

megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

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*I think that I shall never see,
A billboard lovely as a tree.
Perhaps, unless the billboards fall,
I'll never see a tree at all.* ~ Ogden Nash
from 'Song of the Open Road', 1933

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PORT CHARLES PATEKE WORLD CLASS

The Port Charles pateke (brown teal) project was recently hailed as "by far the world's most prolific recovery ever recorded for an endangered waterfowl species". That diagnosis came from the independent Brown Teal Conservation Trust. They also said Port Charles represented "an outstanding example of what can be rapidly achieved in recovery programmes for endangered wildlife". Thanks to the Port Charles community's effort the pateke population in the northern peninsula has grown from 20 to around 700-800 over 7 years. Take a bow!

Also taking a bow is MEG committee member and Sandy Bay local Tina Morgan who received Forest and Bird's prestigious Old Blue award for her decades of commitment to conservation. Congratulations Tina - it is well deserved.

MEG's longstanding goal of operating a sustainable possum control buffer coast to coast to the south of Moehau has moved closer over the last 3 months. MEG's Coast to Coast Possum Blitz has carried out 740ha of possum control from Otautu on the west coast to the Waikawau Bay Knox Farm block on east coast using cyanide. Post operation monitoring will be completed over the next few weeks. We are working with land owners and volunteers are installing infrastructure to expand the Coast to Coast Possum Blitz by 550ha.

One of the goals for MEG and other kiwi care groups on the peninsula is to build a higher profile for kiwi on the Coromandel over the next 10 years. We want to make them part of the peninsula's identity. Giving locals and visitors a strong sense of pride, ownership and an understanding of how vulnerable kiwi are, so they can play their part in looking after them.

Cheers - *Jonty Rutherford*, MEG Coordinator,
mob: 021 410040, jonty@meg.org.nz



Coro kiwi groups conference at MEG's Ecobase at Waikawau Bay although the decline has been halted in some parts of the peninsula the hard work continues.

Wendy Sporle, National Kiwi Advocacy Mentor, from BNZ Save Kiwi Trust, spoke about the resources available to those trying to help kiwi and facilitated a session to set 10 year goals for kiwi on the peninsula. Kiwi avoidance dog training and trapping expert Richard Goomes gave practical advice on trapping best practice and Yuri Forbs presented the abstract from his recently completed masters thesis on kiwi roosting and habitat preferences. Paddy Stewart was able to give insight into how kiwi on Moehau have responded to 10 years of predator control and the news is all good.

Paddy and a team of dedicated kiwi listeners have braved the elements on Moehau this winter to replicate a population and distribution survey of kiwi that was made in 2000 when intensive efforts to protect kiwi on Moehau began. Kiwi listening for 3 nights at each of the same 79 listening sites used in the 2000 survey, the team has racked up 237 nights on the hill. Paddy presented heartening preliminary results from the survey at the conference. Paddy said "Kiwi numbers have more than doubled on Moehau in the last nine years and we are hearing kiwi at sites where they haven't been heard before. So their distribution is growing as well as numbers."

As well as people from the established kiwi care groups it was great to see new people wanting get involved. Paddy Stewart's stats show the goal of doubling kiwi numbers throughout the peninsula in the next 10 years can be achieved.

COROMANDEL KIWI GROUPS LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Doubling the number of Coro kiwi over the next 10 years is the primary goal set by over 30 representatives of kiwi care groups from throughout the Coromandel who attended a 2 day conference recently at the Ecobase at Waikawau Bay near Colville. The event, hosted by The Moehau Environment Group (MEG), aimed to agree 10 year goals for the Coromandel kiwi population and was an opportunity for community groups involved in caring for kiwi to learn from each other and leading kiwi recovery experts.

Avi Holzapfel, head of DoC's kiwi recovery group, highlighted that nationally kiwi numbers are still in sharp decline and

DEATH WISH DUCKS PLAYING RUSSIAN ROULETTE!

We have often heard that Pateke are vulnerable during the night, when they are at risk of being road kill. I can only suggest that they have a death wish! I will swear they hold parties on the road, a sort of Russian roulette for ducks. I have come upon cavorting ducks five times this winter. They are so hard to see, and suddenly they are right there, possibly under your front wheel.

Driving home one night recently, I came over a tiny hump in the road, to see three partying Pateke! I jammed on the brakes, and slewed to one side, then tentatively exited my car to see the carnage. Torch didn't work, no street lights, no moon, very dark night. As luck would have it, another car came along, and in its headlights, I was able to see NO dead ducks! Sigh of relief.

The kindly young drivers stopped. Are you alright, Lady, they called. I'm fine, I thought I'd killed the Pateke, but they're OK, I replied. What? looking puzzled! Birds, I replied, but thank you so much for stopping. They drove off, convinced I think, that we country souls have lived in isolation too long.

The moral of the story – watch out for Pateke carousing on our roads.

PS I know the rules about not braking for animals, but the roads are very quiet in this nick of the woods! Tina Morgan.



Pateke - pretty boy racers off to party at Port Charles.

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The view from MEG's Ecobase at Waikawau Bay near Colville.



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Contact Tina Morgan at t.morgan@colville.org.nz, or 1659 Port Charles Road RD4, Coromandel to order.



MEGA STAT

2000+

**Est. Possums
dispatched by
MEG this spring**

moehau 
environment
group

WAIKAWAU BAY WETLANDS & ESTUARY PROJECT DOES IT LIKE THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL.

