

Spring 2017

COROMANDEL ENVIRONMENT NEWS

# megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

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*"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."*  
—Mother Teresa

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## Kiwi kids gone wild ...

**For a ten or eleven year old, what could be more fun than smearing mud on your face, screaming like a banshee and hurtling at speed down a treacherous clay track?**

Mr George-Colmer's Year 5/6 class from Coromandel Area School got to do just that on July 4, while helping carry traps they had built for us into the bush. While our adult helpers cautiously negotiated the slippery clay track, most of the kids embraced the chance to get muddy. The worst offenders needed to be hosed down before returning to their classroom. We had an absolute blast, and so did the kids.

The 29 stoat traps the class built were decorated with pop-art slogans to raise awareness about kiwi. Each trap is a weapon which helps us protect vulnerable kiwi chicks from predation in the hills above town. Keep an eye out for them, next time you walk the Kaipawa ridge track or Success walk.

We really appreciate all the willing helpers who came along to support us and Adventure Racing Coromandel who loaned us their quad bike. If you or your child are inspired and want to do more to help kiwi, we'd love to have you volunteer. You can contact us by emailing [coromandelkiwiproject@meg.org.nz](mailto:coromandelkiwiproject@meg.org.nz)

We made the summit! The Red Team break for lunch in front of the Kaipawa trig.

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Above: In areas without pest control the hillside is turning grey with dead pohutukawa. Inset: A possum feasts on a kereru egg © Nga Manu.

## Ancient forest under attack

**Our coastal forests are dying. All along our coastline, ancient trees are turning grey. Their dead, ghostly skeletons are easy to spot from a boat or from the air. Aerial photographs clearly show the devastation happening in the northern Coromandel.**

The dieback is widespread, and affecting ancient pohutukawa, puriri and rata trees, many that over 100 years old. These trees have not died naturally from old age. Possums are the main culprit. Each night, an army of possums eat the leaves, buds, flowers and young shoots of their favourite trees. Ignoring old leaves, they select the sweet, tender new growth. Without sustained pest control, these ancient trees are doomed.

This spring we will begin a large-scale pest control operation to target 3,246 hectares surrounding Port Charles. We're aiming to knock back the possum and rodent numbers, in order to give the forest time to recover and provide the birdlife some relief to allow a bumper breeding season. The baiting will be ground-based, using a mix of cyanide, diphacinone and 1080 baits placed in baitstations. Our field team have already begun the huge job of re-marking tracks and baitstations.

Taking out just one or two pests is not an option if you want healthy native forests. If we are to prevent further canopy collapse on the Coromandel, we need to support and encourage regular pest control. Without our help, the forest will continue to turn grey.



Right: Students from the Coromandel Area School Year 5/6 class place traps they have built and painted with slogans within our Coromandel Kiwi Project.



## Rogue kiwi killers on the loose

**We've heard it all before: Dogs and kiwi don't mix. Dogs that roam kill our kiwi. And yet, in the heart of kiwi country, our dog problem seems to be growing.**

A landowner phones to say he has dogs wandering through his property. He has grave concerns for the kiwi living on his block. He has reason to be concerned. Another landowner no longer hears the pair of kiwi that used to call near his house, after a pack of dogs has been caught attacking the neighbours' sheep. Some were shot, but others escaped. One of our volunteers stumbles across two dogs roaming in the bush, while out checking traps in our kiwi sanctuary.

The evidence is mounting that the northern Coromandel has a rogue dog problem. We've had numerous tip offs recently that packs of dogs are on the loose. Reports have been trickling in from Papa Aroha, Port Charles, Koputauaki, Waitete Bay..

This year's kiwi listening results paint a grim picture. Kiwi calls within our sanctuary are down on previous years. Overall we've also seen a reduction in the number of individual kiwi heard.

We are worried that in many areas, rogue dogs are taking a toll on our kiwi populations. Reports of dogs roaming near Waitete Bay could explain why this year we saw a dramatic drop in both individual birds and the overall call count recorded at this listening site. While there is always natural variation from year to year, these results are disappointing.

With kiwi living on our doorstep, we need *all* landowners to ensure dogs are kept under control at all times. Free kiwi avoidance training for dogs is available from the Department of Conservation. It's a simple method for teaching dogs kiwi are something to stay away from.

