



Insect Tracking

He iti hoki te mokoroa nāna i kakati te kahikatea

The mokoroa (grub) may be small, but it cuts through the Kahikatea

Did you know that about 90% of all species on earth are mū (insects)?

New Zealand alone has more than 5000 species of tātaka (beetle), almost all of which are found nowhere else on earth. People regularly find new species in their own backyards just by watching closely and recording what they see. Come and venture into te aitanga pepeke (the insect world)!

We are going to practice our observation skills on a mū (insect) we find in our yard or a nearby park. We will then build a model with the features of the insect we studied.

Task Part 1 - Observations

1. Find a suitable area with some insect life.
This can be nearly anywhere! Your backyard or a park are ideal places.
2. Search for an insect that you want to follow. Tip:
It's easier if it crawls rather than flies!
3. Follow your insect.
Watch what it does for at least 5 minutes, but 10 or more is better! Where is it going? What is it doing? Is it by itself or in a group? What does it eat?



4. Make notes on what you observed.
You can write sentences or key words, record yourself speaking, draw diagrams or all of the above. Use the table on the next page if you wish.

Task Part 2 – Construct a Model of your Mū

(This can be straight after your observations, or at a later time.)

1. Gather materials from around your house and garden.
This could include cardboard, tubes, string, paper, tape, pens, sticks, leaves and anything else you can think of.
2. Now let your creative side go wild!
Make a model of your insect using your materials.
Try and include all the main features you saw.



Mīharo! Great job.

You now have a much better understanding of the creatures that live near you. You can repeat the observation stage any time, with the same or different insects to keep growing your knowledge.

Questions to extend your learning:

- Look at an insect ID website or book. Can you work out what your insect is? Start at a high level (order or family) and see how accurate of an ID you can make – can you find the genus or species level?
- What features could you see on your insect? How do these help it survive?
- Where does your insect sit on the food chain? What do you think it eats? What do you think would eat it?
- It's very common for insects to look very different at different life stages - think of a caterpillar and butterfly. What do you think the life cycle of your insect looks like?
- Is there something you can do in your backyard to help your insects, or other creatures, survive. Could you add particular plants they enjoy, or create a shelter for the animals?
- Think about what would happen if this insect species was removed from your garden. How would the ecosystem change?

Insect	Observations
Size	
Behaviour	
Food sources	
Predators	
Habitat	
Features	
Other observations	