We've been blessed yet again with a visit from a group of overseas volunteers who pay to come and help with conservation work in New Zealand. As one young person said: "I love it. It's like being on Discovery Channel!"...Yes...well... This group are helping with rodent, reptile and insect monitoring in the Waikawau Bay estuary and wetlands; and, planting trees, removing weed species, putting in bait stations and clearing tracks. Above all having a lot of fun doing it! It's been a fairly quiet couple of months given that we have had winter and things get a tad wet underfoot, but we have just finished the rodent monitoring and looking much healthier than expected. There is some tracking for rats in some areas and more than 50% mice, but the good news is the enormous increase in insect tracking, especially weta.

Not much luck tracking skinks or geckos though. Perhaps a bit early in the season yet. Not particularly warm yet either.

Fern bird numbers still seem to be good with many being seen during the rodent monitoring and we are hoping to monitor nesting as well this year.

Thanks to WWF Habitat Protection funding we have almost completed the flora and fauna baseline surveys. No rare or unusual species have turned up so far, but there is a very good representation of all expected wetlands and estuary species. There is a really good number of native bird species and with increased trapping and animal pest control these will increase. There are already noticeable increases in the number of Pateke (Brown Teal) breeding in the area with over 90 at the last count.



"The Big Fella" - Bittern at Waikawau Bay

One oddity that turned up last summer was the absence of butterflies of any species. There could be several reasons for this, but it is suspected that introduced wasps are responsible for their demise. We will be spending a bit of time this spring keeping a look out for these predators and trying to "remove" them.

Environment Waikato's funding to investigate the impacts of salt water Paspalum progresses well and findings so far suggest that this weed is spreading at an increasing rate and impacting on the salt marsh, and sand and mud flat flora and fauna species. It is, however, showing up to be an amazing plant for slowing harbour erosion. This is a two year study and we are only into the ninth month.



Global Volunteers in the arms of Tane, Waikawau, September 09.

And finally the great news is MEG now has the funding to expand animal pest control into the catchment directly behind the wetlands ... an area of 150ha or so. This will reduce predator pressure on all the wetland fauna species and hopefully allow some species to recover. So all in all "things is truckin' and all is good!" Wayne and Kathi

PORT CHARLES RAT ATTACK UPDATE



MEG's Rubin Turton with a group from the Global Volunteer Network.

Toutouwai (North Island Robin) released in April are providing an excellent opportunity for individuals/ families to become involved in this project. We are endeavouring to carry out frequent observations of birds at known sites to watch for behaviour patterns and nesting activity. Some of these sites are easily accessible and do not necessarily involve a great deal of walking, rather more time and patience. It is an opportunity whether it is for 1 - 2 hours, 3 or more, as a one off or more often there is opportunity to assist Just give Lettecia a call on 07 8666626.

September 16 saw a group of 12 Forest and Birders come to see the project and the Robin (who obliged). Great to see them try and read the leg bands!!! The same day we had ten overseas volunteers working rat traps as well as two of our regular trappers. This group included our first volunteer from Slovakia.

Rodent monitoring carried out in September involving the placement of inked papers into (60 permanently placed) tunnels overnight with a peanut butter lure showed the following awesome results:

Rats	1.6%
Mice	56%
Invertebrates	53%
Skink	1.6%

meg events

MEG'S AGM will be held at 10:30am on Saturday the 14th of November at the MEG Ecobase, Waikawau Beach Road, Waikawau Bay.

THE MEG SUMMER PROGRAMME for Jan & Feb 2010 will be launched over labour weekend. Be entertained and informed over the holidays by MEG's nature based events and adventures. This summer's programme sees the return of the Kiwi Close Encounter thanks to The Tangiari Kiwi Retreat and Kiwi Bach Dog Days; kiwi avoidance training for pooches who holiday in Coro!

A BIG THANK YOU GOES TO...

- ❖ The Colville, Coromandel Community board for a \$650 grant towards a possum fur plucker
- ❖ 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 new corporate members & sponsors for supplying tracking papers.
- ❖ Steve Norris at Steelcraft Coromandel Town for engineering support.
- ❖ Print House, for sponsoring the Megaphone. Printed using Forest Stewardship Council certified paper. To find mindful print solutions see: www.phprint.co.nz or call Brett Phillips on 0800 225 125
- ❖ 360 Discovery, The Coromandel ferry people, for sponsoring the MEG Summer Programme



SUBS AND DONATIONS - PLEASE.

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 and let her know.

For new memberships please download the form at www.meg.org.nz/pdf/2707_Meg_Brochure_Member.pdf

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

Thank you.

MEGA INFO BITE

Bellbirds: Recently witnessed by several observers: the male feeds the female small insects as part of a "pre-nuptial" ritual. Observed in two different locales. The male was seen working upside down on the underside of branches picking out insects from the bark and leaves and carrying them to the female.

A "distraction" behaviour also observed around a major winter nectar source (in this case-grevilleas). Male bellbird "badgers" Tui which is trying to feed, into chasing it. Tui chases bellbird round and round trees in the vicinity with bellbird 'deliberately' making tighter and tighter turns then breaking off and suddenly disappearing into foliage. Tui confused and exhausted lands on branch far from feeding source. Bellbird returns to grevilleas with female to grab a good feed before Tui finds out and 'attacks' and drives them off. This behaviour was observed several times a day for several days at the height of the grevilleas nectar flow. Who said birds aren't smart??

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