

megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

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"They are our national monuments.... No-one else has kiwi, no-one else has kakapo. They have been around for millions of years...And once they are gone, they are gone forever. It's up to us to make sure they never die out."

-Don Merton



Howick pupils help protect Coromandel wildlife

Point View Primary school in Howick have been busy building rat boxes for us. Ten classes of Year 3 and 4 pupils have built 250 rat boxes to house our rat traps.

The wooden rat boxes have been built by students during their technology class. The project taught the children skills such as how to use a saw and

hammer. The kids also researched kiwi, and were excited to be helping protect birds on the Coromandel. In August a group of students came to Port Charles to deliver the boxes, go kiwi listening and see a kiwi in the wild.

Our Coordinator, Natalie Collicott, says it is heart-warming to see so many children enthused about protecting wildlife. "It really sinks in when people can see the species they are working to protect. Building rat boxes can seem a little bit separated from protecting endangered wildlife but it actually has this direct link. These kids got that."

The rat boxes will help protect native wildlife in the Northern Coromandel. 2400 rat traps are checked regularly by trappers in our Port Charles Rat Attack project. The boxes protect our traps from weather & pig interference, while also ensuring native birds are not accidentally caught.

We are thrilled to have the support of Point View Primary, who not only built the boxes for us, but also covered the cost of the materials.





Farewell Tina Morgan

It's with sad hearts that we say goodbye to Tina Morgan, our wonderful Membership Coordinator and well-respected Sandy Bay resident.

After decades living in Sandy Bay, Tina is moving back to England to be nearer to her family. She will be sorely missed! At her farewell last month, she was awarded a MEG 'Life Membership' to recognize the considerable contribution she has made to our group over many years.

"I've enjoyed every minute of being involved with MEG," Tina says, "and am full of admiration for what you achieve". We wish her all the best.

Katharina Hecht will be taking over the Membership Coordinator role. You can email her at info@meg.org.nz



Some keen volunteers spent a day track-cutting an overgrown stoat line in our Coromandel Kiwi Project

POSSUM KNOCK-DOWN

Our field-team has been working hard to reduce possum numbers around Port Charles. Post operation monitoring in our Northern Collar project has shown possums have been knocked-back during our January-April cyanide operation.

To maintain a healthy native forest we aim to keep possum numbers under five possums per 100 traps set. This year after baiting, we caught an average of 2.4 possums for every 100 traps. We couldn't have hoped for a better result.

One of our contractors has also been using the MEG Community Possum plucker over the winter to harvest fur. Fewer possums will benefit the plants they love to browse (like rata, pohutukawa and kohekohe) as well as the native birds they eat & compete with.

Sponsor a trap to save kiwi

We are on a mission to raise funds for our Kiwi Sanctuary. By sponsoring a trap, you will help us win the fight against mustelids and keep kiwi chicks safe.

Our Kiwi Sanctuary has been in operation for 8 years and protects nearly 8000ha of kiwi habitat. We employ six part-time trappers to service 700 traps monthly. Since we started these traps have caught over 900 stoats, 590 weasels & 6760 rats making a huge difference to resident Kiwi.

In fact, kiwi more than doubled in the area in the last 10 years. The biggest threat to young kiwi is stoats and by servicing these traps we are giving kiwi the best chance to survive in the wild and re-populate the area.

Due to funding cuts we need to source more funding to ensure trapping can continue. If you would like to help protect kiwi, please sponsor a trap for only \$65/year (what it costs to service the trap).

What do I get for my sponsorship?

- The money will directly benefit Coromandel kiwi
- A map showing trap location
- Yearly updates of what your trap has caught

To sponsor a trap or learn more please email info@meg.org.nz Your support makes all the difference!



The Colville Childrens forest

Every year Colville School comes up to Waikawau Bay, to help plant trees in our Children's forest. This year the students planted 65 cabbage trees and flaxes donated by Waikato Regional Council.

Moehau Environment Group established a Children's forest at the site in 2007. Since then, children from Colville School have participated in tree planting most years, planting hundreds of trees and gradually transforming a paddock of kikuyu into a lush rainforest.

Terry Whitehouse helps pupils from Colville School during a treeplanting day at Waikawau Bay



Pateke, our endangered Brown teal are thriving in the Northern Coromandel. But they remain vulnerable to being eaten by cats.

Pateke are no match for feral cats. The birds are known to hide rather than fly away when frightened, making them “sitting ducks” for predators. MEG found firsthand evidence of this recently at Port Charles, where several Pateke feet were found in a cat scat.



