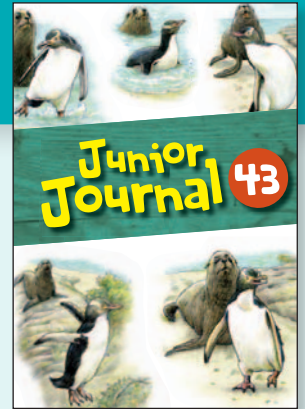


# Catching Mustelids

by Bronwen Wall

JUNIOR JOURNAL 43  
This text is levelled at Gold 1.



## OVERVIEW

This report, told from the perspective of a young girl, describes how and why her grandad catches mustelids (ferrets, stoats, and weasels). It provides opportunities for students to ask questions and locate answers. The report has a mix of text types, including an explanation and an information report, and has a mix of personal and factual information. It has strong cross-curricular links and can be read and discussed for many purposes. The theme of predators continues in the poem “Hoiho” in the same Journal, providing an opportunity for students to integrate ideas from both texts. A third text in this Journal, “A New Home for Mokokoko”, continues the theme of protection of native wildlife.

There is an audio version of the text on the *Junior Journal 42 and 43 CD*.

## RELATED TEXTS

Texts about protected or endangered native creatures: “Endangered Bird” (JJ 29); “Our Treasure Island” (JJ 37); “Hoiho” and “A New Home for Mokokoko” (JJ 43); “Kiwi in the City” (CN 2, 2000)

Texts about pest animals: *A Very Clever Possum* (RTR, Orange), *Too Many Possums* (RTR, Gold).

## TEXT CHARACTERISTICS

Key text characteristics relating to the reading standard for after three years at school are shown in the boxes with a solid outline. Other boxes indicate additional characteristics.

The bush setting, which may be unfamiliar to some students, particularly those who are relatively new to New Zealand

Mustelids are a type of animal. Ferrets, stoats, and weasels are all mustelids. They are small, with sharp teeth and claws and short, strong legs. They have small ears and thick fur. Mustelids climb trees and snatch small birds from nests. They break birds' eggs with their teeth.

Mustelids mostly sleep during the day and are awake at night. They can walk many kilometres every night. They eat anything they find along the way – birds, chicks, eggs, wētā, and geckos.



Stoat

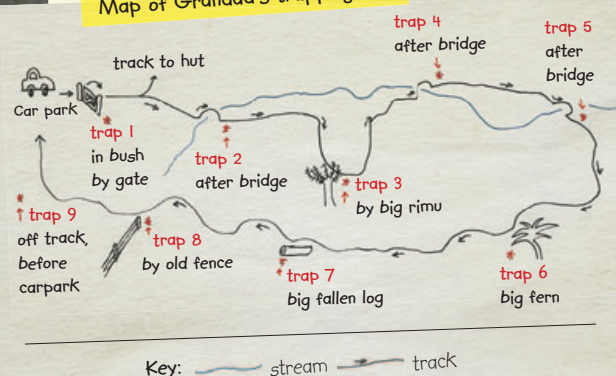
Weasel

Ferret

A mix of explicit and implicit content within text and illustrations that requires students to make connections between ideas in the text and their prior knowledge to make simple inferences, for example, about:

- why mustelids are such a danger to native birds
- what the traps look like and how they work
- when the report changes to a recount (on page 12)
- the meaning of Grandad's closing comment

### Map of Grandad's trapping line



Grandad's mustelid traps look like giant mousetraps in boxes. Grandad puts an egg at the back of the trap. This is the bait. Meat can also be used. The mustelid smells the bait. Straight away, it wants to find the bait and eat it.

Content including the concepts of native and introduced species and pest animals, which may be unfamiliar to many students

Visual language features – including maps and diagrams

Some unfamiliar words and phrases, the meaning of which is supported by the context, illustrations, or definitions

**English (Reading)**

Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

**Science (Living World)**

Levels 1 and 2 – Ecology – Recognise that living things are suited to their particular habitat.

**SUGGESTED READING PURPOSE**

*(What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?)*

To find out why mustelids are a danger to New Zealand native birds and what is being done to solve this problem

**SETTING A LEARNING GOAL**

*(What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically about” texts?)*

Some behaviors you could expect to see as the students read in order to meet the reading purpose are suggested below. **Select and adapt** from them to set your specific learning goal(s). Be guided by your students’ particular needs and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

Students:

- ask questions and look for answers as they read
- make connections between ideas in the text, the visual language features, and their prior knowledge to identify and summarise the main points about mustelids
- form and justify an opinion about whether the trapping is effective (evaluate)
- use word-solving strategies to decode and/or work out the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases.

