be constantly vigilant is a little worrying until we can find a more effective method to get rid of these critters. Meantime we have resorted to a round of low toxicity poison to see if we can get the numbers down before winter.

An effort has also been made this summer to reduce the number of willows and woolly nightshade in the wetlands with most of the woolly nightshade now removed except for a patch right at the back of the wetlands. Willow removal will be ongoing into next Spring.

The most exciting news is we can confirm that two pair of Bittern bred in the wetlands this year. We know that at least one pair raised at least one chick, but we don't know about the other pair. We haven't been able to sight either pair since late in February so we will have to wait and see through winter when they are sited more often out feeding on wet pasture lands.

We had a visit from Dave Hansford, a journalist who writes articles for 'New Zealand Geographic', 'Royal Forest and Bird Magazine', amongst others. The visit was arranged by Marc Slade of WWF, our main funder. An enjoyable time and we ended up with a fabulous article in the January 7th edition of 'Waikato Times'.



Special thanks to Megan Brant and Martine Wong from USA, and Emma Pahlson from Sweden, awesome volunteers who spent some time with us over summer helping out. They will be missed.

The final stages of several reports are underway including the summing up of research on saltwater paspalum. These will be ready in the next month for anyone interested. Please give our coordinator a call if you would like a copy.

*Wayne and Kathi*



This small brown dabbling duck has been in serious decline for the past fifty years. Thanks to the efforts of DOC, Ducks Unlimited, community groups, and support from Banrock Wines, several very successful translocations have taken place and there are now over 2000 of these little waterfowl.

Research has shown they are a very primitive duck, tracing their lineage back many millions of years unchanged. They do not quack, feed mostly at night, and are considered the early "rodent equivalent" on mainland NZ. They are omnivores feeding on a variety of foods in wet grasslands, estuaries, streams and forest floors.

Translocations into the northern Coromandel have been very successful with populations spreading south and expanding. Our latest census done in Feb and March for Waikawau Bay, shows a stable population this year of 160+/- with an earlier count of 180 just prior to the census.

Interestingly, the birds are getting harder to count. They are more easily spooked than they used to be; taking to scurrying for cover as soon as they see you. For the first two or three years after translocation they were tamer and not so easily frightened. Could be they are becoming more "feral" with each generation which might explain the change in behaviour. It has certainly been difficult this year getting accurate head counts.

Still it is good news all round and they are seen day and night all year in our bay. With the intensive predator control MEG now has in the bay these endangered birds have a good chance of successfully living long and healthy lives! With your help this will continue.

**Did you know?** The Pateke is New Zealand's rarest waterfowl species on the mainland.

## GOOD TURNOUT FOR KIWI AVOIDANCE TRAINING



Thanks to everyone who brought their dogs along to the free Kiwi Avoidance training sessions over January. It was really encouraging to meet people from all walks of life, keen to protect kiwi in their backyard through responsible dog ownership. Sessions were held by DoC in Tairua, Coromandel, Colville, Waikawau Bay and Te Mata. I had a really enjoyable day-out meeting dogs and their owners at Colville and Waikawau Bay, where 35 dogs were trained to avoid kiwi in the bush. If you missed out on getting your dog trained over summer, more sessions are scheduled for Queens Birthday weekend. Get in touch with our coordinator to book.

### LISTENING FOR KIWI

One of the simplest ways to locate kiwi is to listen. Kiwi call at night to mark their territory and stay in touch with their mate.

**When?** The best time to listen is on a moonless night, up to two hours after dark, or just before dawn.

**What?** The male kiwi call is repetitive and shrill and has 8-25 calls, while the female call is a repetitive guttural sound of 10-20 calls.

**Want more info?** You can hear what their calls sound like at [www.savethekiwi.org.nz](http://www.savethekiwi.org.nz). Or come join us for our annual kiwi listening sessions during June.

## COROMANDEL: 'HOT-SPOT' FOR KIWI PROTECTION

The Department of Conservation recently coordinated a series of meetings between reps from the National Kiwi Recovery Group, Bank of New Zealand Save the Kiwi Trust, DoC and Coromandel community groups.

The aim of these visits was to increase the understanding of the kiwi recovery work being undertaken on the Peninsula and facilitate better support and advice in line with the developing Coromandel Kiwi Taxon Plan. (A draft of the Taxon plan is due out for consultation in May).

In late March, some of our committee met with this group in Coromandel. It was a great opportunity for us to discuss the future direction of our kiwi protection work, and share expertise. "For me it was a reminder of how much has been achieved for kiwi by community groups over the past ten years, but it also raised the question of how can we become more strategic in working together with other Kiwi groups on the Peninsula" says Natalie, MEG Coordinator.