Pateke feet found in a cat poo

Pateke are the rarest waterfowl in New Zealand, with less than 2500 left on the mainland. The Coromandel is a stronghold for the duck, thanks to all the predator control undertaken there. All this great work has allowed the population to explode, and radiate down the Peninsula. An annual survey by DOC continues to show an increase in numbers and dispersal of pateke on the Coromandel Peninsula, with birds found in new locations each year.

Want to help Pateke?

- Report feral cat sightings
- Have domestic cats wear a bell and keep them inside overnight
- When your cat dies, think about not replacing it



A mother pateke duck watches over her brood of ducklings

(c) Katharina Hecht

Removing the Fear Factor

How does fear of predators affect prey behaviour? Can observations of wolves and elk teach us about New Zealand conservation?

What happens when you re-introduce wolves back into an environment which has been overrun with elk? Where there are no longer aspen and willow along the valley floors and the beaver are dying out from a lack of food. Well, firstly the obvious: the wolves prey on elk causing elk numbers to drop rapidly. But then the aspen and willow return and the number of beavers once again increase.

A couple of observant ecologists started noticing a whole lot of other things going on over a five year period during this change which they investigated more thoroughly to ensure they weren't imagining them. Basically it boiled down to: a constant fear of a predator changing elk behaviour, hormonal balance, live birth weights, the number of healthy young and general feeding habits. Social behaviours altered dramatically also.



How is this relevant to New Zealand conditions, you might ask? We don't have wolves! Well just this: remove our animal predators like ferrets, stoats, weasels, rodents, feral cats, and hedgehogs and some very different behaviour begins appearing among many of our main bird species.

Off shore predator-free islands are the first place to see this. With no predators there is no fear and native species quickly revert to a state that hasn't been seen since pre European times. Larger species will spend more time on the ground feeding, with some nesting back there. Not so on the mainland where the fear factor remains high. Except...except where concentrated and long term predator control has been successfully carried out.

MEG has been beating down the fear factor for the past 10 years now by targeting introduced predators and some surprising observations are emerging. Morepork nesting on the ground two years in a row. Pateke moving back into their traditional rohe- the forest- not only the coast as previously. Banded rail out during the middle of the day. Tui spending more time on the ground during breeding season picking up valuable insects to feed their young.

Over time I wonder how many other “unusual” behaviours we might see, by removing the fear factor? Time and effort will tell.... Wont it?

-Wayne Todd



Support our Work Shop Online

Become a member of Moehau Environment Group. You will directly help to protect the unique species and ecosystems on the Northern Coromandel Peninsula.

2013 Members Subs were due in January. If you have already paid, many thanks. If not, please do, as we really need your support! Subs are only \$10 per person, \$20 per family or \$250 Corporate. We can't do this without your **support**, so thank you.

If you would like to make a secure credit card donation go to our website, www.meg.org.nz. Or **donate** online through internet banking. Our BNZ account is 02-0304-0342229-02

Our online **Shop** raises funds to support conservation projects in the Northern Coromandel. **100% of the profit of these gifts will directly fund local conservation projects.**

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

Purchase an olive green MEG Tee for just \$35. Or a white 'Coromandel Real Kiwi Country' Tee for \$25. A range of childrens T-shirts are available in pink, blue, red and green for \$20.

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



Diane Prince, Raine Williams & Natalie Collicott model the MEG T-shirt range at the National Kiwi Hui in Cambridge in May.

If you'd like to purchase a T-shirt yourself, you can order them through our website. They are also sold at the Coromandel Information Centre.

A big thank-you to our sponsors



Franklin Vets

Our newest sponsors held a sausage sizzle in our honour at the recent launch of their Pukekohe Vet clinic. They raised an impressive \$360 which has been put towards upgrading traps in our Kiwi Sanctuary.

Franklin Vets are one of the largest privately owned veterinary practices serving the South Auckland and North Waikato regions. Moehau Environment Group are thrilled to have them onboard as a sponsor, and look forward to a promising partnership.

Kiwis for Kiwi

for their ongoing sponsorship of our Kiwi Sanctuary. This funding round we have been granted \$10,000 to help towards the cost of our stoat trappers wages for the year.

Kiwis for Kiwi has provided funding for our work to save kiwi on the Coromandel since 2005. Their support has been vital, and without their consistent sponsorship we could not have made such gains for Coromandel Kiwi. This year they gave over \$260,000 to kiwi projects around the country.



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



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