

Tēnā koutou katoa

I hope you're settling back into the 'new normal' after the unprecedented disruptions to the beginning of the school year. If you're keen to get your students involved in outdoor education without travelling too far from school, this newsletter provides lots of avenues for exploration. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you'd like to discuss how any of the material covered in this SITE newsletter can work for you and your class (education@trc.govt.nz). Ash Muralidhar (Rotokare Scenic Reserve, educator@rotokare.org.nz) and I are both available for school visits to help students discover and enhance biodiversity close to home and school. Remember to book early to avoid disappointment.

Nominations for the 2020 Taranaki Regional Council Environmental Awards are now open. These awards are made in five categories including Environmental Action in Education. For more details see www.trc.govt.nz/award-categories-and-criteria.

Nāku noa nā,
Dr Emily Roberts








Backyards and school grounds collectively make up a substantial chunk of the total green space in our cities, towns and villages. They have huge potential to be bursting with native wildlife if suitable habitat is provided.

Backyard Biodiversity –Taiao Taiepa Ki Tua is an online video resource filmed and released during the lockdown period in April and May 2020. Co-produced by environmental educators Ash (Rotokare Scenic Reserve) and Emily (Taranaki Regional Council), this 11-episode series takes you on a journey to discover what lives in your backyard and what

you can do to enhance habitat for native wildlife. Each episode includes tasks to complete and a set of resources for further reading and exploration.

While the series focuses on gardens, all of the learning, activities and resources are applicable to green spaces around your school grounds and areas of nearby bush. For this reason, many schools around Taranaki and further afield have been using Backyard Biodiversity –Taiao Taiepa Ki Tua as a useful learning resource post-lock down.

You can access all of the videos and resources using any of the following platforms:

	BackyardBiodiversityTaranaki
	RotokareTrust
	trc.govt.nz/backyard-biodiversity
	An associated interactive online education resource developed by Donnaddigital: https://tinyurl.com/BackyardBiodiversityResources
	rotokare.org.nz/Education/Backyard-Biodiversity---Taiao-Taiepa-Ki-Tua





Backyard Biodiversity

Taiao Taiepa Ki Tua

All of this learning, exploring and action is relevant to school green spaces in addition to backyards. Visit: www.trc.govt.nz/backyard-biodiversity for links to relevant resources.



Bugs

Identify:

- Learn how to find and observe invertebrates.
- Use a pitfall trap and sheet-shaking to collect bugs.
- Identify bugs using online resources.
- Learn all about mantis/rō.
- Go on a night tour to discover the huge diversity of nocturnal creepy crawlies.

Improve habitat:

- Learn how to make a variety of different bug whares and wētā motels.



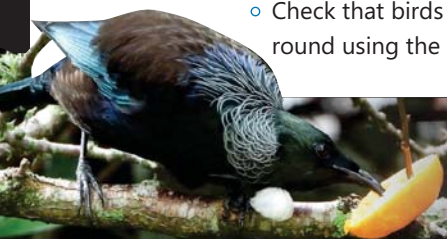
Birds

Identify:

- Discover eight of our most common native and introduced birds. Learn how to identify them by sight and call.
- Become an expert bird brain using online resources.

Improve habitat:

- Find out which native plants provide fruit, seed and nectar for native birds.
- Build good habitat for insects that birds feed on.
- Provide food suitable for native birds including fruit lollipops, fatty bird puddings and sugar water feeders.
 - Check that birds have a good supply of food all year round using the monthly calendar of plants for birds.





Lizards



Identify:

- Find out which lizards are most likely to live in Taranaki school grounds and gardens.
- Learn how to tell the difference between skinks and geckos.
- Become a lizard detective, identifying scats (droppings), sloughs (shed skin) and footprints.

Improve habitat:

- Provide a safe haven for lizards by building a lizard lounge.
- Find out which native plants lizards like to hide in and feed on.