MEG is really looking forward to further developing our relationship with this group, and is in the process of planning a Hui for conservation community groups in the Coromandel.

## KIWI SANCTUARY TRAP UPGRADE

We recently secured funding from the Lou and Iris Fisher Charitable Trust, to begin systematically upgrading our stoat traps to stainless steel DOC 200 traps in our Kiwi Sanctuary. With 700 traps spread over 7900 hectares, this is a big task!

MEG has just finished our annual trapper audit and these results (as well as the comprehensive trap audit undertaken last year) will be used to prioritize trap replacement. Since our Kiwi Sanctuary's establishment in 2005 these traps have caught over 787 stoats, 548 weasels, 5844 rats and 23 cats, making a huge difference to the breeding success of resident Kiwi.

## INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS SPEND SUMMER WITH MEG



MEG hosted two volunteers over January and Feb; John from Germany and Emma from Sweden, each staying for four weeks. They were immensely helpful, and spent their time trapping, track cutting and undertaking weed control.

Cartoon: Self portrait of Emma with a weed and rat in her hands

I asked Emma to describe her time here:

*"I didn't know what to expect when I first came to the Coromandel. A pair of hiking boots, work gloves, and a rat line later, I felt like Jake Sully on his first excursion on Pandora: wide-eyed, breathless, and firmly convinced I was living in a dream.."*

*..Learning about the endemic species of New Zealand, and seeing them with my own eyes, has been more fantastic than words can describe. It's such a great feeling, to go out in the bush and with my own hands do work that will aid the survival of these plants and animals. Whether it's plodding through the marshes to monitor fauna, climbing the hills to bait rat traps and weed invasive plants, or collecting seeds of native plants, there is always a tangible connection between MEG's work and the species they aim to protect."*

Both volunteers were hosted in the homes of MEG committee members, which added to their unique experience. "There are so many amazing things to discover, and it's not limited to wildlife. There are people here who belong in fairy-tales, or in books not yet written. There are people with great stories, and great hearts...they invite you into their lives and make their home your home" says Emma.

Volunteers are the life-blood of our organisation. Each year we host over 50 international volunteers, and our volunteers contributed over 5300 hours to our conservation projects in 2011.

# meg events

## CLOSED FOR GOOD

On Tuesday 8 May BNZ will be 'Closed for Good'. For one day staff will be teaming up with volunteers across NZ to work on projects that benefit the local community. MEG has entered a project, asking for budding filmmakers to spend a day in the Northern Coromandel and make a short promo vid for us. If you'd like to volunteer for a project in your community, visit [closedforgood.org](http://closedforgood.org) to find out more, and register.

## FREE KIWI AVOIDANCE DOG TRAINING

MEG and Harataunga Kiwi Project are planning on running free Kiwi Avoidance Training sessions over Queens Birthday weekend (June 2-4). Please Call **07 868 3054** to book.

## MEG MEMBERSHIP- SUBS ARE DUE

A friendly reminder that your 2012 subscription is now due. If you have already paid, many thanks. Subs are \$10 per person, \$20 per family, or \$50 Corporate.

You may send subs to Tina Morgan, Membership Coordinator, 1659 Port Charles Road, RD4, Coromandel 3584 OR pay direct into our BNZ a/c 02-0304-0342229-02. If you choose this option, please email to let us know at [t.morgan@colville.org.nz](mailto:t.morgan@colville.org.nz).

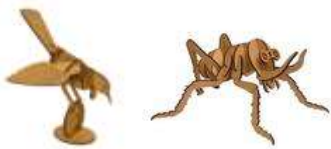
Receipts for subs will not be sent unless requested. Donations are gratefully received, and will be receipted.

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)

We look forward to your continued support, as we work towards protecting the wonderful flora and fauna of the Northern Coromandel.

Thank you in anticipation.

Cheers - *Tina Morgan*



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## A BIG THANK YOU TO...

- ☛ **The Lou and Iris Fisher Charitable Trust** for a \$5000 grant for the upgrade of stoat traps.
- ☛ **BNZ Save the Kiwi** for ongoing support of MEG's Kiwi Project.
- ☛ **Fortress Fasteners** for hardware to build trap boxes and save kiwi.
- ☛ Lois & Warren Agnew from **Gotcha Traps** - corporate members & sponsors supplying tracking papers.
- ☛ **Adventure Racing Coromandel & Spirit of Coromandel Trust** for their generous offer of sponsorship.
- ☛ **Print House** for sponsoring the Megaphone. Printed using Forest Stewardship Council certified paper. To find mindful print solutions see: [www.phprint.co.nz](http://www.phprint.co.nz)

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