

megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

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"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land" Aldo Leopold



A little history on Knox Farm

Waikawau Bay is one of the last beaches left intact without development on the Coromandel. But only thanks to a campaign by concerned locals which once saved Knox Farm from subdivision.

The Knox Farm block sits at the north end of Waikawau Bay and was held in private ownership until the 1990s. The land was leased and the coastal area was heavily impacted by large beef cattle, with cows often in the estuary.

Private individuals, and then Moehau Environment Group (MEG) have undertaken ongoing pest control here since the late 1980's, when it was discovered that possum browse was causing the Pohutukawa and Kohekohe canopy to collapse.

The property became less profitable to farm, & the landowner offered it for subdivision and sale to the Auckland University. In 2001 the Environmental Defense Society contacted MEG to alert them to the impending auction. MEG was asked to spearhead an action group to stop the sale and encourage DOC to investigate purchasing it to protect the integrity of the Waikawau Bay Farm Park which encompasses the entire bay.

MEG received substantial support from local landowners, Forest & Bird, Coromandel residents and TCDC to try to stop the auction. MEG and local landowners met with Conservation Minister Chris Carter, who flew by chopper from Auckland to the bay, to view for himself what was here and listen to an alternative proposal. Several months of negotiations later Knox Farm was purchased by the DOC Nature Heritage Fund, with a \$90,000 contribution by TCDC.

grazing and a new fence erected to stop stock incursions into the regenerating coastal forest and estuary. Grazing over the remaining flat lands continued until last year when DOC retired these paddocks as well. Discussions with the local community are still under way about the impact of retiring productive grazing land in the area.

A drop-in meeting at Knox Farm in March, saw 36 interested locals turn up to discuss future management plans for Waikawau Bay with MEG, DOC and Waikato Regional Council. It was an opportunity for local residents to look at maps of the proposed changes and share their own views on the bay's future. A vigorous debate followed and concerns were aired. MEG is hopeful that this meeting may trigger closer collaboration between agencies and local landowners over future decisions.

MEG later negotiated with DOC to have the hill country retired from

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Want an 'Eco-holiday'?

Volunteer Sally Gallagher shares her experiences from a week spent working in our Rat Attack project at Port Charles.

I had a few spare days towards the end of January and found MEG via the DOC volunteering website, which features conservation volunteering opportunities by region. A couple of e-mails and a phone call later and I was packing a bag for five days on the Rat Attack project in Port Charles, staying in the red barn with the MEG Chair Lettecia and her partner Katharina.

Friends and family in Auckland were promised some good stories on my return and they have not been disappointed! Checking rat lines requires hill climbing, some bottom sliding, perseverance, a stout pair of gloves and a sharp eye for the next blue tape marker guiding you through the bush.

On my first day I got a little muddled and ended up taking the long route home through 'Death Gully' – but, this paid off, because the next day I checked a couple of my 'extra' traps on this line and found one to contain a freshly caught monster rat. That made my day. I could have come home dragging his pelt but made do with a possum jawbone which has impressed everyone back home in Auckland (except those with a little more knowledge of animal physiology).

Most of my rat traps just needed cleaning and re-baiting, a tribute to the hard work and consistent monitoring that goes on here, but just when you feel that you can't face another jar of peanut butter (rat-bait) you'll get a break.

Tired legs get a chance to recover with a sit-down job, like unpacking and drilling new traps or re-potting seedlings; or you might find yourself in the passenger seat of the John Deere gator, driving up through bush tracks (more fun than the roller coaster) on a weeding mission. You'll get pretty grubby with spiderwebs and the odd stick insect adding to the bedraggled effect, but it all makes the hot shower at the end of the day more enjoyable.

Most of the locals are friendly & you'll meet lots of them: skinks, geckos, fantails, grey warblers and wood pigeon to name a few, and at night you'll hear kiwi and morepork – this may be at close quarters on one of Lettecia's adventurous 'night walks', where you might be challenged to poke your arm down an old kiwi burrow, hoping that it emerges without wetas attached.

So, if you're tired of the old routines, tell your family you're going bush for a week and head down to Moehau. You will be welcomed by a dedicated and talented group of people and come away with a new appreciation of just what it takes to protect and enhance the natural environment. You'll also have some good stories to tell! Thanks to the team for hospitality and great company.



