

Waikato ENVIROSCHOOLS

Raumati 2026 edition

He mihi

Welcome to the Waikato Enviroschools newsletter. We hope it finds you safe and well after a very turbulent start to 2026.

We send aroha and mihi to communities affected after the tragic flooding and slips, and hope your Term 1 has otherwise gotten off to a good start.

This pānui is packed with events and opportunities for teachers and students alike, and it gives us the chance to share inspiring stories from across our network.

We'd like to extend a warm welcome to schools that recently joined the Enviroschools network! Nau mai, haere mai Springdale School and Kiwitahi School – we are so glad you've joined us!

We'd also like to mihi each Enviroschools lead teacher: whether you're new to the role this term or you've been here a while, thank you for your work to support your school's sustainability journey.

Our facilitators are really looking forward to working with you in 2026.

The **Enviroschools Fund** opens again this term, with applications welcome between 2 March and 13 April. The fund is available to help schools set up or grow sustainability kaupapa in their grounds or within their community. If you have a project in mind, please work with your facilitator to discuss your ideas and work through the application.

We hope this newsletter offers an engaging read. Please feel free to forward it on to any interested colleagues.

Ngā mihi,

The Enviroschools team



Tā mātou mahi | What we do

Enviroschools is a nationwide programme supported by the Toimata Foundation and a large network of regional partners like us here at Waikato Regional Council.

It helps support early childhood centres and schools on their long-term sustainability journeys, teaching a generation of young people to value and nurture their natural environment.

Our vision is to create a healthy, peaceful, sustainable world through learning and taking action together.



14 regional partners

222 Enviroschools

50 ECE centres

172 schools

55,500 tamariki and students

**15% of early childhood
61% of primary and intermediate**

**58% of secondary
67% of composite and other**

3 collaborators



Waikato Enviroschools acknowledge our funding partners. Their ongoing input and funding is essential to the success of the Enviroschool programme throughout our region.



Ngā kaupapa e haere ake nei | Opportunities

The events and opportunities below are open to all Enviroschools across the Waikato region. Additional local events and opportunities will also be available from time to time. Your facilitator will be in touch about these directly.

For students

Māra Kai Challenge 2026

Wednesday, 13 May, Rototuna Junior High School

If your school is joining us this year, it's time to get growing and cooking this Term for the Term 2 Māra Kai Challenge! The event is designed to empower and inspire students to grow kai in their school māra, and then create delicious meals to eat, share and enjoy!

To attend our event in May, [register here](#).

You can also contact your facilitator for support with your own in-school challenge.

Enviro-leaders Summit (formerly Climate Summit)

29 April, Ō-Tāwhao Marae, Te Awamutu College;

30 April, Maungatautari Sanctuary Mountain; day three TBC

This year's summit runs over three days, with an optional overnight noho at Ō-Tāwhao Marae between days one and two. Each day stands alone, but we encourage students to attend all three if possible.

The event will support secondary students to explore local and global environmental issues, develop leadership skills, connect with like-minded peers and plan meaningful action for their schools and communities.

Day 1 – The Big Picture

29 April — Ō-Tāwhao Marae, Te Awamutu College

Day 2 – Building Community and Creating Momentum

30 April — Maungatautari Sanctuary Mountain

Day 3 – Leadership in Action

Term 3 — Date and location to be confirmed

[Register here](#).

For teachers

Enviroschools 101 2026

Expressions of interest for online PLD (2x 1.5hr sessions)

Enviroschools 101 is a two-part online introductory course designed to support schools new to the Enviroschools programme, re-engaging, or those that have a new lead teacher.

The course explores the Enviroschools kaupapa and offers practical guidance on getting started.

We're looking to find dates that work for as many teachers as possible for this annual professional learning and development series.

If you're interested in attending, please use the expression of Interest form to let us know when might work for you. We'll be in touch as soon as possible to confirm dates.

[Express your interest](#).



Teacher Re-energise: Nature Connection

18 March, 9am – 3pm, Forest Lake School, 59 Storey Ave, Hamilton

(Please note the change in venue from Pokuru School)

Join us for an inspiring and immersive day of professional development that will help you explore and deepen your connection with nature to better support all learners.

