

Summer 2017

COROMANDEL ENVIRONMENT NEWS

# megaphone

THE FACTS & ISSUES

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**"It's not what the world holds for you.  
It's what you bring to it."**

*Anne of Green Gables*

print house Ltd.

A shining cuckoo camouflaged amongst the green of a fig tree in the Port Charles Rat Attack © K Hecht



## Secrets of the green imposter

**The call of the shining cuckoo announces spring, a welcome reminder that warmer weather is on its way. But this visitor also brings with it some devious parenting tactics.**

Pipiwharau (shining cuckoo) are not rare. Although seldom seen, their distinctive high pitched call can often be heard. These migratory birds journey from New Guinea and the Solomon Islands to arrive in New Zealand each spring. Every autumn they fly back across the Pacific Ocean for thousands of kilometres, chasing the sun.

The cuckoo take a hands-off approach to parenting, sneaking a single egg into another bird's nest, usually the unsuspecting grey warbler, who is then tasked with fostering this imposter.

After locating a suitable warbler's nest, the cuckoo delicately squeezes its derriere into the tiny opening to lay an egg. Job done, Mrs Cuckoo is free to enjoy the rest of summer, feasting on insects and preparing for her long journey north.

It is not a sophisticated ruse. The cuckoo egg is rather conspicuous, being much larger and a different colour to the warbler eggs. But the obliging warbler accepts it anyway. The cuckoo egg will hatch first, and once hatched the murderous chick will push the remaining eggs or even chicks out of the nest.

From then on, the shining cuckoo chick is boss, demanding a constant delivery of spiders and insects from the much smaller adoptive parents.

It is quite a sight to witness a tiny grey warbler zipping back and forth to feed a very vocal cuckoo chick, almost four times its size. The warblers make great substitute parents and will feed the cuckoo chick for four weeks before their charge flies off to join its fellow cuckoos in the Pacific.

While it's hard not to feel sorry for the poor grey warbler, it isn't all bad. They typically manage to raise a clutch of eggs before the shining cuckoos arrive, giving them a chance to raise their own offspring first.

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

moehau  
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**Miserable weather couldn't slow progress in our Coromandel Kiwi Project, where a band of hardy locals came together to carry traps into the bush.**

Friday 30 of September looked dismal and wet. Despite the wet weather, a mix of parents, children and keen conservationists slowly assembled near the skatepark in Coromandel. The group (already looking a little bedraggled) were there to help cart traps into the bush.

But not just any traps. The traps had been built by Coromandel Area School's Year 6 Technology class. Art work by the children on each trap-box illustrates how these traps will protect kiwi around Coromandel town.

Friday was the day selected to place the traps along the Harray track in Coromandel town, and nobody was going to let a little rain put them off. Each child got the chance to carry the trap they had built and decorated into the bush. Some adults carried two, huffing and puffing their way up the steep steps. A big thank you to the 23 volunteers who took part.

We have caught our first stoat already, in a trap built by Riko. This is fantastic as now is the time when young kiwi chicks are most vulnerable to being eaten. The traps will be checked monthly by Pete Sephton, one of our Coromandel Kiwi Project volunteers. If you'd like to help out, please email [coromandelkiwiproject@meg.org.nz](mailto:coromandelkiwiproject@meg.org.nz)

Top left: Casey Hooper, Charlotte Kite and Katie Walker on the Harray track.

Left: Alex King beside a stoat trap made by him and Deveshh Bali



## Have ferrets reached the final frontier?

**Can you tell a ferret from a stoat? These furry intruders seem to be becoming more common on the Coromandel.**

We caught our first ferret in the Coromandel Kiwi Project in September. That same month, Mahakirau Forest Estate on the 309 road also trapped one.

Ferrets are rare in the northern Coromandel, but are caught more often further south. They prefer open farmland where rabbits (their main prey) is abundant. They pose a big threat to our wildlife. Species found in the same areas as rabbits like the dune-dwelling dotterel are more at risk.



And while stoats prey on kiwi chicks, a ferret can easily kill an adult kiwi, decimating breeding populations. In 2013, 26 kiwi were killed by one ferret at Tongariro National Park.

Ferrets are much larger and stockier than a stoat. Because of this, they require larger traps. As a precaution, we are deploying some larger DOC 250 traps at key locations within our trap network. It may give us better information about just how common these unwelcome visitors really are.

Below: The ferret we caught had squeezed itself into a DOC 200 trap to sniff the stoat-scented lure we are trialling.





