

# megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

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**"What you do makes a difference. You have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."** - Jane Goodall

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## Making friends with wilding pines

**Wilding pines are a looming ecological disaster. Without swift action, they will soon dominate our landscape.**

Frequently we see tourists stopped on the roadside to take a shot of the iconic Coromandel landscape. Almost all of these photos include pines or pampas. At Port Charles, in the centre of one of Moehau Environment Group's rodent control areas, we have been killing pine trees for over fifteen years, with thousands left to go.

From the start, a conscious decision was made not to fell the majority of the trees. It was uneconomic to harvest the wilding pines and would have caused a huge amount of damage to the habitat we are working to restore. It would also have made it difficult to service the rodent trap-lines that run through the area, not to mention the risk of increased weed issues.

Pine trees, both *Pinaster* and *Radiata* are present. *Pinaster* are full of sap making them difficult to ringbark or drill as they bleed sap, heal themselves and keep on smiling at us. We have reluctantly felled a few of these trees as a control method but only out of desperation. Felling a pine-tree in the bush creates a light well- a prime site for the establishment of invasive weeds. We've had more success with a basal treatment, painting the trunk with a solution of oil and poison.

The majority of the pines are *radiata* and are self-seeded wilding pines. We are systematically poisoning the larger trees by drilling holes just past the cambian bark layer and filling these with a solution of metsulfuron. Others have been ring barked and thousands of young trees have been hand pulled or cut by volunteers.

While ugly to look at, the dying pines have given sustenance to kaka who tear at the bark and rotting trunks.

Left: Evidence of pine control in Port Charles  
Above: Kaka forage and play in the dead pines  
Photo courtesy of Dan Burgin

Other birds use them as singing perches or roosts, making deposits which seed a nursery of trees below the dead spars. Once the pine needles have decomposed, little forests of self-sown rimu, kohekohe, puriri, nikau, tawa, five finger and coprosma begin to establish (all food for our birds). Over time, the dead trees lose their rotten branches, adding material to the soil.

The dead spars may be a blight on the landscape for a very long time but the slow deterioration of the tree feeds and nurtures the recovery of the native bush they excluded prior to treatment. And hopefully one day we can provide those scenic landscape vistas free of weeds.



## News in brief

### Kiwi call counts have begun

We're heading into winter, which means it's time to start our annual kiwi call counts. We use a mix of human listeners and automated acoustic recorders to count kiwi calls within our protected area. This year volunteers will survey nine sites during May and June. Watch this space for updates on what we hear in the hills from Coromandel Town up to Waikawau Bay. If you'd like to tag along for an evening, contact Lettecia on (07) 8666626

Look where volunteers Kaiya Kerrison (11) and Katie Walker (10) are! We are always keen for new volunteers (and old ones too). Please email [info@meg.org.nz](mailto:info@meg.org.nz) if you'd like to get involved.



A silvereye having an autumn snack on a persimmon. Photo courtesy of legendary volunteer Dan Burgin. To see more of Dan's work visit [www.instagram.com/in\\_reverie](https://www.instagram.com/in_reverie)

## A new approach ensures every catch counts

Between our Kiwi Sanctuary and the Coromandel Kiwi Project, MEG staff and volunteers maintain almost 1000 stoat traps on the Coromandel Peninsula. Each month, every trap is checked, any kill removed, and the trap is cleaned, rebaited, and reset. A record is kept of kills, trap malfunctions, bait types, etc. As you might imagine this has resulted in a lot of data over the years.

Like most other conservation groups, MEG has dutifully maintained our catch data for years on computer spreadsheets. While durable, this method was not easy to maintain year-on-year nor to extract summary information or to share information with other organizations.

Enter the University of Auckland and the CatchIT! database. Developed by the University's Statistics Department, CatchIT! uses a web-based interface for entering and analysing data. Last year we moved the Coromandel Kiwi Project onto CatchIT! This year, we're migrating the larger Kiwi Sanctuary as well.

CatchIT! should save MEG time and money by reducing errors during data entry, tracking the state of monthly trapping, and quickly generating summary reports and graphs for MEG stakeholders and funding applications. The system will also enable MEG to easily exchange trapping data with other conservation groups, and the analysis of all groups' data may lead to improvements in trapping practices.

While data entry is performed on a secure site, anyone may view the data. If you want to see what some of our data looks like, go to <https://oste434.shinyapps.io/barchart-application/> and select 'MEG Coromandel Kiwi Project' from the pull-down menu. You can then play with different ways of displaying our data visually, sorting data by date, species caught, bait used or by trap-line.

Across MEG, we're excited about the opportunities CatchIT! presents to organize, publicize, and nationalize the results of our trapping efforts.



## Many hands building traps to save the kiwi



Clockwise from left: CAS student Tama Kocian looking dangerous with a hammer. Room 31 from Point View School busy making trap boxes in their technology class. Victor Shen from Room 30 with a stuffed rat trap. Room 29 from Point View School and MEG Coordinator Natalie Collicott show off their decorated trap boxes. Coromandel students Katie Walker, Deveshh Bali, Sabrina Awhio-Lemon and Casey Hooper work together to construct a trap box.

**Hammers flew and saws squeaked this term as we taught the next generation the art of trap-building.**

Two schools have been busy building us traps this winter. Students from ten classes at Point View School in Howick are once again building rat trap-boxes as part of their technology class. The school hopes to build 250 trap-boxes this term, which will be used to house rat traps around our Port Charles Rat Attack project.

This is the second year Point View School has supplied us with hand-made traps, which are decorated by the students with jokes and colourful slogans like 'Welcome to the Cheese hotel'. Their quirky messages offer cheery encouragement to our trappers. Thankfully, the rats can't read.



Closer to home, Coromandel Area School students are also learning how they can help protect kiwi. Ms Spyve's Year 6 class have been building stoat and rat trap-boxes each Friday, which the kids will help place on the Harray track. These traps will be serviced by MEG volunteers, with the aim of extending the area under protection arounds Coromandel town.

"We've been making rat traps to save the kiwis with wood and nails and glue guns and saws" explains Anton Smith from Point View School. In the process, their school has learnt heaps about why kiwi are special. "Kiwi don't have wings to fly away from predators, and they don't have tails. But they have strong feet to help them fight. They yell in the night to find each other. The male is squeaky and the female sounds fierce" adds Yunmin Lee. We couldn't have put it better ourselves.





## Winter Lecture Series



We have had a great turnout for the first three talks in our **Winter Lectures Series** which delved into the curious world of underwater robotics, the dietary habits of fur seals and the best way to get on top of noxious weeds. The free series of public lectures are hosted at Moon Hair Salon, behind the Chai Tea house. Come get cosy beside the fire with a warming drink. All welcome.

### Bird identification through song and flight

Kathi Parr & Wayne Todd,  
Moehau Environment Group  
Monday 4 July, 7pm

### Native frogs – what's happening?

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



## 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.**

### Rat trap-box

Want a rat trap for your backyard? Purchase for \$25 or \$20 for box without trap



Effective and humane, the Victor Rat trap is a traditional wooden base rat trap that is double sprung for catching and holding rats. The wooden box protects the trap from the weather and is designed to exclude non target species and pig interference.

## 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/](http://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:

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