We will be:

- spending as much of the day as possible outside – slowing down, observing, connecting, sharing, being inspired and being curious
- exploring various contexts for learning and connecting with the curriculum
- learning about the Forest Lake School Kura Taiao programme.

[Register here](#).



Secondary Teacher PLD

1 April 2026 (plus optional overnight, 31 March)

Waikato Enviroschools, with the support of Toimata, are excited to offer this engaging Secondary Teacher PLD.

Come spend the day (and night if you'd like) immersed in some hands-on activities in the Maungatautari ngahere.

Learn about the resources we have to support you, deepening your understanding of Te Ao Māori and connecting with other teachers tackling environmental learning.

Teacher release funding is available thanks to the Toimata Foundation.

[Register here.](#)

Resource kits and programmes

We have some awesome kits that can be borrowed and used to support learning outside the classroom, and some fantastic experiences that can be arranged.

- Waste Audit Kit
- Stream Study Kit
- Freshwater Detective Kit
- Kauri Protection Experience
- Freshwater Biosecurity Programme
- Marine Biosecurity Resource
- Nature Connection Kit

Get in touch with your facilitator to book any of these for 2026, or to request a kit, complete the [booking form](#).



A message from our friends at Restore Native

Restore Native is proud to support local schools through our Trees for Schools initiative. Over the years, we've donated more than 5,000 native plants to schools and community groups across the Waikato and Bay of Plenty, helping students connect with nature and take part in hands-on restoration projects.

Eligible schools can apply to receive free native plant packs for planting projects on their school grounds. We offer two pack options:

Standard grade native plants

- 100 plants total
- supplied as four trays of 25
- schools can choose up to four different native species (one tray per species).

Large grade native plants

- 50 plants total
- supplied as five trays of 10
- schools can choose up to five different native species (one tray per species).

Once you've registered your school's interest, our team will be in touch to assess the planting site and help select suitable, locally appropriate species.

To ensure plants are ready for the winter planting season, we ask schools to register their interest by the end of Term 1.

[Request here.](#)

A message from our friends at Rangimārie Bush Centre

At [Rangimārie Bush Centre](#), we know the cost of school camps can be a barrier. That's why we're offering, discounted tree-planting camps.

If you book at 3-4-day camp with us between the start of May and end of August this year, we will give you one day for free!

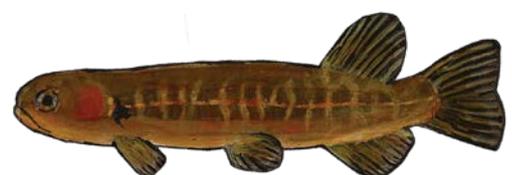
Two half-day sessions will be spent planting native trees (supplied by us).

We will also teach the children to whittle, so they can carve a support pole for a tree that they adopt – which they can come back and visit in the future!

And, of course, we leave time for the normal bush exploration, swimming, team games etc.

Not sure, but would like to visit and find out more? We are holding a free open weekend for teachers, 28-29 March.

[Register here.](#)



Education for Sustainability

The calendar is designed to highlight the many wonderful environmental events and annual celebrations that take place over a year in Aotearoa and around the world. These dates are opportunities for tamariki, ākonga and whānau to connect and engage with the local taiao/environment, and the community. Ākonga can build an understanding of inter-relatedness/whanaungatanga between humans and the natural world and the consequences and effects of these interactions, so that they can make informed decisions about contributing to the regeneration and hauora/ health of social, cultural, and ecological systems. Education for Sustainability covers all learning areas and kaiako/teachers are encouraged to use a cross-curricular approach when using this calendar.

