ISSUE 1 • 2022

THE MEG-A-PHONE

A Newsletter from Moehau Environment Group

FREE PLEASE TAKE ONE

Annual Kiwi Surveys: 2004 to 2022

Our kiwi professional and conservation dog handler Diane Prince, has analysed the results from the annual kiwi call count surveys which are the main tool used by MEG to monitor the outcomes of the stoat trapping network on kiwi survivorship. Diane's report looks at the annual surveys done between 2004 and 2022 estimating the number of kiwi present and the call count rate per hour.

Great news: the number of kiwi estimated to be present at the five long term listening sites has increased over the years. In the 2015 survey, 94 pairs were found. Now there may be close to 202 pairs in the survey area. Call rate per hour was 1.8 in 2005 and 3.8 in 2022, an increase of 111%.

Originally, 5 listening sites were created in 2004. Volunteers listen at the sites on five separate nights for a period of two hours. Only adult kiwi presence can be detected as juvenile kiwi and chicks do not call. See our full report for more details www.meg.org.nz

This issue:

Winter Lecture Series wraps up with spine chilling account from Dr Brendon Dunphy about our highly threatened seabirds

Photo: Tītī (Sooty Shearwater), taken by Edin Whitehead who is the co writer of book 'The Brilliance of Birds' with Skye Wishart

In 2021, Dunphy and his team found seabird chick populations collapsing as they researched seabird colonies (in particular tītī/sooty shearwater and kororā/blue penguin), living on the islands of the Hauraki gulf. Tested specimens revealed the stress indicators of the birds had sky rocketed. New research is finding that on the eastern coast of the north island, sea temperatures are becoming warmer creating many changes; one of which is the noticeable decline of zooplankton. Seabirds will fly for 16 hours or more to find an upwelling of cool water where the birds can target a plankton bloom.

"We are seeing shearwater populations retracting from North to South. In our lifetime, we can probably expect yellow eyed penguin to go extinct from the mainland". Not only are seabirds stressed at sea, but when they come ashore to roost and incubate eggs on the mainland they are predated upon by rats and stoats. One stoat can wipe out an entire colony. Colonies must remain predator free.

Aotearoa has the highest diversity of birds in the world, particularly its West Coast and Tasman Sea and is described as 'the seabird capital of the world'. There are more species of seabird in NZ waters than any other country in the world and unfortunately 90% of our sea birds are now threatened. We need to act fast to save them.

MEG brings science speakers to Kapanga/Coromandel Town each winter for a series of evening lectures and social gatherings. Come along and hear some fascinating talks. Join our newsletter mailing list to stay up to date!
www.meg.org.nz

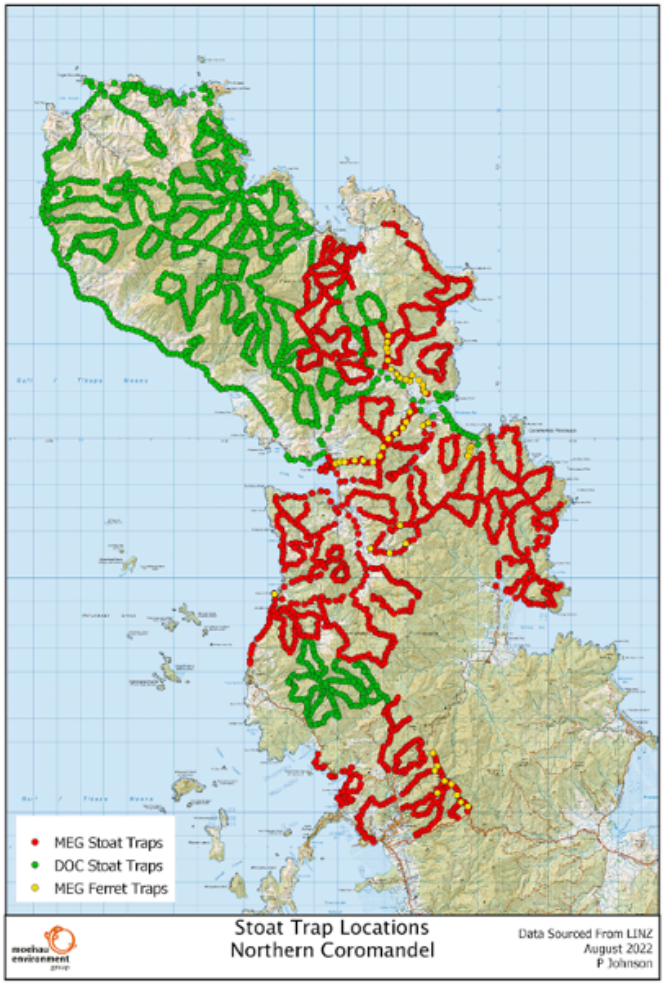
Funding received to plant another 300 trees

