

megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

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"The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it"
-Robert Swann, Antarctic explorer



Masters of Camouflage

The humble fernbird was what first inspired our Wetland project in Waikawau Bay. Members of our group had seen and heard less fernbirds over the years, so began trapping predators in 2006 in the wetlands and saltmarsh area. As a consequence we've observed incredible increases in birdlife in the estuary.

And thankfully, with less predators around, our fernbird population is once again thriving. Our latest survey shows pretty much the same number of birds as last year, but in some different locations. This means we probably have a stable population, which may be approaching carrying capacity in the wetland area. Fernbirds are now being heard in other smaller wetlands around Waikawau Bay. We hope this shows dispersal into other areas is beginning to happen.

Plenty of Polytech students visit Waikawau Bay

Every year a bunch of Bay of Plenty Polytechnic students come to help us monitor fernbirds, rodents & invertebrates in our Waikawau Bay Wetland project.

In September MEG hosted 25 Environmental management students, who came for a week to learn monitoring techniques. The students are an invaluable resource- helping us undertake our annual Fernbird monitor, which requires synchronized listening by observers dotted around sites within the wetlands. The data collected helps to tell us if we are winning the war against rodents.

Years of hands-on experience make resident ecologists Wayne Todd & Kathi Parr ideal tutors. They demonstrate many of the monitoring tools MEG uses in our Wetland project.

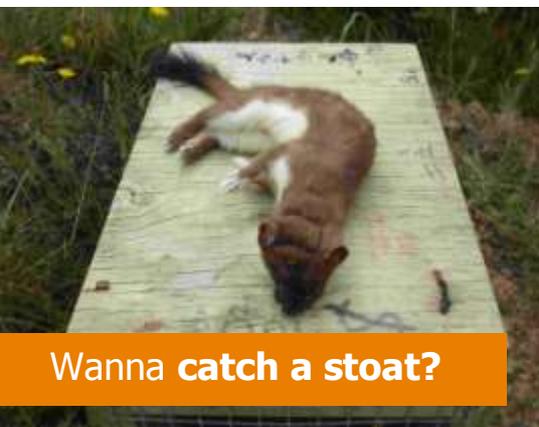


Two students take a rest at a Fernbird Monitoring site



www.meg.org.nz





Wanna catch a stoat?

We are lucky to have a dedicated volunteer who makes all our trap boxes. He's also kept busy supplying other groups!

Terry Whitehouse knows a thing or two about building trap boxes. He's constructed thousands over the years. In fact in 2011 alone Terry made over 450 traps for community groups and individuals in our area.

The Coromandel Coastal Walkways group recently purchased 60 rat traps and 16 stoats traps for their Rings Beach wetland. Our coordinator Natalie Collicott, went along to deliver the traps and help Whitianga students carry them in.

Like a trap for your own backyard? We sell them through our website. Visit www.meg.org.nz or contact Natalie on 07 8665337 for more info.

SUMMER HOLIDAYS

Our annual Summer Holiday Programme is happening throughout January. It's always loads of fun, with outdoor activities for the whole family to enjoy.

This years' Programme will include old favourites like our Upclose Kiwi Encounter, Junior rangers and Kiwi Avoidance training for dogs as well as some new events, like Starlight cinema and a Morepork Survey.

To find out what's on, look out for our Programme booklet. You can view this on our website, or pick one up from Coromandel I-site. **Bookings are essential.**

The Port Charles Rat Attack

Now into our 8th year in the Rat Attack, our August monitor had the highest invertebrate count to date. Our Rodent Indexing showed an amazing 73% invertebrates; 47% mice, 0% Rat and 5% lizard prints in our monitoring tunnels.

We are excited with these results but know the situation can change quickly-with rodents able to reproduce very 6 weeks. The cool wet autumn and winter may have helped in keeping rat numbers down. Back in 2005 prior to the beginning of the management program rats tracked at 70%. Since we began we have consistently maintained rat tracking at 5% or less. However the trapping work goes on...

The bush is looking lush with Five Finger having flowered and full of seed. The spread of ti ngahere (Mountain Cabbage tree) is noticeable with young trees spread throughout the project. Shining Cuckoo are present in significant numbers and already there are Grey Warbler fledglings about.

A Morepork (Ruru) survey to map territories within the project will be held in January ...**If you are keen to help register your interest with Lettecia: Ph 8666626.**

The Waikawau Wetland Project

Of bittern, banded rail, and other birdy things...

It's been a busy and fairly interesting spring, what with tutoring Bay of Plenty Polytech students, wetland bird monitoring, and a visit from the central government auditors. On top of all this, we heard we were successful with two funding applications: one lot from the JS Watson Trust through Royal Forest and Bird, to carry out research on rodent control; and the other from the DOC Biodiversity Condition Fund to continue our protection work for another twelve months. Quite a lot to absorb one way or another.

Back to the bird monitoring: while our stable fernbird count is good news, what is more exciting is that this year 8 Banded Rail were positively identified during the monitor, and at least 5 Bittern were seen and heard. This is the highest recorded numbers since monitoring began back in 2006. Two pair of Bittern were recorded making their very unusual "booming" calls in two specific localities on four separate days suggesting these areas may be nesting territories.

Bittern are now seen or heard almost every day while working in the wetlands. Nationwide Bittern are the most endangered of our wetland bird species with an estimated 750-1000 left.

