



Getting the numbers on giant snails

The number of giant land snails in the Nelson backcountry is thought to be declining due to predators and habitat disturbance but there is a lack of data to confirm their status.

Nelson Nature is working with the Department of Conservation to rectify this, by setting up permanent snail monitoring locations at several sites along the Bryant Range. These will be used to estimate snail density and detect any decline, or a possible comeback if effective predator control is established in the future.

Our local giant snail species *Powelliphanta hochstetteri consobrina* is only found in the Richmond and Bryant ranges behind Nelson. It is threatened by introduced predators such as possums, rats and pigs, as well as habitat disturbance by goats, deer and people. A recent snail count at the sites found low numbers, indicating that predators are taking a heavy toll on the population.

Sharp-eyed trampers may have occasionally noticed the impressive shells as they walk the tracks in these areas. Despite the full-grown shells being about 60mm across, live snails are rarely seen as they are uncommon, nocturnal and well camouflaged. If you do find empty shells on your travels, please don't take them home as they are fully protected by the Wildlife Act and are used by other snails as a source of calcium.

Giant snails are a great indicator species for the health of an ecosystem as the conditions they need to thrive (deep, moist leaf litter and very low predator pressure) are the same conditions that support a healthy forest.



Nelson Nature on display at the Brook Sanctuary Open Day

Nelson Nature hosted a stand at the Brook Waimarama Sanctuary open day in early April this year – a great celebration of the work being done by many people and organisations to bring nature back into Nelson.

With over 1300 people attending, there were plenty of takers for Nelson Nature's 'win a rat trap' competition, with lots of new people signing up for Council's biodiversity newsletter "Nelson Nature Fix" and the Adopt-A-Spot programme which connects volunteers with conservation projects.



Environmental Grants awarded to community restoration projects

Council's Environmental Grants Scheme is proving popular with individuals and conservation groups seeking funding for restoration projects.

Nelson City Council has received 36 applications in the February 2021 Environmental Grant round, requesting \$155,000 of funding. The Environmental Grants Scheme provides funding to support groups and individuals working to improve the health of Nelson's natural environment. This was the second and final grants round for the 2020-2021 financial year.

Most grant applicants were successful with at least partial funding for their project and approximately \$70,000 was awarded from Council's Nelson Nature, Healthy Streams and Sustainable Land Management programmes. This funding includes \$30,000 from the Ministry of Primary Industries to reduce erosion in Nelson. These grants will help support landowners and community groups



to control weeds in important native forest areas, trap pests, restore stream margins and wetlands, manage erosion on steep erodible land, and plant over 8,000 native plants across the Nelson region.

The next round for Environmental Grants Scheme will be open in August 2021. More information on the scheme can be found here:

nelson.govt.nz/environment/funding-for-environmental-programmes/environmental-grants-scheme

Snare a trap to catch a rat

With winter approaching, rodent pests like rats and mice will be hungrier and easier to catch.

Now's the time to pop into the Nelson i-Site and pick up a subsidised pest trap from Nelson Nature and the Department of Conservation. Sturdy tunnel traps for rats (\$15), stoats (\$60) and Trapinator possum traps (\$30) are available. For information and how-to guides on backyard pest trapping go to:

predatorfreenz.org/toolkits/backyards-toolkit



Need a Nature Fix?

Nelson Nature publishes a regular email newsletter about biodiversity in our area.

The Nelson Nature Fix comes out approximately every six weeks, with news, information and stories relating to Nelson's environment, biodiversity and how the community is caring for it. To sign up to receive your copy in your email inbox, go to:

nelson.govt.nz/nature-fix