| Event/Week/Month | DATES | WEBSITES/VIDEOS/LESSON IDEAS/TEACHING MATERIALS |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| World Wetlands Day | 2 February All February | www.wetlandtrust.org.nz/what-we-do/resources www.doc.govt.nz/nature/habitats/wetlands www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/3001-repo-wetlands-a-context-4-learning https://matukulink.org.nz/education |
| BikeReady Month | All February | https://www.bikeready.govt.nz/schools www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlugLE4TaLA www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlugLE4TaLA |
| Whio Awareness Month | All February | https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/conservation-education/resources/whio-forever/ www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/2416-whio-threats-and-conservation |
| World Wildlife Day | 3 March | www.twinkl.co.nz/event/world-wildlife-day-2026 www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2KykATa_QU www.teachstarter.com/gb/teaching-resource-collection/world-wildlife-day |
| Seaweeek | 1-9 March | www.twinkl.co.nz/event/seaweeek-2026 www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/seaweeek-resources |
| International Forestry Day | 21 March | www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/33391-ExploringNZForestry www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/conservation-education/resources/experiencing-native-trees-in-your-green-space |
| World Water Week | 22 March | www.smartwater.org.nz/water-education/new-story-of-water www.teacherplanet.com/content/water-day www.twinkl.co.nz/event/world-water-day-2026 |
| Earth Day | 22- April | www.twinkl.co.nz/event/earth-day-2026 www.earthday.org/education-resource-library www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsAJ2FMIapE |
| Conservation Week | | Now 20-26 April. Visit www.doc.govt.nz & search for Conservation Week |
| Save the Frogs Day | 28- April | www.nzfrogs.org https://teara.govt.nz/en/frogs |
| World Migratory Bird Day | | www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/birds/birds-a-z/mirandas-migratory-birds https://www.twinkl.co.nz/event/world-migratory-bird-day-nz-2026 |
| | 28 April | https://teara.govt.nz/en/bird-migration www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CqBfJN4qts |
| International Biodiversity Day | 11 May | www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/1153-introducing-biodiversity www.doc.govt.nz/biodiversity www.doc.govt.nz/nature/biodiversity/biodiversity-new-zealand-resources www.facebook.com/FarmNatCons/videos/911543265968277/?extid=SEO |
| | 22 May | www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDG8xxR83w0 www.learnz.org.nz/backyardbiodiversity213 |
| World Environment Day | | www.twinkl.co.nz/event/world-environment-day-2026 www.stem.org.uk/resources/collection/425595/world-environment-day |

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Waikato
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera ā Rohe o Waikato

Supporting environmental learning through EnviroSchools and a wide range of other popular programmes.

Search for 'Education' at:
www.waikatoregion.govt.nz

EnviroSchools

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enviroschools.org.nz

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New Zealand **FOOD SAFETY SCIENCE & RESEARCH CENTRE**

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www.nzfssrc.org.nz

Enviroschools website login

As the new school year begins you might have different staff members keen to access Enviroschools resources. With this in mind, here's a reminder of how to do so.

To access the Enviroschools 'Team Area' and some of the content on our Padlet, you'll need to [register here](#).

Multiple staff members from a school can register. Each person will just need a unique email address and username.

You will need to have access to your email and know your school/centre's MoE number to complete the registration process. (You can find your MoE number on the Education Counts website educationcounts.govt.nz).

If, during the registration process, the promised email doesn't arrive, please check your junk mail.

Once registered, you'll be able to login to the Team Area using the email or username you chose, and the password you created.



Opportunities from NZAEE

For those that missed the NZAEE "Sustainability Education in School" and "Analysing the draft curriculum" webinars earlier this year, the recordings have now been published.

[Watch recordings.](#)

Growing Spaces of Belonging

25 March, 3.30-4.30pm

Katie Earle will share research insights and practical reflections for those exploring land-based pathways in their local school setting.

The session is aimed at educators working in Aotearoa primary and intermediate schools but will also be relevant for environmental educators, nature educators and others working to support the health and wellbeing of young people.

[Register here.](#)

Integrating Education for Sustainability within Senior Secondary Programmes

12 March, 4-5pm

Highlighting Aotearoa case studies and resources. Save the date for now and we will confirm the content based on our feedback from secondary teachers, and also send out the details to join the session.

[Register here.](#)

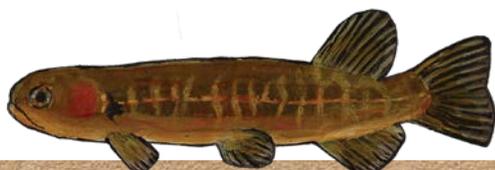
He twhiri | Quick sustainability tips

Have you heard about crop swaps?

They're community events where people exchange surplus home-grown produce – usually fruit, vegetables, herbs, seedlings, seeds or homemade goods (like jams or preserves).

No money changes hands. It's all about sharing.

Check out [Crop Swap Aotearoa](#) for great advice for setting one up.