We currently have an all-women crew carrying out possum and rodent control on the larger surrounding bush and scrub blocks protecting the wetlands - some 600ha in all of fairly rough country. This helps relieve the pressure of re-invasion into our wetlands areas and allows the bird species a chance to nest and raise their fledglings successfully.

That's it for now- we'll keep you posted on progress in the next issue of 'MEGaphone' or you can go to our website at www.meg.org.nz for updates.

Wayne and Kathi

Mercury Bay Area school students unload traps made by MEG for a Rings Beach conservation group



Colville children plant a future forest



On a stormy morning during August children from Colville School came up to Waikawau Bay to help plant trees. Over the space of a couple of hours they got their hands dirty and planted 60 pohutukawa trees in our Children's forest.

First Kiwi fly to Motutapu

The Coromandel has the highest survival rate for kiwi chicks on the mainland. Now we are exporting some, to create an island population in the Hauraki Gulf.

While most Brown kiwi populations are declining rapidly in the wild, Coromandel Brown Kiwi are thriving, with a current population of around 1500, thanks to the efforts of community kiwi groups and DOC.

Five Coromandel Brown kiwi were released in October onto predator free Motutapu Island. The release marks the start of a programme in which up to 50 kiwi will be moved from the Coromandel Peninsula to Motutapu over the next 4-6 years. It is expected that up to 300 kiwi will one day call Motutapu home.

The translocation is the start of a genetic diversification programme to help ensure the survival of Coromandel Brown kiwi. It will allow for kiwi sourced from all over the peninsula to be back in contact, mixing their genes and producing a genetically robust Coromandel brown kiwi to hopefully return to our peninsula in the future.

Kiwi calling Coromandel town home

Audio recordings prove there are Kiwi living in the hills behind Coromandel Town.

The first 'official' survey in our Coromandel Kiwi Project has confirmed what locals already suspected. The kiwi are there!

Bioacoustic recorders found both male and female kiwi calling at three of the four monitoring sites, with the Kennedy Bay Hill and Flays Rd sites call hotspots.

This is a great encouragement for our volunteer trappers who have been working to make this area safe for kiwi by trapping stoats. We'll repeat this survey next year to see how the kiwi are doing.

The Coromandel Area School Kiwi Project aims to increase the chances of Coromandel residents hearing kiwi from their backyard. The project is a joint initiative between the local area school and Moehau Environment Group. **Like to get involved? Contact Lisa Kearney on 8667462**



Support our work

By becoming a member of Moehau Environment Group you are directly helping to protect the unique species & ecosystems on the Northern Coromandel Peninsula.



Members Subs were due in Jan. If you have already paid, many thanks. If not, please do, as we really need your support! Subs remain at only \$10 per person, \$20 per family or \$50 Corporate.

We can't do this without your support, so thank you.

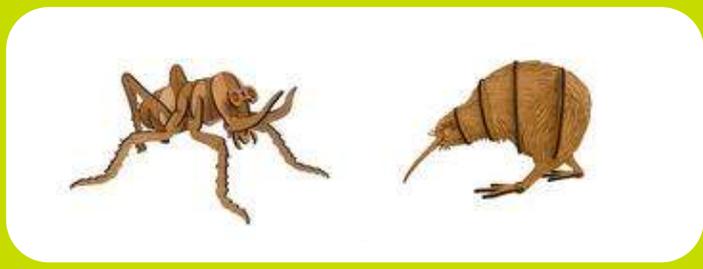
To make a credit card donation go to www.meg.org.nz You can also **donate** online through internet banking. Our BNZ account is 02-0304-0342229-02

New Online Shop

Our online **Shop** raises funds to support conservation projects in the Northern Coromandel. Every cent of profit from any items purchased goes directly towards protecting biodiversity.

Our shop has a range of items, such as T-shirts, key rings and gift cards.

Among the treasures we have for sale, check out these neat kiwiana gift cards. Only \$12



Choose from the Kiwi, Fantail, Tui, Weta, or the Tuatara. The 3D cards fit in an envelope, making them an easy gift to post. Available online, or at the Green Snapper café in Colville.

For more bargains look online at www.meg.org.nz



meg events

HAVE YOUR SAY AT OUR AGM

Come along and hear from guest speaker, Jim Smith from Te Whangai Trust. 17 November, 10:30am, Colville Hall.

SUMMER HOLIDAY PROGRAMME

Nature-based activities throughout January. To view the whole programme visit www.meg.org.nz. Bookings essential.



Find us on Facebook
Like Moehau Environment Group to help spread the word!



A big thank-you to...

- **The Biodiversity Condition Fund** for their ongoing support of our Port Charles Rat Attack and Waikawau Bay Wetland projects.
- **The JS Watson Trust** for a \$3000 grant to research innovative methods of rodent control.
- **The Spirit of Coromandel Trust** for donating \$700 from their ARC Moehau Race.
- **BP** for supplying \$400 worth of fuel vouchers for our volunteers
- **Kiwis for Kiwi** (formally **BNZ Save the Kiwi**) for ongoing support of the MEG Kiwi Sanctuary.
- **Fortress Fasteners** for hardware to build trap boxes and save kiwi.
- **Print House** for sponsoring the Megaphone. Printed using Forest Stewardship Council certified paper. To find mindful print solutions see: www.phprint.co.nz

