

# megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

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**Less than 10% of kiwi chicks make it to six months in the wild. In the Northern Coromandel 68% of kiwi chicks survive past this age!**



## KIA ORA FROM MEG'S NEW COORDINATOR



Natalie, the new MEG coordinator, above Waikawau Bay

I want to start by thanking everyone from MEG, and the wider community, who have all made me feel so welcome since I started my new role. I am really looking forward to getting to know more of you over the coming months.

So, a little bit about me...The youngest of four kids, I grew up on a beef farm north of Warkworth and developed an interest in conservation early on.

Having trained as an environmental scientist, I have spent the past few years working as a science advisor for the Ministry for the Environment. Prior to this I worked for WWF-NZ as their Community Conservation officer, where I managed the Habitat Protection Fund (which coincidentally has funded MEG in the past). I have also worked as a ranger for the Department of Conservation, doing stints on Stewart Island, and in the Abel Tasman.

I have been lucky enough to work in many idyllic spots around New Zealand, but believe that the Coromandel takes the cake! I am thrilled to be working with MEG to protect the regions biodiversity, and a little awestruck by what this bunch of volunteers has managed to achieve over the past ten years. I'm eager to continue the good work promoting conservation in the region and encouraging greater participation from the local community. If you see me around over summer, please come introduce yourself.

*Cheers - Natalie Collicott*

MEG Coordinator, ph (07) 8683054, mobile: 027 3585281, [natalie@meg.org.nz](mailto:natalie@meg.org.nz)

## KIWI VISIT NESTING BOX 2 YEARS RUNNING

For two consecutive years Kiwi have nested in artificial nesting boxes constructed by MEG. Some 5 years ago redundant boxing timber was used to build a number of 'nesting boxes' for kiwi. These were placed randomly within the MEG Port Charles 'Rat attack' project area. Last year the entrance of one of the boxes was covered with forest floor litter. A tell tale sign that it was occupied. A kiwi was in residence and as far as we know hatched two eggs successfully.

This year the same box was used again, for a first clutch. This time a single egg was laid but abandoned. This particular box was placed on the side of a track, along a fence line under young Kanuka trees – a fairly nondescript place – but not far from a 'damp' area. Last year not only did we have Kiwi breed there but within



The popular kiwi nesting box

20 metres were a breeding pair of Pateke and a North Island Robin! Not bad for a bit of wood that was just lying around.

[www.meg.org.nz](http://www.meg.org.nz)



## THINGS IS 'BOOMIN'- Waikawau Wetlands Restoration Project update

It's been a bit of a topsy turvy year, but we have arrived at December with some very great results and a well maintained infrastructure. There has been increased interest from other groups, DOC, and individuals in the work we are doing, especially with so many of the threatened bird species becoming more visible in our estuary, rivers and wetlands.



Bittern out in the open, middle of the day!

This comes on the back of a consistent fortnightly trapping regime for rodents, a three monthly monitoring programme to check effectiveness, and annual surveys to assess populations of fern birds, banded rail, pateke (brown teal), and bittern. A shorebird census was also carried out to assess NZ dotterel and variable oystercatcher numbers this year.

We have fewer volunteers and workers however, doing more of the work, having lost the help of the Global Volunteer Network folk. This organization has closed up shop and is no longer in New Zealand. Toby Malcolm, their team leader will be sorely missed as friend and supporter as will the 10 or so volunteers who came every three months for a week to help.

It's good news all round with populations of each species either up or stable. In the recent fernbird survey carried out by BoP Environmental Management Studies students, two pair of bittern was located after their distinctive booming was continually heard in two locations deep in the wetlands. Although we knew bittern are present in the bay area we had never recorded their calls, let alone in distinct areas which suggest nesting and territories. It is hoped we will see some juveniles in the weeks to come. Bitterns are now seen regularly during trapping rounds.

### SUMMER HOLIDAY PROGRAMME IS HERE

Well its hard to believe that Christmas is *just* around the corner, but that means that it is time for MEG's annual Summer Holiday Programme to kick off. Yippeee! This year's programme runs throughout January and includes a variety of activities suitable for all ages run by experienced guides and volunteers. If you are keen to get out and experience nature these holidays, go to [www.meg.org.nz](http://www.meg.org.nz) for details. Programmes will also be available from the i-SITE in Coromandel town. The MEG team are looking forward to a fun summer so grab the opportunity to be involved.

Banded rails were also recorded in the rear section of the wetlands for the first time during these surveys. They are now seen almost every day spent in and around the wetlands and estuary.

The fernbird population is stable with the latest survey showing 110+ in the estuary and wetlands, but we also now know that there are other small populations forming in the outlying wetlands and scrub remnants in the catchment. It would be safe to say we have a very viable and increasing population of these little "endangered" birds. Pateke numbers are 'booming' also, with a recent spot count of 160 birds while introducing DOC staff to the work we are doing.

The first rat caught in a trap in three months happened last week: - that's 250+ traps checked fortnightly= one rat in 22,500 trap/nights! Not cause for depression we think, but a reminder they are still around! Mice however are a problem and a new multi-kill trap has been developed to go into trials over the summer. This is an electric kill trap and while there are types already on the market we are trying to make a much cheaper version of our own. This was developed by a BOP polytechnic student about 12 months ago. We are also about to trial a variety of snap traps for effectiveness as the current traps we use are not sensitive enough.

And that's about it for the year. Special thanks goes to: WWF for their funding support; Richard Clark, a great trap checker, who is sadly returning to England; all our wonderful volunteers over the past twelve months; and finally Warren Agnew and Gotcha traps who has generously continued to provide us with hundreds of tracking papers to track our progress.

