

megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

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"Nature is not a place to visit. It is home."
Gary Snyder

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Royal visitor a rare treat

A royal spoonbill has been visiting Waikawau Bay estuary, feeding on fish and shrimps in the tidal flats.

Appearing occasionally in Coromandel estuaries, this tall, stately and unusual looking bird has been seen at several spots along our coast. A solitary spoonbill was observed feeding in Waikawau Bay estuary this winter.

Spoonbills feed by walking along and sweeping their bill in smooth sideways arcs, using the water movement to gather and filter out the small invertebrates, fish and frogs they eat.

In our estuaries they are often seen feeding in cooperation with white-faced herons. There seems to be a 'symbiotic' relationship where the spoonbill disturbs the muddy or sandy bottom looking for ground dwelling creatures while the herons catch the small fish which flee these disturbances. Spoonbills are more than twice the size of white-faced herons.

They first appeared in New Zealand in 1861, with the first breeding recorded in 1949 alongside the white heron breeding colony at Okarito. Since then spoonbills have successfully colonized New Zealand from Australia and are now widespread although uncommon. In 1977 the population was estimated at 52; growing to about 2000 by 2012. Keep a lookout for these stunning and beautiful birds.



Royal spoonbill photographed at Whakatane estuary (c) Neil Foster



WANTED: TRAIL-CAM SPONSOR

Trail camera's set up on Motutapu have snapped one of the kiwi translocated from Mt Moehau in April. Only the adult birds are banded and that is what is on the leg (with a reflective tape). We hope to purchase a motion-activated infrared trail camera to capture footage of kiwi within our own sanctuary. The footage will help us engage children and make kiwi visible, without disturbing our birds. The camera's cost approx \$450. If you would like to contribute please email natalie@meg.org.nz

Moehau Kiwi move to new island home

Another ten kiwi have a new home on Motutapu Island. It's the biggest ever single transfer of Coromandel brown kiwi and it has been done to future-proof the species.

Moehau Environment Group joined other volunteers helping Department of Conservation dog-handler teams locate kiwi within the Moehau Kiwi Sanctuary during March. The teams spent three days around Port Charles scouring the bush during the day, and listening through the night to locate birds.

Once caught, the kiwi were weighed, and measured before being banded or micro-chipped ahead of their big trip to Motutapu.

The traditionally flightless birds were flown by helicopter across the Hauraki Gulf to their new predator free home. They join nine other Coromandel kiwi already there, taking the island's population to 19.

There's more work to be done though. The plan is to have at least 40 'founders' to kick-start the new island population. This will increase genetic diversity by allowing kiwi sourced from all over the peninsula to be back in contact, mixing their genes and producing a more genetically robust Coromandel brown kiwi to return to the peninsula in the future.

During the operation, an adult pair of kiwi were caught from within our own Kiwi Sanctuary, from a Colville forestry block due to be logged.

Moehau Environment Group wanted to ensure these birds were protected, as they would be at risk during the upcoming logging operation. Their genes are a valuable contribution to the island population. Now it's just up to the kiwi to breed and make sure all that hard work is worth it.

Photo above: Home-base at Stony Bay camp. The translocation brought together kiwi-handlers and dog teams from around the North Island, Auckland and local DOC staff, and about 40 volunteers. Below: Looking north from Stony Bay, with Great Barrier visible in the distance.

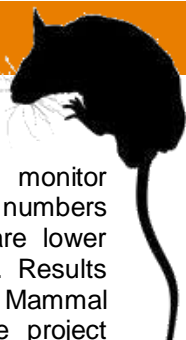




Our display illuminated in the Coromandel Butchers window during the Illume Festival of Light

Mid-winter festivities

Rodent wars



WAIKAWAU BAY WETLAND

Good news! Our latest monitor results show that rodent numbers in our wetland project are lower than the past few years. Results from our June Small Mammal Index monitor within the project showed 1.8% rats and 51% mice present in our tracking tunnels. In the previous years June monitor tracking was at 10% rats, 62% mice. A recent baiting round has helped keep rodent numbers low.

PORT CHARLES RAT ATTACK

Weeds have nowhere to hide in the Rat Attack, with wild ginger, climbing asparagus and wilding pines being targeted this winter. We have also had another two sightings of our North Island robin friend within our project. Unfortunately, our latest monitor revealed higher than normal rodent numbers in some areas, which has kept our trappers busy re-checking traps. We will keep our fingers crossed that our next monitor yields better results.

Funding setback

MEG narrowly missed out on funding from the recent DOC Community Conservation Partnership funding round. This is a real blow, as we enjoyed a strong partnership with this fund's predecessor, the Biodiversity Condition and Advice Fund.

The funding decision has widespread implications for our group. We applied for three years of funding for our Rat Attack project and Coordinator's role. While our projects are currently strong, it puts the future of these projects and others in jeopardy. We are working hard to source ongoing funding to ensure our group's sustainability into the future.

ILLUME FESTIVAL

Coromandel town was transformed in July for Illume- a Winter Festival of Light. MEG joined in the festivities with Koro the Kiwi making an appearance to witness the big "switch on" of lights. Wayne Todd created a beautiful installation for the Coromandel Butchers window to celebrate creatures great and small.

VOLUNTEER POTLUCK

What better way to celebrate our marvellous volunteer trappers than with a winter potluck. Our Coromandel Kiwi Project volunteers gathered during June at Raine and Jeff Williams' place for an epic feast. Much fun (and far too much food) was had by all.



A bunch of volunteer trappers mingle at the Coromandel Kiwi Project potluck in June





Shop Online

Our shop has a range of items for sale including DOC 200 stoat traps, rat traps and boxes.

Stainless steel stoat trap.....\$85
Victor rat trap.....\$6
Rat trap-box.....\$15

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

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



Follow us on Facebook

'Like' Moehau Environment Group and help spread the word

Big thanks to our sponsors

Waikato Regional Council

We've received \$21,500 from their Environmental Initiatives fund. This grant will be put towards making a 'living classroom', creating interactive signage at three key sites and an educational kiwi listening platform to increase the visibility and accessibility of the unique biodiversity present in 'our backyard'. Thanks WRC!

meg events

Save Kiwi Week GOLF TOURNAMENT

Golfers mark Sunday 5 October in your diaries. MEG and the Coromandel Golf Club are holding the first ever Save Kiwi Week Golf Tournament. The \$25 entry fee will go to kiwi protection and there'll be some amazing prizes up for grabs. Spots are limited so get in quick! To register a place email coroplum@xtra.co.nz or visit www.meg.org.nz for more info

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/ or by direct debit into our account 02 – 0304 – 0342229 – 02.

If paying by direct debit, please insert the word "MEMBERSHIP" and your name as a reference.

Members subs were due in January.

Have you paid? If so, many thanks. We really appreciate your support.

For further information please contact:

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Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Waikato REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaunhara ā Pōhē o Waikato



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