



EAST TARANAKI ENVIRONMENT COLLECTIVE

Restoring Native Biodiversity. Protecting our Future. Together

Summer Newsletter 2025



READY FOR RATS

There are too many rats out in the Pouiatoa Conservation Area near Purangi, and the East Taranaki Environment Collective is going to deal to them. ETEC ranger Olly Sleep explains to Taranaki Electricity Trust chair Melissa Stevenson the baits to be used as part of a special operation designed to reduce the rat population.

More details inside.

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From the General Manager...



KAT STRANG

A special feature of this Christmas edition of our newsletter is that it contains several articles with an education focus.

During 2025 we have continued our kaitianga programme involving a number of local schools, and which is increasingly being held in conjunction with Te Ara Taiao, the very good collaboration between Sustainable Taranaki, DOC and local hapū that aims to develop environmental stewardship.

We've also continued our annual in-school conservation sessions in partnership with our friends at Taranaki Kiwi Trust and Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust. And a special recent event was a hui for volunteer trappers, which

gave volunteers representing us and other conservation organisations the opportunity to talk about the invaluable work they do.

We at ETEC are confident that all this is leading to a much improved future for Taranaki and its native flora and fauna.

So with Christmas almost here, I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone involved in this big effort on behalf of our environment – staff, volunteers, helpers, corporate sponsors, and funding organisations.

You all deserve to enjoy a wonderful festive season.

Kat Strang

Farewell To Jayden Fabish

Our popular Conservation Manager Jayden Fabish has decided to seek pastures new, and is leaving us at the end of the year.

Jayden gained his Bachelor of Science at Massey University in 2018, majoring in zoology, and after completing work in other parts of New Zealand he returned to Taranaki – he's an Inglewood lad - to join East Taranaki Environment Collective as a ranger.

"I wanted to return home and begin working in conservation in the areas I grew up around," says Jayden. "I think this added more importance and pride into my work and gave me a greater drive to do the job right."

Last year Jayden was promoted to the role of Conservation Manager.

General Manager Kat Strang says Jayden has proved to be an invaluable staff member, both as a ranger and in a managerial role, and he will be missed.

SPECIAL THANKS:

As we head towards the end of 2025, we at East Taranaki Environment Collective would like to thank the following organisations: Baker Tilly Staples Roday, Methanex, Toi Foundation, Taranaki Electricity Trust, Taranakipine, Todd Energy, Mazda Foundation, TGM Creative, Lottery Grants Board, NZ Community Trust, Pub Charity, Save the Kiwi, Aotearoa Gaming Trust, Greymouth Petroleum, Z Energy, Primo, Harcourts Foundation.



JAYDEN FABISH WITH ONE OF EAST TARANAKI'S RESIDENT KIWI.

Collaboration to teach all about Kaitiakitanga

Kaitiakitanga – guardianship of an environment or a resource.



East Taranaki Environment Collective is heavily involved in teaching the region's tamariki all about kaitiakitanga, each year hosting a series of learning programmes involving students from local schools.

In the third such instalment of the year, a group of young people met with

ETEC Conservation Manager Jayden Fabish at Everett Park. Assisting was Cherry Smith, educator from Te Ara Taiao.

The Kaitiakitanga program is focused around introducing the younger generation to the how and why of pest control work. At this session, the students spent their morning learning about native species, both extinct and still with us, and how important our pest control is from further losses in native biodiversity.

Students were taught the different species of birds, and also about lesser-known native fauna such as fish, reptiles and amphibians and how they are impacted by pests.

Our thanks to Te Ara Taiao, which is a partnership between Sustainable Taranaki, local hapū, the Department of Conservation and others, and which aims to enhance connections between schools, hapū and the Taranaki community, all in the interests of protecting our environment.

There's a spirit of collaboration between ETEC and Te Ara Taiao, something that was illustrated a few weeks ago.

ETEC is finding that many schools in our kaitiakitanga programme want more students to participate – but the numbers involved would be too much for us to realistically tackle.

So recently our team visited St Josephs Waitara for an education session in collaboration with Te Ara Taiao. Prior to this session, there were discussions about using the teachings of the kaitiakitanga programme and ETEC's contacts to get the Te Ara Taiao programme into different schools.

