

The Weekender

FREE

NEWSLETTER

JUNE

6, 2025



NEW ZEALAND GEOGRAPHIC



By James Frankham
PUBLISHER

Few of these newsletters have prompted as much feedback as my [note of May 23](#) on flying, climate, and the new study on the poor performance of direct carbon capture technology in Iceland. Some readers pointed to alternative technologies showing promise. Biochar, for instance, is currently the leading the race to remove carbon—see [this handy tool](#) to compare methods and the flow of investment into solutions. Another reader told me I was [spelling sulphur wrong](#)... point taken.

Others suggested we should focus first on reducing our emissions. New Zealand is in a unique and challenging position in this respect. The last government cut off oil and gas exploration, but we're yet to replace it with alternatives. One reader pointed to potential reserves of 'white' hydrogen—clean fuel trapped in geological fissures in New Zealand. And the opportunity to develop more geothermal power generation and use it to manufacture 'green' hydrogen, the energy-intensive process to split water into its constituent parts, hydrogen (a good heavy transport fuel) and oxygen.

Look forward to more reporting from us on the above. In the meantime, changes in our climate are affecting every part of New Zealand, even those alpine ramparts once thought to be safe from predators. Read the remarkable story of our giant wētā below.

Have something to say? Feel free to get in touch with me directly. You can support our work with a subscription—either print or digital or both—please *check out the options*. The more support we have, the more great work we can produce.



Samuel Purdie

WILDLIFE

We thought the giant wētā of the south were doing okay. Now, they are under siege.

Evolving from an ancestor that survived the Oligocene drowning of New Zealand, giant wētā reclaimed the country as the land slowly rose from the sea. The enormous insects diversified as the mountains rose, splitting into 11 species from one end of Aotearoa to the other.

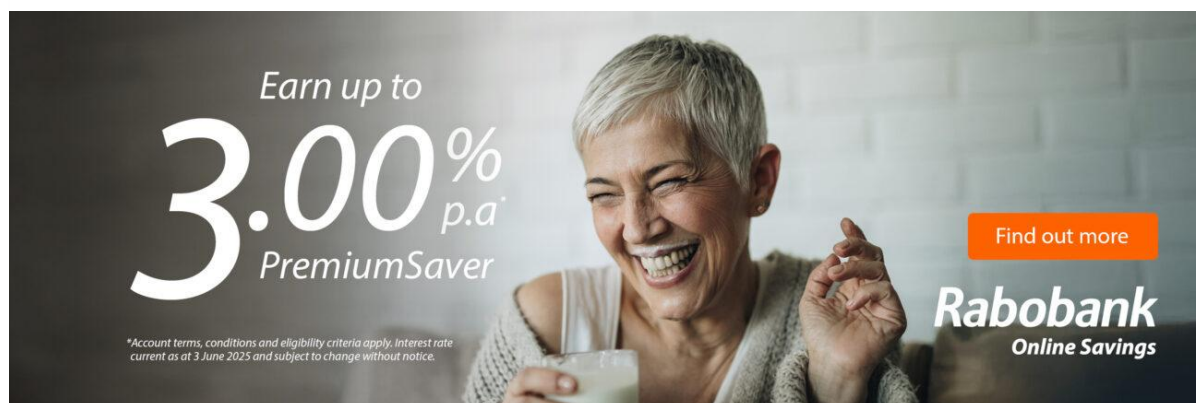
The coming of people and pests was not kind to these walking protein pouches. In the North Island, various species of giant wētā were reduced to just a few scrappy strongholds. Wētāpunga, the largest species, heavier than a house sparrow, clung to Te Hauturu-o-Toi/Little Barrier Island. Eighty-odd kilometres north, its cousins haunted the Poor Knights Islands. The enormous Stephens Island giant wētā existed only on a few islands in Cook Strait. And in the worst shape of all was the Mahoenui giant wētā, confined to just a few patches of tawa and gorse in King Country farmland.

But as recently as the 1990s, it was thought the species of giant wētā in the mountains of the South Island were doing okay. Scientists thought they lived high enough to escape rats and other predators. That, we're beginning to understand, was a dangerous assumption.

Keep reading...

MORE STORIES ABOUT WĒTĀ:

- [The demon grasshopper](#)
 - [Wētā of the Sinbad Gully](#)
-



Earn up to
3.00%
p.a.
PremiumSaver

*Account terms, conditions and eligibility criteria apply. Interest rate current as at 3 June 2025 and subject to change without notice.

[Find out more](#)

Rabobank
Online Savings



Justin Gilligan

ENVIRONMENT

For seabird chicks, eating plastic takes an insidious toll

The sable shearwaters of Lord Howe Island, between Australia and New Zealand in the Tasman Sea, are among the most plastic-contaminated seabirds in the world. Unsuspecting parents feed their chicks indigestible bits of plastic, mistaken for squid or fish.

“It’s upsetting to see just how much plastic they’ve got, just as they’re starting life,” says Alix de Jersey from the University of Tasmania. In a study she led, one chick had consumed 403 fragments (pictured here) together weighing about the same as a slice of white bread.

Keep reading...



Te Rawhitiroa Bosch

PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

Introducing Te Ao Māori Award, celebrating committed coverage of kaupapa Māori

There is a special commitment and relationship required to tell stories from the Māori world. Whether you whakapapa Māori or not, these stories can take longer to develop, longer to shoot and often require a higher level of trust.

The new Te Ao Māori award recognises this effort and focus. As well as photographic merit, judges will be looking for deep, committed engagement with the people in the images. As this is an award, not a category, all images in the portfolio you enter—including any PhotoStory images—will be considered.

If kaupapa Māori is your world, it's time to have a look through your best work of the past year, or get out and shoot some new stories.

Check out Photographer of the Year...



EXHIBITION PARTNERS

LUMO

BRITOMART

“FOUR INVESTMENT PROPERTIES WITH GJ’S”

If you're building for investment talk to GJ's today.

G.J. Gardner. HOMES

WATCH NOW



Thank you for being a subscriber

If you were forwarded this email, [sign up here](#)

Read past editions of The Weekender [webversion](#)

You have received this email because you signed up for communications from Kowhai Media. To stop receiving these emails, [unsubscribe](#)

Connect with us on:



[Manage your email settings](#) [Privacy policy](#) [Contact us](#)

© 2025 Kōwhai Media, All rights reserved



KŌWHAI MEDIA