



JULY 25 - JUNE 26

Enviroschools Newsletter



Puketoi to the Pacific
CATCHMENT COLLECTIVE INC.



**PONGAROA
SCHOOL**
Kei te kaharawa ahau

Welcome

Over the past year, Pongaroa School students have embraced a wide range of opportunities to learn, explore and care for their environment. From Green Week challenges and growing food to exploring the school bush, monitoring pests and discovering native wildlife, it has been a year full of hands-on learning and new experiences.

TERM 3 | *Jul – Sept 2025*

- Started the term with new gardening equipment, fruit trees and planting projects.
- Experimented with different soils and growing materials to compare plant growth.
- Celebrated the winners of the school trapping competition.
- Used Horizons trapping equipment to investigate pests around the school.
- Took part in a week of environmental challenges during Green Week.
- Explored planting, irrigation, wildlife and caring for the environment.
- Secured \$10,000 in funding to develop the school bush as a learning space.
- Visited the bush to share ideas and create a vision for the project.

TERM 4 | *Oct – Dec 2025*

- Prepared seeds, plants and vegetables for the Pongaroa Craft Market.
- Investigated water flow through a hands-on gutter challenge.
- Compared bottled, tank, village and pool water through a blind water-tasting activity.
- Explored fossils through classroom learning and a fossil hunt.
- Raised funds for a rotating compost bin with a school dress-up day.
- Continued developing the school bush through maintenance activities.
- Teachers strengthened their Enviroschools knowledge through a learning session.
- Secured funding for a new garden shed to support future projects.

TERM 1 | *Jan– Apr 2026*

- Began bringing the \$10,000 school bush project to life.
- Developed plans for signage, fencing and weed control in the bush.
- Formed a dedicated student Enviro Team.
- Explored the school bush and gardens through regular hands-on learning.
- Visited Akitio Beach for a special environmental learning day.
- Set chew cards and tracking tunnels to investigate pests in the bush.
- Created personal Enviroschools learning books to record discoveries throughout the year.

TERM 2 | *Apr – Jul 2026*

- Continued hands-on learning with the student Enviro Team.
- Explored pepeha, Māori atua and their connections with the bush and gardens.
- Used plays and activities to bring environmental learning to life.
- Built a compost bin and grew seedlings for the school garden.
- Learnt about Īnanga and took part in the Wai Connections colouring competition.
- Monitored pests using chew cards and traps, recording an early catch.
- Welcomed Alastair Cole and his native skinks and geckos.

TERM 3 July – September 2025

Term 3 was packed with hands-on environmental learning at Pongaroa School. Students got stuck into gardening, pest monitoring and Green Week, while an exciting new project began to take shape for the school bush.

Getting growing

The term began with new spades, shovels and fruit trees to support learning in the school gardens. Students experimented with different soils and growing materials, including pea straw and dags, so they could observe how different conditions affected plant growth.

Trapping and pest monitoring

Students celebrated the winners of their trapping competition and continued learning about pest control. A Horizons trapping kit was set up in the paddock behind the school, giving students another opportunity to investigate what pests were present in their local environment.

A big step forward for the school bush

An exciting milestone came when Pongaroa School secured \$10,000 in funding for a new bush project. Students visited the bush to talk about their vision for the space and what they wanted to learn from it, laying the foundations for the project to begin in 2026.



GREEN WEEK 2025

A Week of Learning, Action & Fun

Green Week was a huge highlight for Pongaroa School, with students taking part in a week packed with hands-on environmental challenges. Each day brought something different, encouraging students to explore, create and think about the ways they can care for their environment.

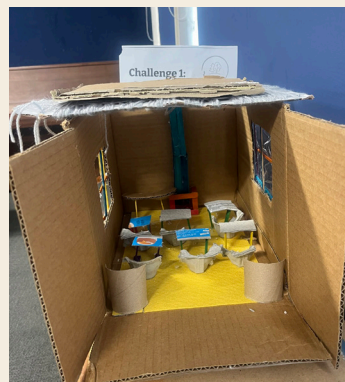
Feeding Our Native Birds

Students enjoyed making pinecone bird feeders with Nicole Read, creating tasty treats for the resident tūī while learning about the native birds that share their school environment.



The Sustainable Classroom

Working together in their middle and senior groups, students had just 90 minutes to plan and create their own sustainable classroom to meet a design brief. The challenge encouraged teamwork, creativity and plenty of thoughtful ideas about what a more sustainable learning space could look like.



GREEN WEEK 2025

Water Wise

A hands-on irrigation challenge had students designing and creating their own systems using different materials. It was a fun way to explore how water moves and how we can use this precious resource wisely.

Making an Environmental Promise

Students thought about the actions they could take to care for the environment, creating environmental promise trees and posters to share their ideas and encourage others to make a difference.



Celebrating a Fantastic Week

Green Week brought the whole school together through practical learning, creativity and plenty of time outdoors. The enthusiasm from students, teachers and whānau made it a memorable week and a fantastic celebration of Pongaroa School's growing Enviroschools journey.

Planting for the Future

Students got their hands dirty planting native and fruit trees, helping create greener spaces while learning about the important role plants play in supporting healthy environments.



TERM 4 October – December 2025

Term 4 was filled with curiosity, creativity and hands-on learning. From experimenting with water and discovering fossils to growing plants and preparing for the community market, students continued to explore their environment while building practical skills and having plenty of fun along the way.

