

# Environmental Education



## Greetings, kia ora koutou

Welcome to the second edition of the Horizons Regional Council Environmental Education newsletter. We've had a busy few months visiting 36 schools and 4 public events. You may have seen us out and about, and if you do, say hi to our friendly team of environmental educators who are more than willing to answer any questions you may have or just have a good old chat.

## Meet the team



From left to right: Hikoi Te Riaki, John McDonald, Helen Brown, Rowena Brown and Alistair Beveridge

## World Wetlands Day 2 February 2010

World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on 2 February and marks the signing of the International Convention on Wetlands in 1971. There are now over 1000 Wetlands of International Importance known as Ramsar sites, protected under this Treaty, and one of these is our very own Manawatu Estuary.

### So what are wetlands?

Wetlands are lands that are seasonally or permanently saturated by water. These include swamps, estuaries, lakes, ponds and lagoons.

### Why are they important?

Wetlands are hotspots for biological diversity (biodiversity) because they are a vital habitat for hundreds of species. Wetlands also have significant cultural importance, and even today wetlands still provide food (e.g. eels and whitebait), materials (e.g. harakeke for weaving), and medicines. Wetlands are also important because they regulate the water

table between flooding and drought conditions, and help with pollution control.

### What are the threats to wetlands?

Early settlers cleared and drained wetlands for housing, farms and roads. It has been estimated that 97% of the wetland habitat (excluding lakes) in the Horizons Region has been lost. Continued threats include introduced predators and invasive weeds.

### What can I do?

There are many ways to get involved in saving our wetlands. One of our local landowners and E-Hero, Brian Hales is currently restoring an old oxbow wetland of the Wainui River back to native habitat with the help of keen volunteers, such as the students at Weber school who have planted over 150 natives. "It is a great learning site. It is easy for children to work with the concept of water...simple comparisons of clean and dirty, all visual and concrete rather than abstract...And it is a fun place to be, I defy anyone to stand there for more than a minute without throwing a pinecone into the water." – Brian Hales



Brian and Horizons staff helping Weber students exam water-life in Hales wetland.

### Like to know more?

You could get involved with a wetland restoration in your area or start your own project. Go to our website [www.greenrig.co.nz/what'snew](http://www.greenrig.co.nz/what'snew). The Green RIG also offers the Wai Ora programme which helps teachers develop students' understanding of processes and activities that impact the health of our waterways. Look out for various events around New Zealand on 2 February to celebrate World Wetlands Day.



## Youth Jam 2009

Totara Reserve, situated in the heart of the Pohangina valley, was the stunning venue for the first Regional Youth Jam co-ordinated by Horizons and Environaki on 6-7 August, with workshops during Term 2 & 3 to prepare. Youth Jam is an initiative created to involve secondary school Envirogroups in presentation and project development workshops based on environmental initiatives that they are working on in their communities. It is a great place to network with like-minded people and gain new skills during free time, jam sessions, team activities and action events.

Students recalled many highlights of the 2009 Youth Jam, "the food, meeting people, sharing instruments and learning new things." Horizons staff that led the action events during the weekend were impressed by the knowledge, interest and excellence of effort that students put into the events. Due to the success of the Youth Jam 09 there are now great plans for 2010, to be bigger, better and even more successful at inspiring students to get active in their own way, in their own place, for the environment.

## The Green RIG fact file

### What is the Green RIG and why do we need it?

The Green Rig is a community initiative, borne out of a need for increased awareness of our local treasures (flora and fauna), and Horizons' role in safeguarding these for future populations,

### Who runs it?

We have a team of 5 trained environmental educators – see photo on previous page.

### What programmes does it run?

We have lots of programmes from water quality (Wai ora) to flood management to native habitats.

### Where can I see it?

We are mobile, so you can see us ANYWHERE in the Horizons Region. We have already travelled 39, 119 km! To find out when we will be at a town near you, visit our website calendar.

### How can I book it for my school/event?

To book the Green RIG and view the calendar, visit [www.greenrig.co.nz](http://www.greenrig.co.nz)

## Green RIG update

Since the last newsletter we have visited the National Feildays, in Hamilton, with our sponsor Genesis Energy. It was a bit damp, but great to see so many of our hardy Ruapehu people. We were also at the Sakura Festival at the International Pacific College and the Young Farmer of the Year competition held in Palmerston North this year. The Green RIG was also out in force during September in Conservation Week. Thank you to all of you who got involved in the many activities in the region such as planting and weeding. It may have been a small sacrifice but together we made a huge difference. A special thank you to Pahiatua School for hosting the Conservation week plant swap day. They were a tough bunch braving the cold over there.

## Green RIG calendar 2009/2010

Emergency & Armed Services Open Day – Manfield	31 October
Mai Farm Festival – Ashhurst	28 November
Organic River Festival – Levin	29 - 31 January
CD Field Days – Feilding	16 - 20 March
Kapiti Sustainable Home and Garden	27 - 28 March

## Newsletter competition

Our newsletter is taking the environmental education message to even more people in the Horizons Region, and we are looking for a catchy name. So think up the best name that you can and send it in to Helen Brown (Helen.Brown@horizons.govt.nz) and you could be in to win a great prize. Stay tuned for the new face of our newsletter in May 2010.