

Autumn 2016

COROMANDEL ENVIRONMENT NEWS

megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

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"I'm interested in finding the cure for cancer, not investing in chemotherapy."

-Al Bramley, CEO of Zero Invasive Predators

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Predator Free NZ- a crazy idea whose time has come?

Predator Free is the latest conservation buzz word. Could it provide a vision for the Coromandel?

Currently only a fraction of New Zealand benefits from any form of predator control. Is it time to accept the fact that our forests will never again be dominated by our native birds but by feral cats, stoats, weasels, rats, mice, and possums? Or do we dare to dream? Imagine getting rid of the lot; possums, stoats and rats from all our mainland islands. Our own backyards would become wildlife havens.

Undertaking predator control on a large-scale is tough. It requires sustained effort and funds over time, making it hard to scale up. Al Bramley, from ZIP (a company investing in new ways of eradication on the mainland) thinks we need a paradigm shift:

"What if we could take what we do on offshore islands and do it on the mainland? Remove the predators and prevent them from coming back."

DOC are getting better at clearing pests off islands. Feats they thought weren't possible even ten years ago have now been accomplished with relative ease. New Zealand's largest pest eradication to date rid the 11,200ha Campbell Island of Norway rats. Stewart Islanders are now working out how to make their 170,000ha home pest-free. The mainland is the next frontier.

Research agencies are refining technologies which makes pest eradication over large peninsula's like ours feasible. There's almost unanimous agreement that the predator-free vision would have to include aerial toxin drops. Yet, it could

International volunteers Filipi and Stephanie audit a stoat trap in our Coromandel Kiwi Project, overlooking Coromandel town

also employ less controversial methods in populated areas. The 64ha Native Island is now rat-free thanks to self-setting trap technology.

Scientists have admitted it would be technically possible to eradicate the suite of pests from mainland New Zealand. What everyone agrees is that such an ambitious scheme would take community involvement and buy-in on a massive scale. With our raft of existing community-led conservation projects, the Coromandel Peninsula is ideally situated to ride this wave. I only hope I'm around to see it happen.

www.meg.org.nz

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Join us for a free series of public talks hosted over winter. The lectures provide an opportunity to learn more about the world around us and discuss topical issues. They will be held at Moon Hair Salon, behind the Chai Tea house. Come get cosy beside the fire with a warming drink. All welcome.

Deep Sea – Observing the deep, driving remotely operated vehicles

Jeff Williams, Underwater robot operator
Monday 18 April, 7pm

Fur seals and sea lions at Coromandel- past, present & future

Dr Chris Lalas, Otago University
Monday 2 May, 7pm

Noxious weeds- the growing threat

Benson Lockhart, Waikato Regional Council
Tuesday 7 June, 7pm

Bird identification through song and flight

Kathi Parr & Wayne Todd, local experts
Monday 4 July, 7pm

Native frogs – what's happening?

Prof Ben Bell, Victoria University
August (date TBC), 7pm



New signage at our Waikawau Wetland project will help raise the profile of local biodiversity

Grappling with the noxious and the invasive

Left unchecked, weeds can change our landscape and threaten the survival of native plants and animals. New committee member Carol Sutherland muses on how our actions today will determine our legacy of invasive weeds.

Trapping is needed to protect native fauna from exotic predators but without the flora their habitat is lost. Habitat loss as a result of invasive weeds is real. The impact upon some species does not instantly show up in population numbers but over time it can be dramatic.

What we did 100 years ago is expressed in the ecosystem and populations today. In another 100 years what will our remaining forests look like? Could it be similar or better than what we have now? Would we consider it a delightful assortment of exotics or an ecological nightmare? Or would we even consider a hillside of pampas, woolly nightshade, ginger and wildling pine to be 'natural'?

How we view it is dependent upon our awareness and what it means for our environment is dependent upon our actions now. Benson Lockhart- a biosecurity expert on pest plants will be giving a talk as part of our Winter Lecture Series; speaking on the impact of noxious weeds and tools to identify plant species that might become the next trifid on the peninsula. Can we be the forward guard against the next wave?

2016 SUMMER PROGRAMME

A wet and windy summer didn't seem to impact our Summer Programme, with a record 750 people taking part in our activities. Unfortunately, the weather did lead to the cancellation of our much anticipated overnight tour of Cuvier Island as persistent swells made landing on the island unsafe.



Local children get to meet a gecko during a Summer Programme event at Driving Creek Sanctuary



A day in the life of a MEG field worker

Every day is different for our field team who work alongside volunteers to combat pests in the Northern Coromandel.

The physical, dirty and often gruesome work of biodiversity protection is balanced by the rewards of working outdoors, getting to interact with nature daily and the knowledge you are making a difference. These photos provide a window into the world of a MEG biodiversity field worker.

Above from left to right: Clinton and Seamus stock up on rat bait in the Red shed; each stoat box is marked with a blue triangle; the boys set off into the hills; Clinton baits a rat trap-housed in a wooden box to protect it from pigs and weather; the glamorous side of trapping; a rat box decorated by school students; mmm dehydrated rodent; the team return back to base after a day in the field.



News in brief

Old School House Shop



MEG ran the Waikawau Camp store again this summer. It's a partnership between us and our local DOC office, which helps generate some revenue to put back into local conservation projects. This year, our International Nature Volunteers helped make two giant murals of a Coromandel striped gecko and kaka to decorate the outside of the building. Big thanks to Mel and Travis for managing the shop again.

Upcoming possum and rodent control

We are planning our next possum and rodent operation which will target 593ha in the Waikawau Bay catchment. The possum control is expected to take 4-6 weeks to complete and will begin in April 2016. For more information, contact us at info@meg.org.nz



Follow us on Facebook
'Like' Moehau Environment Group
and help spread the word

Shop Online

Our online shop has a range of items for sale including traps, gift cards, key rings, and T-shirts.

100% of the profit of these items will fund local conservation projects.

Blank Gift Cards

These cards feature native creatures we are helping to protect-the Kiwi, Weta, Skink and Robin. Perfect for every occasion.



\$5 each or \$16 for a set of four

Or for those who have it all, why not consider a 'trap sponsorship' - just \$65/yr.

To make a purchase visit www.meg.org.nz/support-us/shop/

Support our Work

Become a member of Moehau Environment Group.

You will directly help to protect the unique species and ecosystems on the Coromandel.

It's easy! Simply fill in the form below...

Name	
Address	
Phone	
Email	
I'd also like to volunteer	Please circle: YES NO

Annual Membership fees:

Single: \$10, Family: \$20, Corporate: \$250

I would like to donate a further:

\$ _____

Please include payment by cheque.

Cheques payable to: Moehau Environment Group, Port Charles, RD4, Coromandel.

You can also pay online here

www.meg.org.nz/support-us/membership/

Pleased note for accounting reasons we no longer offer direct debit as a payment option unless requested.

Members subs are now due 1 October.

Have you paid? If so, many thanks.
We really appreciate your support.

For further information please contact:

Natalie Collicott (our Coordinator)
Ph (07) 866 5337

E: natalie@meg.org.nz

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