A good Christmas, and a wonderful New Year to you all-

*Wayne and Kathi*



Lisa and Jean- a couple of awesome volunteers, brave the wetland

## MORE TRAPS MEANS FEWER PESTS

MEG Committee member and dedicated volunteer Terry Whitehouse has been hard at work, making loads of traps to aid predator control on the peninsula. In November Terry made and delivered 80 rat boxes for the Rings Beach Restoration Group, with another 15 stoat traps now ready for this group. MEG also supplied 80 rat traps to this group. In that same month Terry also constructed 40 stoat traps for the Kapowai Kiwicare group. On top of this Terry makes all of MEG's traps which has kept him busy over the past few months building 40 replacement stoat traps, and upgrading 50 rat boxes for MEG's Waikawau Wetland project.

MEG is proud to support other community conservation group's efforts in the region. If you are interested in some traps, contact Natalie on (07) 8683054. Current pricing is: alloy mustelid trap with stainless steel plate (\$55); full stainless steel mustelid trap (\$85); wooden-boxed rat traps (\$20). MEG would like to thank; Terry for all his hard work; Ward Timber Mills who are always generous with their timber; and Fortress Fasteners who kindly donate all the hardware.



Natalie Collicott helps Bruce Smith of Rings Beach Restoration Group load their new boxed rat traps. Terry Whitehouse hands over stoat boxes to Tony Harrison of Kapowai Kiwicare Group.

## EXPERIENCES OF AN INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER

### Laura Mohring from Germany shares her experiences of being a MEG Volunteer...

"From the middle of October on I spent four very interesting and eventful weeks volunteering at Port Charles on the northern Coromandel. It has been a great experience for me. I had the chance to do something completely different to what I did back in Germany, where I just finished high school. I enjoyed doing physical work as I tried my best to help with trapping, track cutting and weed control. I did some rat lines on my own and I made friends with the Robin visiting and feeding him. One evening we went out for a night walk and I finally heard some kiwis.

I'm really happy to have started my journey like that. I gained an insight into conservation work in New Zealand and learned about the significance of pest control. Besides I'm now able to tell the difference between some native and foreign plants and animals. That's why I'm going to see New Zealand in a different light during my following journey and I'm happy about that. Hopefully I'll get the chance to do some more conservation work on my way. I really had a great time in Port Charles. A great thanks to Katharina and Lettecia, who were such wonderful hosts to me!"



Laura getting stuck into building a skink house

## CHANGES TO MEG'S COMMITTEE

Sadly, after three years as MEG's coordinator, Jonty Rutherford is moving on. MEG wants to extend a huge thank you to Jonty for all his hard work over the years. A big thank you also to Richard Clarke & Erica Doran, two committee members who have recently resigned. Richard is returning to England, while Erica is resigning due to work commitments but plans to remain involved with MEG. Both will be greatly missed.

MEG would like to welcome the return of Tina Morgan (Membership Coordinator) & Kathi Parr (Acting Secretary) to the committee. We are currently looking for fresh committee members. If you would like to find out more about what this entails, give Lettecia a ring on 866 6626.

# meg events

## THE MEG SUMMER PROGRAMME IS ON!

Running throughout January 2012. Be entertained and informed over the summer by MEG's nature based events and adventures. If you are keen to get out and experience nature these holidays, go to [www.meg.org.nz](http://www.meg.org.nz) for details.

## FREE KIWI AVOIDANCE DOG TRAINING

Wednesday 28th December 2011

☛ Te Mata

Saturday January 7<sup>th</sup> 2012

☛ Tairua

Saturday 14th January 2012

☛ Colville 9am

☛ Waikawau 12.30pm

☛ Please Call **07 868 3054** to book.

## MEG MEMBERSHIP- SUBS ARE DUE

MEG Subscriptions remain at \$10 per person, \$20 per family and \$50 for company membership. Subs are due 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2012. Please send subs to Tina Morgan (Membership coordinator), Moehau Environment Group, RD4, Coromandel 3584 or pay direct into BNZ account 02-0304-0342229-02. If you choose this option please email payment details to [info@meg.co.nz](mailto:info@meg.co.nz)

For new memberships please download the form at [www.meg.org.nz/pdf/2707\\_Meg\\_Brochure\\_Member.pdf](http://www.meg.org.nz/pdf/2707_Meg_Brochure_Member.pdf)

Donations will, of course, be willingly accepted at any time in person, into MEG's bank account (see above) or at:

<https://secure.donate.co.nz/fundraiser.aspx/megorgnz>

Thank you for your support!

## STOP KIWI GOING TO THE DOGS!

With the influx of holiday makers on the Coromandel peninsula over the Christmas holiday period, MEG and the Thames Coast Kiwi Care group will once again be joining forces to run a campaign over summer aimed at making visitors aware about the risks dogs pose to kiwi. If you or someone you know are keen to get your dog trained, call 07 868 3054 to book. If you've had your dogs done -thanks! However repeating the training is advisable and free!



## 3D CRITTER CARDS ONLY \$12



Made from a postcard size piece of balsa these easy to post, easy to assemble models are a quick and quirky gift! We now stock 5 models: the tui, weta, fantail, tuatara & kiwi. Each one comes flat with an envelope for posting, and full instructions. They are easy to assemble, needing no glue, though small kids might need some help. You won't find them cheaper so order yours NOW!

Contact [info@meg.org.nz](mailto:info@meg.org.nz) Also available at the Green Snapper Cafe Colville.

## A BIG THANK YOU TO...

- ☛ 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 - 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](http://www.phprint.co.nz) or call Brett Phillips on 0800 225 125.

Want to support MEG *and* look stylish?  
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