Plants



Identify:

- Learn how to identify plants based on leaf shape, leaf arrangement, fruits and flowers.
- Use online resources to identify plant species and determine if your plant is native or introduced.

Improve habitat:

- Protect goody native seedlings and adult plants and remove baddy pest plants.



Invasive Predators

Identify:

- Become an expert pest detective, identifying footprints and poo clues.
- Monitor predators using a tracking tunnel.

Improve habitat:

- Learn how to trap predators like a pro using best practice, safe trapping protocol.
- Protect native bugs, birds, lizards and plants by removing introduced predators from your school grounds and backyard.



Schools getting on board

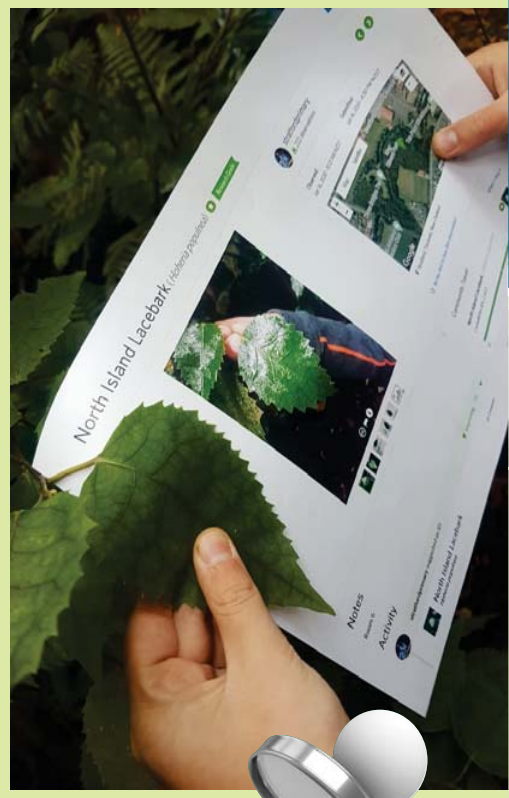
Massive thanks to all of the schools who've been in touch to let us know how much you've enjoyed the Backyard Biodiversity series, including Mimi, Huirangi, Tikorangi, Lepperton, Waitara East, Moturoa, Norfolk, Omata, Oakura and Coastal Taranaki.

For follow up work at your school relating to Backyard Biodiversity –Taiao Taiepa Ki Tua get in touch with:

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AND/OR

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Stratford Primary BioBlitz

Every class at Stratford Primary participated in the school BioBlitz at King Edward Park, Stratford last term. They learnt how to hunt for bugs and identify plants and birds using resources provided through Backyard Biodiversity –Taiao Taiepa Ki Tua. Check out the huge diversity of species that they found: inaturalist.nz/projects/bioblitz-stratford-primary. Everyone at the school is now excited about enhancing native biodiversity in their local area.

Bonkers about Birds

Inglewood Primary



Year 2/3 students at Inglewood Primary have become native bird experts. Last term they learnt how to identify birds by sight and call. They put their new found skills to great use by participating in the New Zealand Garden Bird Survey 2020. They also made a fruit lollipop to feed the hungry silvereyes. Watch Episode 7 of Backyard Biodiversity – Taiao Taiepa Ki Tua for tips on how to feed native birds, including how to make a fruit lollipop. This term they will be learning all about which native plants birds love, working towards making the school grounds a bird paradise.



Urenui School Pest Detectives

Year 5/6 students at Urenui School made their own tracking tunnels following instructions provided in Episode 9 of Backyard Biodiversity –Taiao Taiepa Ki Tua. They found heaps of mouse, rat and hedgehog footprints after deploying their tracking tunnels along the Noel Nairn Walkway behind the school. I'll be working with the class to trap these introduced predators during Term 3. Get in touch if you're keen to get your school involved with Towards Predator Free Taranaki.



For assistance or information on environmental education contact:
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