

Estuary watchdogs

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Six enthusiastic students from Whananaki School have appointed themselves watchdogs of the estuary that features so prominently at their school.

Enviroschools Northland Facilitator Julie Holt says the Year 5 – 8 students have been given a wonderful opportunity to work closely with staff from the Northland Regional Council as a way to revamp their monitoring skills.

"For a long time, learning at Whananaki School has centred around the environment where the school is located," says Julie.

"Because they are on such a unique position on the estuary, it was decided to revamp the students' monitoring skills and promote the value of the estuary with both locals and visitors," she says.

Julie says, Bruce Griffin – Estuary Management Advisor for the Northland Regional Council –

has shared ideas, answered questions and taken the group to collect data about shellfish in the estuary.

"The students have discussed and established the aspects of the estuary they would like to monitor and the outcomes they expect to achieve."

The results of the data collected by the students will be presented to their class as part of the statistics and maths programme, as well as in newsletters to the community and on the community notice board.

Julie says a range of learning opportunities has arisen and the students have developed a local survey as well as an information letter to set the scene for on-going contributions.

"James, Diego, Preston, Troy, Skye and Caylem are continuing their own observations to prove they really are the Estuary Watchdogs!"

Northland Regional Council Estuary Management Advisor Bruce Griffin works with Whananaki School students at their local estuary.





Out and about



Enviroschools Facilitator Julie Holt has been out and about around Northland visiting a range of Enviroschools. Here's what Julie has to say...



Environmental action

Years of environmental action at Peria School has seen the creation of gardens, orchards, habitat corners and a fruit forest. A newly cleared area is providing a buzz with students and the community involved in decisions about what will be developed – definitely something to look out for in the future.



Momentous occasion - dinosaurs invited

Kaikohe West School recently celebrated a momentous occasion – the opening of Tawanui, a multi-purpose building surrounded by exciting landscaping.

The students took part in learning and action to enhance the surroundings of the new building, including murals, hanging baskets, dinosaur gardens and weta houses.



Providing inspiration

In June, several teachers took part in an inspiring cluster meeting at Whāngārei Heads School to explore what has been happening with sustainability.

Whāngārei Heads is a Silver Enviroschool and the learning is evident in the wide range of sustainable practices and commitment to improving the planet. Meeting in an environment where there is a strong commitment to Enviroschools is certainly a great way to foster ideas and enthusiasm.



Pretty puddings

Creating pretty puddings to feed the birds is one of the projects the junior school at One Tree Point devised to keep their local feathered friends happy.

New gardens are popping up with students designing and planning what they would like to grow and plans for a new shadehouse have encouraged a lot of interest.

Aroha Island

Have you been to Aroha Island, 12 kilometres from Kerikeri?

This is a wonderland of exciting opportunities to explore, experience and enjoy the biodiversity that promotes the need to conserve what we have, before it is lost, including kiwi.

The island is only a few minutes drive from central Kerikeri and is connected to the mainland by a causeway – so you can drive right to it!

For more information contact the manager on manager@arohaisland.co.nz or phone 09 407 5243 to book your school camp or a day trip. Visit Aroha Island website for more information: www.arohaisland.co.nz





Exploring Māori perspectives

Mid North teachers had a motivating day exploring Māori perspectives through a range of mediums during a cluster meeting at Tautoro School.

Art, sculptures, murals, archways and pou recognise the significance of Atua for the students and they link their learning about Papatuanuku to their daily lives.



Slippery suspects

How many students get to go on an eel camp? At Waiharara School water is a major focus and eels are very relevant to the area, so what better way to learn than to experience first-hand.

On-going learning about water in the area provided the theme for the school throughout the year with students involved in a range of activities and outstanding contributions through art and drama.

Plucking pesky possums

In what is believed to be an Enviroschools first, a new programme – 'Project Possum' – is offering students a chance to earn NCEA credits while creating potential job prospects for young Northlanders.

The project was developed by Enviroschools Northland, with the help of the Northland Regional Council, the Department of Conservation, the local fur industry and Can Train NZ Ltd. The project provides hands on knowledge of possum trapping, fur and pelt recovery.

More than secondary pupils are learning about the biology of possums, the traps used to control them and applicable techniques as well as plucking and skinning and preparing fur and skins for sale.

Northland Enviroschools Facilitator Marty Taylor is leading the training, which was offered in both Whāngārei and Far North districts over day-long skills workshops and two-day assessment workshops during September.

Feedback from the workshops was positive with students saying they enjoyed getting their hands dirty and learnt a lot.

Marty says learning in a hands-on manner is exactly what 'Project Possum' is about.

"It targets students who are not engaged in learning in the traditional manner – they

tend to be physical and capable but they're lost in the system," he says.

"The project gives them something to get stuck into and offers them NCEA credits so they don't just end up leaving school. It's about looking into the 'why' behind what they're doing."



Liam makes the first cut to skin a possum

Following the workshops, several schools in the region are piloting a programme where students set up a small sustainable business sponsored by the Gateway Programme.

"Students are loaned the money to buy traps. The fur harvested is sold to a fur buyer. Half the money goes to pay off the traps and half goes to the students as an incentive to keep them trapping."

The Northland Branch of the New Zealand Association for Environmental Education has already contributed to the pilot by purchasing 20 humane possum traps for Te Kura Taumata o Panguru, worth about \$400.

"Really keen students will be given the opportunity to develop a career pathway. Students over the age of 17 will be able to complete their Controlled Substances License which is a ticket into a job anywhere throughout the country."

"It's definitely a sustainable development approach – the students learn the 'why?' behind possum control, they earn unit standards and make a few bucks."

Piles of machine plucked possums.





Our precious waters

This year's Northland Enviroschools Expos saw community experts share their skills and expertise with more than 200 primary and intermediate students and teachers.

The expos – themed 'Our precious waters – the fresh to the salty' – were held at Hurupaki and Springbank schools at the end of September.