## TEXT AND LANGUAGE FEATURES

**VOCABULARY**

- Possible unfamiliar words and phrases, including “type”, “Ferrets”, “stoats”, “weasels”, “claws”, “snatch”, “kilometres”, “wētā”, “geckos”, “trapping line”, “Key”, “bait”, “squashes”, “kea”, “entrance hole”, and commonly used words that have multiple meanings, including “set”, “slip”, “arm”, “curious”

**POSSIBLE SUPPORTING STRATEGIES**

Monitor students’ **decoding** attempts by noticing their use of words from the text during discussion. Prompt the students to remember strategies they can use, for example:

- breaking words into syllables or familiar chunks or components (“must-e-lids”, “kilo-metres”, “entrance”);
- drawing on knowledge of spelling patterns and phonics (use analogy to “fudge” to work out “nudge”); awareness of different vowel sounds within “ash” (“squashes” to rhyme with “washes” rather than “splashes”); awareness of enunciating every vowel in Māori words (“kea”)
- rereading the phrase or sentence around the unfamiliar word to confirm decoding attempts.

Monitor the students’ **word-solving** strategies to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases and commonly used words that have multiple meanings. Prompt students to remember the strategies they can use, often in combination, for example:

- looking for a definition or explanation close by (“mustelids”, “trapping line”)
- thinking of the overall context and making connections to their own experiences
- rereading or reading on so that they can use the next word (“native birds”, “trapping line”, “entrance hole”) or the overall context of the sentence or paragraph (for example, to clarify the intended meanings of “set”, “slip”, “arm”, and “curious”)
- using visual language features, such as the map and diagram.

Have a dictionary available to confirm or clarify word meanings.

**SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE**


- the concepts of native and introduced species and pest animals, which may be unfamiliar to many students.

Make connections to any relevant texts the group has read before or to science topics about native animals and their habitats.

## INTRODUCING THE TEXT


- Have students look at the photograph and title on page 8, (without the text). Have them talk in pairs about who, what, and where. Give students who share a language other than English time to discuss it in their language. Share ideas as a group and write up and discuss relevant vocabulary. Prompt the students to make links between the photograph and the title. For example, “*The people could be just walking in the forest but what does ‘catching’ mean?*”
- *When I read the title, a question popped into my head right away. I thought “What are mustelids?”* Have the students reread page 8 and think, pair, and share any questions they have.
- Explain that, in this context, native birds are birds that are found only in New Zealand.
- Use the students’ questions to set the reading purpose and identify learning goals. Set up a chart with three focus questions (What are mustelids? Why are they a danger to native birds? How does Grandad catch them?) to help the students identify and make connections between relevant information as they read.
- Before reading on, have the students review and summarise the information about mustelids on page 8 (that they are a danger to native birds, clever, fast, and very hard to catch). Prompt the students to also make connections to the visual language features (the silhouette by the title and the photographs) to make further inferences (that mustelids live in the forest park and they are a type of animal). Add these points to the appropriate section of the chart.
- Explain that to summarise, the students need to read carefully, identify the main points, and share them in their own words.

## METACOGNITION




Effective readers are metacognitive. They are aware of the processes and strategies they draw on and are able to explain how they used these to successfully make meaning and think critically. Examples of metacognitive behaviours, or strategies that promote metacognitive behaviours, are threaded through the notes and indicated by .

### EXPECTED STUDENT BEHAVIOURS

(what to look for, prompt, and support as the students work towards achieving their learning goal)

-  As they read or reread this text, students notice when meaning has broken down. They draw on a range of strategies to correct the problem and can explain what they did.

### HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS TO READ, RESPOND, AND THINK CRITICALLY

-  Ask questions: *How did you know that bit was wrong? Or I noticed that you reread that bit when you got confused. How did rereading help you?*
-  Use prompts: *How did you know that bit was right? Think about the strategy you used. How did it help you?*
-  Give feedback: *I noticed that you read this as... and then you fixed it up by ...*

## READING AND DISCUSSING THE TEXT

In order to meet the reading purpose: **The students make connections between their prior knowledge, the text, and visual language features to help identify and summarise main points and identify information that answers their questions. They form and justify an opinion about whether the trapping is effective.**

### EXPECTED STUDENT BEHAVIOURS

(what to look for, prompt, and support as the students work towards achieving their learning goal)

#### PAGE 9

The students identify the main points about mustelids and share them in their own words.

They make connections to Grandad's comment on page 8 to infer why mustelids are a danger.

### HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS TO READ, RESPOND, AND THINK CRITICALLY

Prompt the students to use the illustration to help them visualise the description of the mustelids. Set the purpose for this page: *As you read, look for the main points.*

If necessary, explain what geckos are.

Support the students think about what granddad said on the previous page. *I remember that granddad said that mustelids are a danger. This page helped me understand why.* Have the students identify the information from the text that support this idea.

Explain the use of macrons to denote long (drawn-out) vowels in Māori.

Prompt the students to review the chart and identify what they still need to find out.

#### PAGES 10–11

The students identify the main idea about traps.

They make connections between the map on page 10 and the tracks shown in the photographs, and the "3" on the map and the "3" on the lid of the trap on page 11. They also make connections to their prior knowledge of mousetraps and use the diagram and two photographs of the trap to visualise how it works.

They infer from the size of the entrance hole that mustelids are quite small.

