

THE BIG PICTURE

NEWS & INFORMATION FROM HAWKE'S BAY REGIONAL COUNCIL OCTOBER 09



MAIN PHOTO: Taradale Intermediate students learn about fresh water creatures.
INSET: Students listen intently to a cave safety drill at Opouahi.

ENVIRONMENT ADVENTURE WITH **ECOED**

"Definitely the most adventurous thing I have ever done, and now I know why we should care for our environment". This was just one reaction from a student as they emerged from a cave at Opouahi, inland of Tutira.

The Environment, Conservation and Outdoor Education Trust (ECOED) is the driving force behind a new trial programme to help Hawke's Bay kids learn about the environment, in the environment and take some positive action for the environment. Desks and computers were replaced with raincoats, canoes, tents and torches (and bike helmets!), as students from Taradale Intermediate explored their surroundings, with the blessing of the Department of Conservation.

ECOED's General Manager, Al Bramley, says the best time to teach students about the environment is while they are having fun. "If kids are in a canoe in the middle of the lake and you ask them who wants to go for a swim, most will be busting to do it. But before you let them go for it, you ask: Is the water clean enough? What makes it clean? You have a captive audience who really want to know if it's "safe" to stick their head under the water."

And later when they are back in the canoe, he says there are follow up questions: "Did you see any eels? What do you know about eels?" then "Any ideas on what you could do to ensure their survival?"

Students come away not only with a better understanding, but they start learning to conserve what they value. It's a key

element in ECOED's partnership with Hawke's Bay Regional Council.

"We trialed the programme this year and every Year 7 and 8 child, all 550 of them, had the opportunity to experience it," said Principal of Taradale Intermediate School, Dennis Coxon.

The students spent their time walking, caving, canoeing, assessing water quality, and watched a kiwi chick get a health check. Local rural fire officers showed how to manage fire risk, and the final morning was spent giving back to the environment - by removing an old farm fence, 630 metres of hazardous fence line.

And the response from the children? A collective thumbs up accompanied by huge smiles. "They were living in tents, cooking their meals...and using long-drop toilets - and they loved it."

The trial programme is now being evaluated by ECOED and the Department of Conservation. ECOED is grateful to its key supporters including Eastern and Central Community Trust, Endeavour Community Trust, Infinity Foundation, Landcorp Farming, BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust, Hawke's Bay Proteins and Hawke's Bay Regional Council, which have assisted in creating the Environment Award-winning Pan Pac Kiwi Crèche and the basic camping facilities.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:



SAFE BOATING CHECKLIST



A WARMER HOME WITH HEAT SMART



GREENER NORTH FACING PASTURES



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