

ENVIRO ACTION

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY NEWSLETTER

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

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Pest citizen science programme engages students



"It's good to make the rats and stoats the endangered ones", commented one student after taking part in the pilot "CatchIT Schools" project last year. This innovative programme, run by the Rodney based Forest Bridge Trust in conjunction with the University of Auckland, was successfully trialled in three rural primary schools last year.

Year 5-8 students became hands-on trappers, working through a series of classroom activities and taking home

tools like tracking cards and mouse/rat traps. With parental support they were given larger traps to catch mustelids and possums. They recorded their data as they went, with 230 pests caught in just three weeks.

Interactive software then allowed the students to turn their data into bar graphs which they interpreted to answer their "scientist hat" questions; "What lures in rats best?", "Where do possums hang out?" and of course, "Who caught the most critters?"

Teachers said that it was the authentic learning context that drew the children in, especially the meaningful use of statistics. Nearly all the students said they want to continue to trap and plans are to link them and their families up to a cloud based data system.

The programme has now received support from Auckland Council and the government's 'Unlocking Curious Minds' fund and will be rolled out to four more schools in Rodney this year.

Visit theforestbridgetrust.org.nz for more information on the CatchIT programme in Rodney.

Email: biosecurity@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz to learn about 'Pest Detectives' a pest monitoring programme available to schools in the Auckland region.