MEG-volunteer Sally pricking out some ToiToi seedlings

TRAPPERS SMASH RECORDS

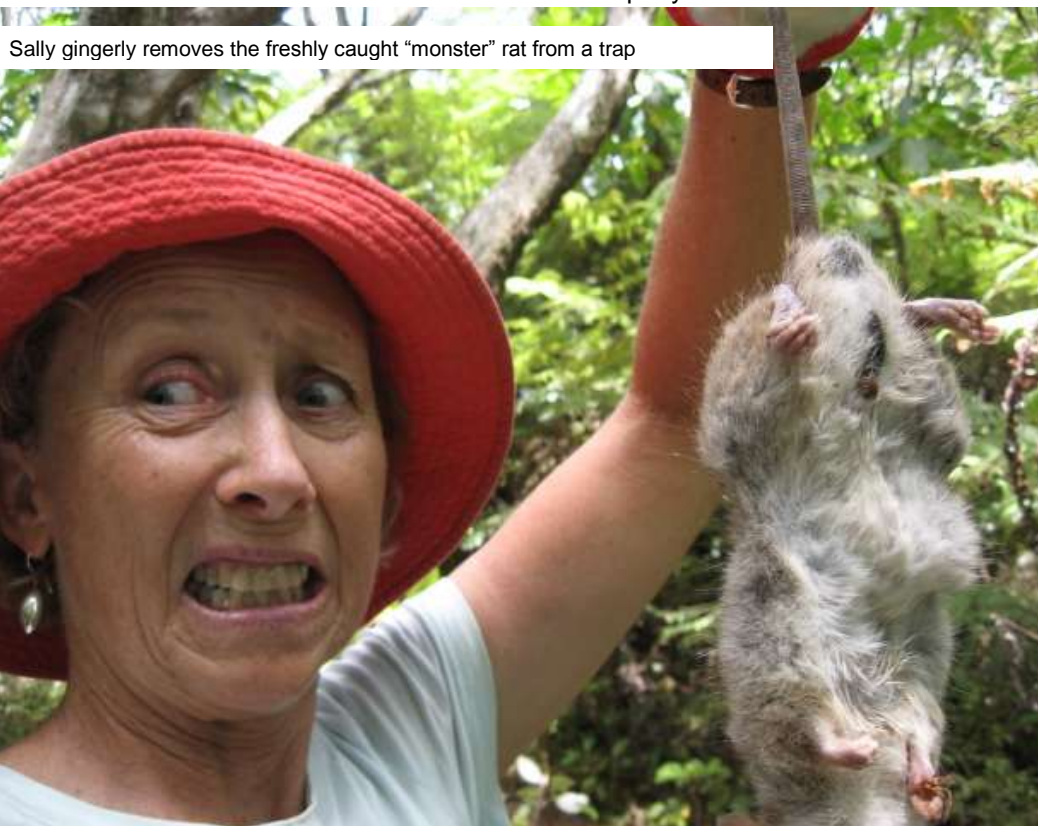
Our Kiwi Sanctuary trappers have been breaking MEG records! They caught a record number of stoats and rats in 2012 (140 stoats and 1020 rats), and have just caught the most stoats in a January on record (31). While it's great to be catching so many predators, it just shows what a bumper breeding season it has been for these crafty killers. Stoats are by far the most serious threat to kiwi survival, so we really want to keep knocking 'em dead.

Bad news for pesky possums

This summer our possum team is back, eradicating pests in our Northern Collar project.

From January to April our trappers will be hard at work laying cyanide and bait in 1,200 ha of private land near Port Charles. This pest control operation aims to help protect rare and threatened wildlife as well as provide much-needed employment to locals in the area.

MEG aims to undertake possum and rodent control in the area every two years in an effort to protect the diverse coastal forest and prevent reinvasion of pests onto the Moehau range. The block is home to many endangered species including North Island Robin, Kiwi, Banded Rail, Kaka and Pateke. We are grateful for the ongoing support of landowners within this project.



Sally gingerly removes the freshly caught "monster" rat from a trap



Tommy Herbert with the help of kiwi-dogs Neo & Honey finds Rehua the kiwi asleep in Bracken fern during an Upclose Kiwi Encounter this summer

A KIWI SUMMER

This summer hundreds of visitors to the Coromandel got to experience nature firsthand during our Summer Programme. Here are a few snapshots from our events..

Many thanks to everyone who attended and our fantastic volunteers who gave up their time to help. This years programme was attended by over 300 people and managed to raise over \$2000 for protection of Kiwi Habitat.



Terry and Dawn Whitehouse on crowd control at our Starlight cinema in the woolshed event



Wayne Todd gets into a sticky situation with a sticky insect during a nocturnal walk at Waikawau Bay



Our Coordinator Natalie Collicott with Koro the Kiwi collect donations at the Keltic fair in Coromandel



Diane Prince doing a 6 month health check on Rehua the Kiwi at Port Charles



MEG Chairperson Lettecia Williams captivating participants on a Kiwi Listening walk at Port Charles

megevents

COLVILLE WORKSHOP

You're invited to a free Community Workshop in Colville on Saturday 6 April. Learn what locals are doing to help with weed & animal pest management, water quality & soil conservation. For more info call **0800 246348**

FREE KIWI AVOIDANCE DOG TRAINING

Come along to free Kiwi Avoidance Training for dogs over Easter Weekend (Sat 30th March). Any dog can kill kiwi. Get your dogs trained to avoid kiwi in the bush. Call **07 866 5337** to book.

A big thank-you to...



Jana and Luca

who volunteered with MEG early in 2012, helping with our Waikawau Bay wetlands project. They have since returned to Germany, but recently got in touch with a generous offer. Jana had received a tax refund for the year, and kindly donated the whole sum (\$167) to MEG! Thanks guys- we really appreciate your support.



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Support our Work

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

2012 Members **Subs** are now due.

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.

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

Shop Online

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.

MEG has recently teamed up with the talented designer Miriam Silvester, to create this fanciful set of blank gift cards. Cards are professionally printed on sustainably-certified matte card.

The cards feature creatures we are helping to protect- the Kiwi, Weta, Skink and Robin. Only \$5 each, or \$16 for four, order yours online today!



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



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