This led to a decision to try things out by holding collaboration events at single schools. The first was at St Josephs Waitara, attended by 45 tamariki from St. Joseph's, Norfolk, Waitara Central and Waitoriki. The students were split into three groups and learnt about pest species, trapping and monitoring with some other activities in between.

Another collaboration event was held mid-November at Norfolk School with different schools invited.



Taking conservation to our schools

What's the best way to teach our tamariki all about conservation? Take the education to the schools.

A few weeks ago our Conservation Manager Jayden Fabish and ranger Halle Aish visited schools in Inglewood and near Stratford for what were dubbed in-school conservation sessions. Representatives from Taranaki Regional Council, Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust, Taranaki Kiwi Trust and Department of Conservation also participated.

The team first visited Toko School and rotated the students between five stations for 20-minute sessions in which the students learned all about a variety

of subjects including conservation dogs, telemetry, trapping and kiwi behaviour. Each station had around 15 students per group.

The team then visited St. Patricks Inglewood and applied the same format of rotating through groups. This time there were around eight to 10 students per group. Overall, 175 students participated in the day.

This event was funded through Powerco and was part of Conservation Week. Our thanks for this support.



SCHOOL PUPILS LEARNING HOW A PEST TRAP WORKS.

Volunteer Trappers Hui

ETEC relies heavily on our volunteers – citizens who go out in all weather, checking, resetting and repairing our pest trap network.

During Conservation Week, we organised a hui for volunteer trappers. The hui, which was attended by 30 people, was hosted by our friends Pukerangiora hapū at Kairau marae, with a practical session at nearby Everett Park.

The whole point of the hui was to share knowledge and help people form connections and a network, which is important as trapping can be quite an isolating activity. There was also plenty of discussion about techniques to improve trap rates, and the work that is happening around all Taranaki.

The hui was supported by Taranaki Regional Council and Taranaki Kiwi Trust, and attracted volunteers from 800 Trust, Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust, all the way up to Rapanui. Feedback from the event was that people enjoyed it and learned some new skills.

Our thanks to Powerco for helping fund this important event.



TRAPPERS HUI

Pouiatoa rat population shows worrying growth

The Pouiatoa Conservation Area is a highly important area of native bush that gets special attention from ETEC. There's good reason for this – not only is the 3900ha tract of land rated as high conservation value, but it is also home to our population of North Island Kōkako that were translocated there a few years ago.

Kōkako are particularly vulnerable to nest predation by rats and possums, so keeping these pest numbers low is key to their breeding success. So it was worrying when recent monitoring discovered that rat numbers have become abnormally high in the Pouiatoa Conservation Area.

Rat numbers are measured using tracking tunnel cards, and in the latest survey the rat index came back at 79 per cent – the highest ever recorded.

These high rat numbers were after the ETEC team had put in a lot of mahi with a 1000ha cholecalciferol ground operation to target the rats, and with having 1000ha of A24 resetting traps.



NORTH ISLAND KOKAKO

“There are a few possibilities as to why the rat population is higher than normal,” says ETEC General Manager Kat Strang.

“There have been a few warm winters, which has led to more natural food on the ground, so increased rats. And with our getting on top of our possum population out there, we could be creating more food within the Pouiatoa forest. But unfortunately, what has caused the rat population growth is something we will never really know.”

What is known though is that high rat numbers can cause a high nest failure for the kōkako and very low recruitment for this breeding season. So the team at ETEC has been creating a plan to relieve predation pressure and hopefully get a few chicks through.

This plan involves re-gassing and re-luring all of the resetting traps where the kōkako are located, bringing in a nest surveyor to identify which trees are being used for nesting, and establishing a “Ring of Steel” round each tree using rat traps, possum traps and poison.

“Because of how remote our area is, we’re pretty limited for options, but this approach will give the Kōkako the best chance,” says Kat.

“There is also a 1080 operation planned for next year, and that will also reduce populations of both rats and possums.”





BEAUTIFUL NATIVE BUSH SURROUNDING MT MESSENGER IN NORTH TARANAKI.

ETEC helps with Mt Messenger monitoring

Taranaki residents will know all about Te Ara o Te Ata – the big roading project in North Taranaki that is constructing a 6km route that will bypass the existing steep, narrow and winding route over Mt Messenger.