However, avoidance training is not a silver bullet. Even after it has been trained, an uncontrolled or roaming dog may still attack kiwi, especially if it is not regularly re-trained. The best option is simply to keep dogs away from places wild kiwi live. If it is unavoidable to take a dog into a kiwi area, it should always be under control. In most instances this means on a lead, regardless of whether it has been avoidance trained.



Above: This young kiwi was taken to the local vet Dave Thurgood for a health check in 2015 after being chased by a dog. Most kiwi do not survive a dog attack, with many suffering from internal haemorrhaging.

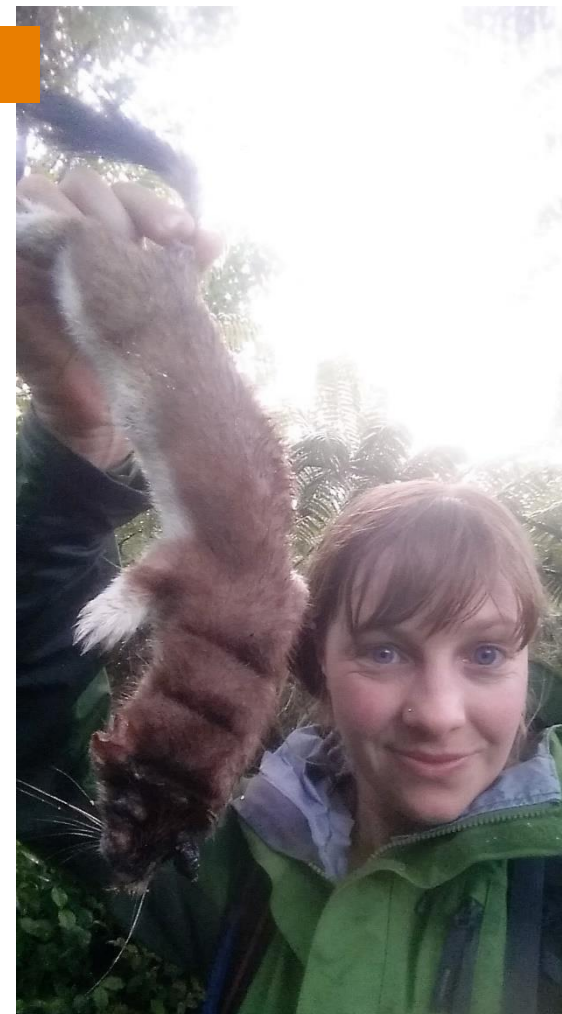
## Change is in the air

**In September we say farewell to our Coordinator, Natalie Collicott, who after five and a half years in the role, is ready for a new adventure.**

During her time with us, Natalie has worked alongside our committee, volunteers, workers and numerous others to champion conservation. Her high level of professionalism, enthusiasm and commitment has enhanced MEG. Her input has been invaluable. She leaves having built some wonderful relationships with the people with whom she has worked alongside.

We wish her the very best. Wherever her journey takes her to she takes with her the warmest friendship, goodwill and respect from all of us at MEG - Arohanui

Right: Our Coordinator, Natalie Collicott, pulls a fresh stoat from a trap



## Come to our AGM

**Sat 11 November,  
Colville Hall**

Starts 10am with a light lunch  
provided afterwards.

The meeting will include the  
election of Officers, and updates  
from our Chair and General  
Manager. Everyone is welcome.  
We hope to see you there!

## Kiwi Avoidance Training

**16 September; Thames  
21 October (Labour Wknd);  
Coromandel town**

Dogs are the biggest threat to adult  
kiwi in our area. Any dog can kill  
kiwi. Get your dog trained to avoid  
kiwi for free.



Training is free and only takes 15  
minutes. Phone 078679080 to book.



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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

Dealing with a few unwanted  
visitors? Want a rat trap for your  
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This humane and effective rat-trap  
comes with a custom made  
wooden box to keep the trap safe  
from curious pets and children,  
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and pig interference, and exclude  
non target species.



**Purchase for \$25**

## 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,  
c/o Lettecia Williams, 1409 Port Charles Rd  
RD4, Coromandel 3584

### 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.*

### Membership subs are due 1 October.

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

### For further information please contact:

Lettecia Williams

Ph: 07 8666626

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