Ngā hua | Our stories

The Water Detectives of Reporoa

Reported by Nic Roderick (Facilitator, Taupō and South Waikato)

The Year 2 and 3 students at St Patrick's School in Taupō became young scientists for a day during a visit to a man-made wetland and stream in Reporoa – a place where design and nature work together to clean water.

Using a natural spring and shaped into four linked ponds, the wetland filters water as it moves through the farm, allowing cleaner water to flow out the other side. The students quickly connected this to their classroom learning about filters, wetlands and biodiversity.

Their visit also wove in Te Ao Māori. They learned about Tangaroa and Hinemoana, the atua associated with repo (wetlands), and how they could act as kaitiaki themselves. Many proudly linked this to the native planting they'd already helped with in Brentwood Gully.

With support from Kids Greening Taupō, the day became a lively nature hunt. The students discovered a giant worm, spittle beetles, green chafer beetles, slaters and even a wētā. Frogs croaked in the background, paradise ducks glided across the pond, and some plants felt so textured they described them as “Velcro-y.”



After lunch, beneath the tall trees at Wairakei Pastoral dairy company office, the students tested the stream's health. They floated leaf and stick “boats”, measured water clarity and temperature, studied macroinvertebrates and observed the surrounding environment. Pulling all the clues together, they decided — with clear satisfaction — that the stream was in “good” condition.

Back at school, the learning continued. Students built their own water filters, chose a wetland invertebrate to study in depth, and explored how each creature survives in its habitat and fits into a food chain. As a class, they also investigated the life cycle of the dragonfly — another reminder of how healthy wetlands support fascinating and valuable ecosystems.



Where kauri stand tall, curiosity takes root

Reported by Rachael Cheeseman (Facilitator, Thames Coromandel and Waikato)

A class of nature-loving adventurers from Waitakaruru School set out on a kauri-themed field trip organised by their lead Enviroschools teacher, Gina Nicholson, with support from Enviroschools facilitator, Rachael Cheeseman.

The day began at the DOC Kauaeranga Visitor Centre, where the students took the small but vitally important first step of cleaning their boots to avoid spreading kauri dieback.



Then, gathered around the towering kauri, the students used 'measuring the giants' ropes to map out the enormous root zone hidden beneath the ground. Soon, the importance of those freshly cleaned boots made much more sense.

In the cool shade of the kauri, the group dove into a lively species card memory challenge.



The tuatara (lizard) species card sparked much discussion and curiosity among the group.

The adventure continued at the John William Hall Arboretum in Thames. After lunch, students explored the grounds, tracking down kauri and discovering how boardwalks protect delicate roots from trampling feet.

Other activities included press drawings of native leaves and a quick, energetic game of Kauri Species Ecosystem Jenga before the return drive to school.

Back in the classroom, the experience shifted from the real forest to digital forest, with students and teachers diving into a fun-filled, kauri-themed VR journey.

The following day, the learning continued with a kauri Kahoot quiz and a student-led inquiry into the terrific tuatara that captured imaginations under the shade of giants.



Crosspollination of ideas sows seeds of inspiration

Reported by Greta Dromgool (Facilitator, Matamata-Piako)

This term, Tatuani School hosted an inspiring Enviroschools tour, welcoming students and teachers from Tauwhare, Mātangi and Waikato Montessori Schools.

The tour offered the chance for schools on similar sustainability journeys to exchange ideas, celebrate progress and strengthen connections.

Tatuani student enviroleaders proudly began the tour by guiding guests through their projects.



From Trees for Survival and compost systems to thriving gardens and their carefully nurtured ngahere, each area showcased thoughtful action and environmental care.

The students answered questions confidently – even the tricky ones – and their depth of understanding was impressive.

At the end of the tour, the visiting rangatahi reflected on what inspired them. Many admired the hard work behind Tatuani's projects, while others left excited about ideas they hoped to recreate at their own schools.