What residents may not know is that as part of this project, a pest management programme has been established that covers 3650 ha of rugged bush from the coast to almost 10km inland. The team doing this work has created a 250km network of traps bait and stations.

The intent behind creation of the Pest Management Area (PMA) is to help offset the effects of the roading project, assist the bush's recovery from damage by animal pests such as possums, and to improve the diversity of native plants and animals.

One of the requirements of the PMA is that the pest management work has to be independently monitored, with East Taranaki Environment Collective's field team undertaking this work. For several weeks the team monitored the rats, possums and mustelids in the bush east and west of Mt Messenger.

"This has been a good development opportunity for our team," says ETEC General Manager Kat Strang. "They were required to work in new and unfamiliar areas, and needed to use their GPS to navigate their way around. The terrain was pretty challenging too, but not unlike where we normally work."

"Working in this space was a great opportunity to learn more about how the Mt Messenger Alliance' PMA team is managing pests, that could be used within our area."

"This project also sits within the Eastern Corridor – a region-wide strategy to create a pest-suppressed area from coast to coast throughout Taranaki's eastern hill country."



Kiwi Supporting Kiwi

Proud to be the designers of this newsletter, sharing the good news about the work ETEC is doing in our community.



creative
brands of substance

Taranaki Electricity Trust Support Invaluable

East Taranaki Environment Collective is celebrating its 20th birthday this year, and it is timely to acknowledge the support received over those years by the Taranaki Electricity Trust. TET is a charitable trust formed 32 years ago when Eltham-headquartered Taranaki Electric Power Board merged with New Plymouth Energy. Since then, TET has distributed investment income as grants to suitable applicants within the area previously supplied by the former TEPB.

This area is very large, extending to past Uruti to the north, Te Roti to the south, Awatuna to the west and past Whangamomona to the east, and includes the towns of Waitara, Inglewood, Stratford and Eltham.

ETEC is fortunate that the entire 18,000 hectares of land that is subject to our efforts to restore the ecosystem and increase native biodiversity, is within the TET's area. As a result, funding provided by the TET has allowed us to do a lot of great work. Conservation work, including predator control, an education programme, volunteer engagement, and development and training opportunities, have been among key positive outcomes that the ETEC has been able to achieve.

"The retention of our staff and their expertise means that ETEC has been able to continue the education programme, and help with many other community and school projects when the opportunities arise," says ETEC General Manager Kat Strang.

"Education within the community and local kura will lead to behavioural change, and will ensure that there are those in the future generations who will advocate and fight for their native species."

"TET funding has also allowed us to ensure that we are developing the skills of tamariki and rangatahi and sharing knowledge with other conservation organisations to help create a network of skilled workers in Taranaki."

The North Island brown kiwi, kōkako, and many other threatened native fauna are benefitting from ETEC's trapping network within the protected area, with possums and mustelids among the key enemies being caught.

TET chair Melissa Stevenson says her organisation began providing funding to ETEC in 2012, and this has continued every year since. **"It's been a long-standing relationship, which we are very happy with because ETEC is doing some amazing work,"** she adds.



TET FUNDING HAS BEEN CRUCIAL TO ETEC'S EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Culvert repairs for pest control work

Ngatoto Rd is a short, unsealed and barely populated road that wends its way alongside the Waitara River at Purangi, east of Inglewood. It might be isolated, but it is important to East Taranaki Environment Collective, because it allows vehicular access to the Pouiatoa Conservation Area. So it was bad news when a major winter storm caused sufficient flooding to blow out a culvert crossing the vehicle track continuing off the end of the road. That is now preventing ETEC from driving all the way to the Pouiatoa for its pest control work, forcing staff to walk there laden down with packs and equipment.

Since it is the major user of the access road, ETEC has taken responsibility for replacing the culvert. It has arranged with the owners of surrounding farmland to have the new culvert installed slightly further away from the Waitara River, and it has obtained funding from Toi Foundation to help pay for the project.

The repair project will begin as soon as the weather stabilises, and it should be completed by Christmas.

"Our thanks to Toi Foundation for assisting in this repair project, which is vital to our ongoing efforts to protect the Pouiatoa, which is a very high-value conservation area," says ETEC general manager Kat Strang.



THE SPOT ON NGATOTO RD WHERE FLOODING HAS BLOWN OUT A CULVERT.



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