

Saving the Pateke

Classroom conservation activities from:

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Introduction

- Revise the main ideas from the November 2004 starters & strategies, 'I'm in real danger – you can help?' which introduced our students to the plight of the Pateke (Brown Teal) and the concept of 'crimes against nature' which humans have (often unwittingly) committed. These have decimated our native bird populations and in many cases – driven them to extinction.
- Remind the class that there are less than 1000 of these unique birds left in New Zealand and a special group set up by the Department of Conservation (the Brown Teal Recovery Group) is trying to save them from extinction.
- Tell students that if more and more people learn about this special bird, how it lives, where it lives and what we can do to help it survive – then we will have a real chance of saving it from extinction.

Activity One – Understanding Conservation Vocabulary

- Introduce the idea that sports, hobbies, interests, peoples' jobs or even subjects we learn at school have special words that are used when we talk about them. As an example, ask the class if they know what a **puck** is? Point out that unless they know about ice hockey they are not likely to know.
- What do the students think that being a conservationist means? Discuss as a class and try to write a definition. Tell student that before they continue research on the Pateke they should explore and understand some of the words that the conservationists trying to save the Brown Teal use.
- Using dictionaries and through class discussion discuss the meanings of the following words and phrases:

- archipelago	- mammals
- reptiles	- niches
- evolved	- ecological opportunities
- an agile duck	- preyed
- habitat destruction	- introduced predators
- wreaked havoc	- remnant populations

Activity Two – Revising Ideas – Web Research

www.brownteal.com > Enter site > Click on Kids Track > Click on Endangered. Print out, photocopy and distribute.

- As a shared reading experience discuss the following ideas with the students:
 - the differences between New Zealand and other land masses.
 - the advantages the Brown Teal because New Zealand was land mammal free (apart from bats)

Curriculum Strands:

Science: Making Sense of the Living World
 Social Studies: Place and Environment
 English: Visual, Written

Learning Intentions:

- Being able to understand and use some specialist environmental words and phrases.
- Understanding that birds play an important part in creating and maintaining healthy environments.
- Using interactive web-based technology to investigate the effects of introduced predators on our bird life and forests.
- Encouraging students to become involved in recovery efforts using web-based technology.

- identify the reasons why Maori found Brown Teal an attractive option to hunt
- speculate on the reasons that Maori brought the dog and rat to New Zealand and the consequences for the Brown Teal
- identify the consequences for the Brown Teal after European settlers arrived. List the reasons for the accelerated decline of the Brown Teal – both predator and environmental reasons.

Activity Three – Consequences of Predators

- Remind students that it is not just the Brown Teal but all of our bird life that is threatened by predators. Do students realise that cats and dogs kill thousands of birds every year?
- In groups have students play the 'Pests' Interactive Game at: www.brownteal.com/site/pestsinteractive.php and report back on the magnitude of the problem. Who is the No.1 enemy? Why did we introduce this predator?





Taking Positive Action

www.brownteal.com

Activity Four: Why We Need Birds!

- Have groups brainstorm and list why they think birds are such an important part of our natural environment. What important tasks do they perform? **eg**
 - *keep down the insect population*
 - *pollinate trees and shrubs in our forests and gardens*
- Do the students know that an environment with lots of birds is a healthy environment?
- Putting the environmental benefits aside, have students start considering and discussing what it would be like to live in a country or a district that didn't have any birds. What would it be like? What would they miss about it? Write a short paragraph supporting our birdlife (Some students may have heard of the Island of Guam where the only birds left are in zoo aviaries as they have all been eaten by the Brown Tree Snake – an unintended predator introduced during WW2).
- Tell students that the Brown Teal Recovery Group who are trying to save the Pateke, not only have made a careful study of the places where Brown Teal like to live (habitat) but also by studying them, have come to realise that the Brown Teal is such a special (unique) bird that our environment is a richer place by having them as part of it.

Activity Five: A Very Special Bird

- The student task is to find out what makes the Brown Teal such a special bird and why we must try to save it. Before research begins, tell students it is the behaviour of the Pateke that makes it so different from other dabbling ducks.
- Go to www.brownteal.com > Click on Brown Teal Facts. Print out and distribute to groups. Students can carry out research tasks, individually, in groups or as a shared class discussion experience. Complete the following:
 - *what extraordinary thing do Brown Teal do during the day*
 - *for what reason is it thought that Brown Teal largely come out at night (are mainly nocturnal)?*
 - *if a mated pair of Brown Teal are living in a pond that is free of predators, how does their behaviour change?*
 - *what do Brown Teal spend most of their nights doing?*
 - *find the meaning or the word gregarious and find how the behaviour of the brown teal shows this*
 - *what happens to the Brown Teal if these roost sites have been changed by man or nature?*
 - *whereabouts do Brown Teal build their nests?*
 - *find facts to show that Brown Teal are better parents than all other species of dabbling duck*
 - *what rather vicious behaviour do mating Brown Teal have towards other Pateke and even other species of duck ?*
 - *when does their behaviour return to normal?*

Activity Six: Create A Brown Teal Website

- Tell students that the Brown Teal Recovery Group has come up with 4 main ways to help save this precious bird. From their study of the Brown Teal to date, can they think of what these ways could be? Brainstorm and list, **eg**
 - *controlling the predators*
 - *restoring and/or creating new habitats for them to live in*
 - *releasing breeding pairs into restored and new habitats*
 - *ensuring everyone is aware of the danger of extinction of the Pateke and why it is threatened*
- Tell students that the Recovery Group want to get out these messages to as many people as possible and that we can all help by reporting any sightings of the Pateke to the nearest DOC office. Introduce the idea that if we are going to encourage people to look for and report sightings, we must first know exactly what we are looking for!
- The student group task is to contribute to create a special Brown Teal page/s on the school or class website that:
 - *identifies the plight of the Pateke and the reasons for less than 1000 birds being left in the wild*
 - *clearly describes the physical appearance of the Pateke including distinguishing features such as size, plumage, colours of beak and feet, eyes ... (include pictures)*
 - *shapes of nests and where they are likely to be found*
 - *where we would be most likely to find the Pateke, eg describe the habitats in which it most likes to live*
 - *identifying any possible habitats in your district that could be suitable for the Pateke*
 - *asks people to contact Kevin and the Brown Teal Recovery Programme team (or local DOC) if there is a sighting.*
- Use the following websites to locate information:
www.wildnz.org/?p=pateke
www.brownteal.com
- To motivate students, invite a DOC representative to talk to the class about the Brown Teal Recovery programme.

ATTENTION ALL TEACHERS

www.brownteal.com invites teachers to email the student's completed web page address (URL) to:
kevin@brownteal.com

Kevin will evaluate the student's work and will place the website address on the highly regarded [brownteal.com](http://www.brownteal.com) website under the brown teal links section so your student web page will have a world-wide audience and become part of the growing network of dedicated conservationists who are dedicated to saving the brown teal.