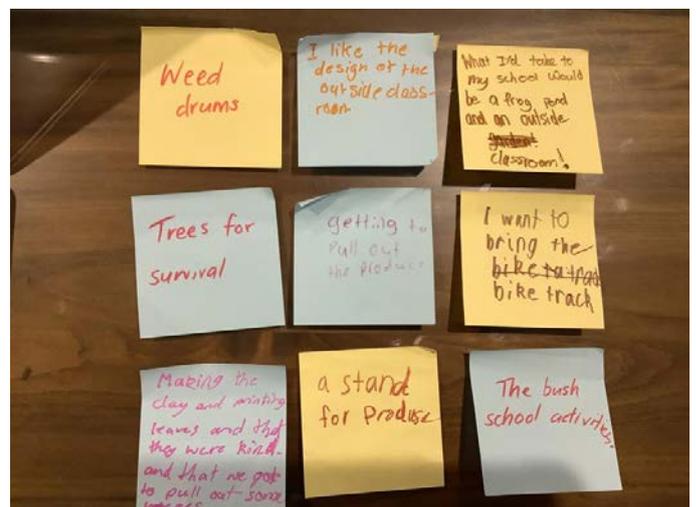
“Let’s make a big bug hotel like Tatuani had!” said one student, reflecting on what they wanted to implement from the tour.

The crosspollination of ideas continued as the group continued through the other schools. Each offered something unique.

Tauwhare shared their transformed vegetable gardens, while Mātangi showcased an outdoor classroom and a rich range of naturebased activities.

Although each Enviroschools journey looked different, all shared a commitment to empowering students to care for the environment.

Ngā mihi nui to the amazing staff who made it possible and to the students who did a magnificent job of showcasing their schools. They should feel very proud of the work they do and their ability to share their Enviroschools journey with others.



A window into the repurposing and rethinking mindset

Reported by Cami Carty-Melis (Facilitator, Rotorua Lakes, Waitomo and Matamata-Piako)

This story follows the continued mahi from Centennial Park, following their [case study in 2023](#).

Centennial Park School has spent several years exploring creative reuse, resource repurposing and circular economy.

They began by refurbishing their junior playground, reusing much of the original equipment and integrating the rest into their gardens — including a standout planter box made from a repurposed wiggly slide.



They later transformed an old pool-side storage shed into a purpose-built growing unit, built almost entirely from recycled materials. But their zero-waste journey didn't end there.

It's been said that when two people look out of the same window, one will see mud, and the other, stars.

When Principal Kevin looked out his window, he saw a grove of trees where students loved to play — and he saw potential!

The ivy-covered branches created a sheltered, magical space where children could feel hidden while still allowing enough visibility for safe supervision.

The loose rocks and branches were perfect for building shelters, ramps and other play structures. And the site became the seed of a larger vision.



In 2026, the school plans to reinvent the senior playground as a nature-connection adventure space, while keeping its much-loved features.

The area is shaded by a magnificent tōtara, and students will help design a space that celebrates and protects this taonga.

The plan is to reuse selected playground pieces alongside new plantings, pathways and movable natural elements.

Although trees will take time to mature, starting now means current students can help shape a legacy.

Facilitator Cami will be visiting at the end of Term 1 with one of the new Waikato Enviroschools nature-connection kits – including ropes, bungees, tarps, slacklines and other gear for active outdoor play.

Students will have the chance to experiment, collaborate and test ideas, and may also be able to repurpose materials from the soon-to-be-decommissioned senior playground.

The hands-on exploration will help the school reimagine and map out what their redesigned senior play space could become.



He rauemi | Resource spotlight

If you're planning to grow food this term – and perhaps thinking about joining this year's Māra Kai Challenge – the Living Landscapes theme area is a fantastic resource to revisit, or explore for the first time! It's full of fun activities and ideas to help you create a thriving school garden while connecting to nature and sustainable food systems.

We also have some [great resources on growing kūmara](#), as well as this super [Padlet](#) by Facilitator Alex, which offers lots of practical tips and inspiration. Kūmara hold deep [cultural significance in the Waikato region](#). [Traditions around kūmara growing, storage and sharing](#) also reflect values of kaitiakitanga, whanaungatanga and manaakitanga, making exploration of this area a powerful learning opportunity for students.



Ngā ringa hāpai | Enviroschools Waikato facilitation team

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Find out more

enviroschools.org.nz

Check out the great selection of national news, resources and ideas in the team area. To register, head to 'team area login' and click 'register'. Please note that you will need your school/centre's MoE number to complete the registration process. Visit educationcounts.govt.nz.

Waikato Enviroschools Facebook

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Waikato Enviroschools acknowledge our funding partners. Their ongoing input and funding is essential to the success of the Enviroschool programme throughout our region.

