

WONDERFUL WĒTĀPUNGA



Wētāpunga are a type of giant wētā that can only be found in New Zealand. They are one of the heaviest insects in the world.



In Te Reo Māori wētāpunga means 'God of Ugly Things'. Their Latin name means 'terrible grasshopper'

Females are larger than males.

One female was recorded as weighing 70g but usually they grow to around 35g – that's heavier than a mouse or sparrow!



Females have a long spike at the back of their body called an ovipositor. They use this to lay their eggs in the soil.

They will lay around 200-400 eggs during their lifetime, which is 2-3 years.





Wētāpunga are nocturnal. They come out at night to feed on the leaves of native trees including karaka, karamu, mahoe.



They use their long antennae to feel their way around. Palps near their mouth help them to smell and taste their food.



Their long legs and hooked feet help them to climb. They raise their spikey back legs if they feel threatened to try and scare off predators.

Wētāpunga were once found across New Zealand but their population declined after the introduction of rats and other pests. Butterfly Creek started the wētāpunga breeding programme in 2008.

Since then we've released wētāpunga onto island sanctuaries to help increase their wild populations.

Find out more about wētāpunga by coming along to our daily encounter talk at 1.30pm where you'll get the chance to get up close to this giant of the insect world.



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