It comes as no surprise that after planting trees for over 15 years with Colville School in the Waikawau Bay Children's Forest we can now say it is a beautiful space **full** of trees. We have just received funding from Trees That Count to plant another 300 trees, so we are looking to create a second new habitat. Awesome mahi from all the children and volunteers over the years! We're excited to come back and plant secondary growth trees too after our primary manuka and flaxes have matured, those trees that provide berries for birds in the winter months, like taraire.

TREES THAT COUNT
TE RAHI O TĀNE

Stoats: what we are doing and what we are learning

The Moehau Kiwi Sanctuary of stoat trapping lines was established in a combined effort by DOC, our community and MEG's volunteers and field team. Our kiwi call count data shows consistent rise in kiwi numbers since listening data began in 2005. In 2008, a study showed that a kiwi chicks ability to survive to become an adult was 67% compared to just 5% in unmanaged sites outside the sanctuary. The MEG sanctuary area (shown in red) currently covers 15,000 hectares and has 1370 traps, which are checked and serviced monthly. This sort of trapping network makes lugging in stoat boxes 'slightly' hard, so with this in mind how do we make sure every trap is doing what its meant to?



In October, some of the team attended the Mustelid Summit organised by Predator Free Hauraki Coromandel Community Trust where we learned about stoats from the latest research compiled by Dr Andrew Veale who has studied Stoat Ecology and Genetics and is the first person in the world to unravel the stoats DNA. Some stoats do avoid traps, which means eradication is hard and novelty in trap baits is important. If you catch a stoat in September it will likely be an older male as the females are denning in September. Summer is the best time to catch stoats as the juveniles are off on their own and exploring.
Stoats are drawn to traps with dead rats, and baits like Connovation's Erayz dried rabbit block and egg mayo which seem to perform better than others.

They are commonly found at higher altitudes and rats at low altitudes, which is why our traps are mostly located along ridgelines. Dr Veale talked about knowing what your trap "clogging rate" is, which means at different times of year your stoat traps might need to be checked more often to make sure they are not getting clogged by rats or other non-target species such as hedgehogs or possums.

Stoats are incredible swimmers, they have been seen moving in family groups and are curious creatures. Once they are ready to leave mum, they can disperse anywhere from 3.5 to 12 km away from their den with some travelling as far as 40-60km throughout a trapping network. WOW. They will investigate the scent of other stoats. So, if a trap has caught a fresh stoat, the trapper can carry the freshly caught stoat and use it to spread its scent on to other traps as they are being serviced.

We took away lots of useful information and hope to invite Andrew here to speak for one of our Winter Lecture Series sessions to share more of his knowledge.

Photo credit: Stuart Attwood




What's That Bird - Matuku/Bittern

Recognise this special visitor? Making a surprise appearance in prime position for our trail cam in Waikawau bay...it's the matuku! Matuku are critically threatened in Aotearoa. Once abundant and important to Māori, they are now rarely seen. They are big birds, standing about 75 cm high.

In October and November we put out acoustic recorders in wetlands around the northern Coromandel to listen for the male's booming call. It sounds a little like blowing across a bottle top. If we hear them in both October and November then there's a good chance they are nesting and we can concentrate on protecting them from predators.

Catch Data For Target Species

Stoat
2022 FY Total -306
Project Total - 3,084

Weasel
2022 FY Total - 59
Project Total - 1,067

Rat
2022 FY Total- 2945
Project Total - 23,839

Ferret
2022 FY Total - 0
Project Total - 8

Sponsor a Stoat Trap & Donate

Would you like to sponsor a stoat trap within our kiwi sanctuary? Well you can! For just $65 per year you can help provide protection for kiwi chicks in the wild. You'll receive a certificate, a map showing the location of your trap and the catch data for the sponsorship year. Not to mention lots of warm fuzzies!

Thanks to our Volunteers, Members, Sponsors & Funding Partners...

Tangiaro Kiwi Retreat
Pepper Tree Restaurant & Bar
Richardsons Real Estate Coromandel
Coromandel Adventures
Coromandel Four Square
Coromandel E Bikes
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