### New gecko mural

A new mural adorns the old concrete wall beside the Coromandel BNZ. We commissioned Caitlin Moloney, an amazing local artist, to paint the mural which features a Coromandel Striped Gecko, endemic to the area. There's also a blackboard noticeboard where we can update locals on MEG news. Thanks to the generous locals whose donations helped make this a reality.

### Colville kids get dirty

Each year we give the children of Colville School an excuse to get dirty at our annual tree-planting day at Waikawau Bay. This year 24 local children planted the 200 native trees donated by Waikato Regional Council. This is the tenth year the school has come and planted trees in our Children's forest. What was a paddock of rank kikuyu has been transformed into a native food forest for the birds and lizards.

### Conservation loses a friend

We are saddened by the sudden and tragic loss of friend and conservationist Pete Buddle. Pete was an eco-warrior who dedicated his life to protecting the environment, and inspiring the next generation. It was Pete's vision and enthusiasm that sparked the formation of Moehau Environment Group over 16 years ago, and his conservation legacy on this landscape will continue long after his memory fades. Donations from his memorial were generously gifted to MEG to continue to protect the bush Pete was so passionate about.



Local artist Caitlin Moloney (right) has help from friends putting the finishing touches on the mural

## Getting more bangs for your buck

**Resetting traps could make monthly trap-checks a thing of the past. We're trialling 40 self-setting possum traps to see if we can control possums to a low density without toxin.**

Traditionally MEG has baited for possums as we do not have the manpower to trap effectively on a large scale over difficult terrain. However, this could change if new self-setting traps make pest control less labour intensive and more efficient. If these traps prove themselves, we could potentially put a lot more traps in the wild, and kill a lot more stuff. That's a promise we feel excited about.

The A12 Goodnature possum trap is powered by a replaceable CO<sub>2</sub> canister and can reset itself 12 times between checks. A long-life cinnamon lure is used to entice possums to the trap. There is also another version, the A24 suitable for rats and stoats. While the traps have been available for a few years, early versions were plagued with technical glitches. Goodnature have worked to address the issues, and DOC now gives assurance of trap reliability out to 18 months.

Our traps will be deployed at a spacing of 200 metres and checked monthly. This will allow MEG to trial the efficacy of these traps in a remote area of high biodiversity that has had no possum control in over ten years.

While the total possum kill will not be known (carcasses get scavenged by pigs and we have not opted to purchase the costly trap-counters), we have already seen immediate results with piles of possums under the newly installed traps. We'll use chew-cards to monitor how effective the regime is.

At \$185 each, Goodnature traps are more expensive than a single setting trap. But if you have a real rat or possum problem, and want to avoid the use of toxins they might well be worth the investment. They are particularly useful in places where traps are difficult to check or for absentee bach-owners.

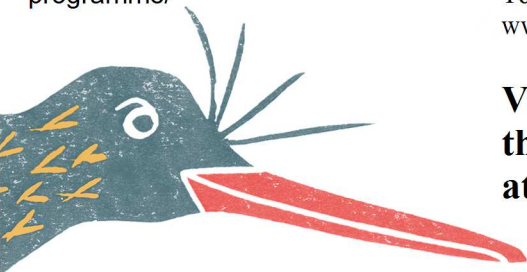
Volunteers Dave, Emma and Josh help carry new stoat traps into the field at Papa Aroha





## 2017 Summer Programme

Join us for an unforgettable encounter with nature this January. Look out for our Summer Programme booklet or download one from [meg.org.nz/projects/summer-programme/](http://meg.org.nz/projects/summer-programme/)



## Kiwi Avoidance training

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.

### 7 Jan: Thames Coast

Call 07 867 9080 to book

### 8 Jan: Kuaotunu

Email [sheilachris@xtra.co.nz](mailto:sheilachris@xtra.co.nz) or call 021 716 514 to book

### 12 Jan: Waikawau Bay

Call 07 867 9080 to book

### 14 Jan: Tairua

Call 07 868 9912 to book

## Shop Online

Looking for unique gift ideas? 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.**

To make a purchase visit [www.meg.org.nz/support-us/shop/](http://www.meg.org.nz/support-us/shop/)

**Visiting the Coromandel this summer? Book a stay at Knox Coastal Cottage**



This charming cottage at Waikawau Bay is a nature-lovers delight, with ocean views. The simple bach offers the perfect secluded getaway. From just \$120/night. All bookings help support our conservation projects

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## 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:

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