Preparing for the Pongaroa Craft Market

Students helped prepare for the school's stand at the Pongaroa Craft Market, packaging seeds and working with plants and vegetables. It was a great opportunity to put their gardening knowledge into practice and share what they had grown with the wider community.

Exploring Water Flow

Students put their problem-solving skills to the test with a hands-on water and gutter challenge. By experimenting with how water travelled through their creations, they explored water flow in a fun and practical way.

Putting Water to the Taste Test

Could students tell where their water came from just by tasting it? A blind taste test compared bottled, tank, village and pool water, sparking plenty of discussion and helping students think more closely about the water they use every day.

Digging Into the Past

Students turned into budding palaeontologists as they learnt about fossils before heading to the sandpit for their own fossil and dinosaur hunt. It was a fun way to encourage observation, curiosity and discovery.

Growing Our Enviroschools Space

Behind the scenes, the school continued investing in its environmental learning spaces. Funding was successfully secured for a new garden shed, creating valuable storage and support for future gardening and Enviroschools projects.

TERM 1 January – April 2026

Term 1 brought plenty of opportunities for students to take their Enviroschools learning beyond the classroom. From summer gnome adventures and exploring the coast during Sea Week to developing the school bush and monitoring pests, students continued building their connection with the environment through hands-on learning.

Gnomes on Tour

The Enviroschools learning continued over the summer holidays, with students invited to take their gnomes along on their adventures and capture photos of where they went.

Back at school, students shared their gnomes' adventures and celebrated their efforts, with prizes presented by Enviroschools coordinator Nicole Read.



Bringing the Bush Project to Life

Following the successful \$10,000 funding secured for the school bush project, planning continued around developing the area as an environmental learning space. Work focused on signage, fencing and weed control, laying the foundations for students to learn more about and care for the bush throughout the year.



Monitoring Pests in the Bush

Students began investigating what pests were living in the school bush by putting out chew cards and Traka tunnels. The hands-on activity introduced students to pest monitoring and helped them understand why managing introduced predators is important for protecting native plants and wildlife.



Creating Our Enviroschools Learning Books

Students decorated their own Enviroschools learning books to record their discoveries, ideas and learning throughout the year. The books also provided a way to continue environmental learning on wet days when getting out into the bush or garden wasn't possible.



TERM 1 January – April 2026

Sea Week at Akitio Beach

As part of Sea Week, Pongaroa School students headed to Akitio Beach for a day of coastal discovery. Hosted by Horizons Regional Council with support from PPCC and EnviroSchools, students explored everything from driftwood ecology to how dolphins communicate.

Coastal bingo added plenty of fun to the day, while encouraging students to look closely at the plants, animals and features that make up the coastal environment.



TERM 2 April – June 2026

Term 2 saw students deepen their environmental learning through wildlife encounters, pest control, gardening and exploration of te ao Māori. From meeting native skinks and geckos to protecting the local bush, students put their growing knowledge into action and continued developing their role as kaitiaki.

Our Enviro Team in Action

Pongaroa School's Enviro Team met every Monday lunchtime to work on practical projects around the school. Students put together a compost bin, prepared items for their bush walk and planted seedlings they had carefully nurtured from seed.

These regular sessions gave students the opportunity to take ownership of environmental projects and turn their learning into practical action.

Connecting Our Learning

Students began filling their Enviroschools enquiry books with learning about their pepeha, Māori atua and the connections between the atua, the school bush and gardens. They also brought some of their learning to life through plays and activities.

The enquiry books became a place to record discoveries, explore ideas and connect environmental learning with te ao Māori.

Discovering Īnanga

Students explored the world of Īnanga, learning more about these native freshwater fish and their environment. They also took part in an Īnanga colouring competition connected with DOC, Mountains to Sea Conservation Trust, Whitebait Connection and the National Īnanga Spawning Programme.

This learning came with something to celebrate too, with Maddie Bush winning her age category in the Wai Connections colouring competition.

Protecting Our Bush from Pests

Students took their pest monitoring to the next level, working alongside Owahanga Catchment Group leader Mark Wheeler to help install new traps in the Pongaroa Village bush walk.

Their earlier monitoring with chew cards had shown high numbers of possums in the area, and the new traps quickly made an impact. Within the first week, three possums and one rat had been caught, demonstrating to students how monitoring can lead to real conservation action.



TERM 2 April – June 2026

Learning About Native Lizards

Students had a very special visit from Alastair Cole, who brought along some of his native skinks and geckos. Getting up close with these remarkable reptiles gave students the opportunity to learn about their unique characteristics, the threats they face and why protecting New Zealand's native wildlife is so important.

The visit sparked plenty of curiosity and helped students understand the important role predator control can play in protecting our native species.





Thank You

What an incredible year it has been for Pongaroa School's Enviroschools journey.

Throughout the year, students have embraced opportunities to explore, discover and take action for their environment. From Green Week and growing seedlings to exploring the school bush, monitoring pests and learning about native wildlife, every experience has helped build curiosity, practical skills and a stronger connection with te taiao.

These experiences have encouraged students to become confident kaitiaki, understanding that the actions they take can make a real difference to the environment around them.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who has shared their time, knowledge and support throughout the year.

Together, we are inspiring the next generation to care for and protect our environment.