Allow time for the students to explore the illustrations and photograph and read the text. Prompt them to link between illustrations and text. *The map helps me to get an idea of where the Grandad's trapping goes. The photographs show me what the track looks like. I'm wondering why the "3" on the lid in the photo might be important ...*

Prompt them to use the map to clarify information: *Follow the trapping line with your finger.* Ask questions to encourage critical thinking: *How will Grandad know where to find each trap? Have the students share with a partner how the girl and granddad would do to get to the ninth trap.*

Ask questions to help the students make connections between the diagram and the photographs: *Where is the metal arm in the photo. Where will the bait go?*

Prompt the students to summarise what these two pages are mostly about. For students who need more support to do this, have them look at the illustrations and skim-read the text to find the topic (traps). Ask questions to help them identify the key points when they read each paragraph.

*What can information add to our chart?*

## PAGES 12–13

The students make connections to their prior knowledge or use clues in the text to make inferences about the meaning of “pests”.

The students notice clues about the size of the birds in relation to the mustelids and make connections to the information about the entrance holes on page 11. They visualise the fact that the predators are actually smaller than their prey.

With support, the students make connections to earlier information and/or their prior knowledge to infer why they don't want to catch birds in the traps.

Tell the students that now the text is about the girl and her grandad.

Model your thinking: *I see that rats and hedgehogs are also a danger to the birds. The author has called them “pests”. Someone who's annoying can be a pest but this seems to have a more serious meaning here about being a danger other animals. Maybe it has two meanings. We could check it in the dictionary.*

Ask questions: *What are you noticing about the size of the mustelids and the native birds? What words or phrases tell us this?*

Prompt the students to make connections to their prior knowledge of native New Zealand birds, such as the kiwi, kea, kākāpō, and weka. You could show them a photograph of a kākāpō in JJ 37. I notice the narrator says, “*We don't want to catch any birds in the traps!*” *I wonder why that might be a problem.*

Add information to the chart.

## PAGE 14

The students infer why the lids need to be tight and why the girl puts a piece of wood on top.

The students notice and wonder about Grandad's comment and read on to see if there is more information on page 15.

Ask questions to support inferring: *What would happen if the lids came off the traps?*

Have the students share their ideas about what Grandad means at the end of page 14. *Why isn't New Zealand a good place for mustelids?*

## PAGE 15

The students infer that in England, mustelids are useful because they kill rabbits. With support, they may also infer that England is different from New Zealand in that they don't have birds that live on the ground. Some students may also be aware of people (not in New Zealand) who keep ferrets as pets.

They visualise how many more kiwi there would be if there were no mustelids.

Prompt the students to notice the links between the ideas in each sentence.

Explain that animals (and other creatures and plants) can sometimes become pests if they are moved out of the place where they came from.

If necessary, support the students to visualise the number of chicks by drawing twenty chicks on the whiteboard and then the same number again four times. This will represent the number over a school week for each day for a week. Discuss how this would look if it was for a whole year.

- 🔍 The students revisit the reading purpose and summarise the notes on the question chart to create a one-sentence answer for each of the questions. They notice that although they have some information about what is being done to solve the problem, there is probably more that they could find out.

If necessary, model how to create a one-sentence summary.

Prompt the students to refer to the final paragraph. Model your thinking: *There are so many kiwi chicks still being killed. I'm not sure that the traps are working well.*

The students discuss their personal responses to the information in the text, in particular, their opinions about whether mustelid trapping is effective.

- 🔍 With support, the students reflect on their learning. They revisit the learning goal(s) and explain some of the strategies they used, for example, how they identified information that would help them answer a question.
- 🔍 The students identify some challenges in the text and how they worked (or tried to work) them out.

Revisit the reading purpose and learning goal.

- 🔍 Ask questions: *When did you realise how dangerous the mustelids are to native birds? What helped you? What helped you visualise how the trap worked?*
- 🔍 *Was there anything that you found difficult or confusing?* Model or explain some strategies they could use.

## AFTER READING

- Students can reread the article as they listen to the audio version on the *Junior Journal 42 and 43 CD*. Audio versions provide English language learners with good models of pronunciation, intonation, and expression.
- Explore the map further and have the students explain how it helps Grandad. Discuss the purpose of the key. The students could create their own maps.
- Have the students use the diagram to explain to someone else how the mustelid trap works.
- Encourage further research. Ask the students if they have any further questions, for example, about other ways of getting rid of mustelids or about the dangers to native birds, and discuss how they could find relevant information.
- Have the students make links to native species in countries they come from or have lived in.
- Have the students identify subject-specific words and use the text and other reference sources, such as a dictionary or the Internet, to find definitions and create a glossary.
- Have the students read “A New Home for Mokokoko” in the same Journal to find out about the dangers to another form of native wildlife and how people are trying to protect it.
- Have the students read or reread the RTR text *Too Many Possums*, which explores how possums became serious pests when they were introduced to New Zealand from Australia and/or “Our Treasure Island” (JJ 37), which explains how some kākāpō are being protected.
- The students could make connections to the poem “Hoiho” in the same journal, to raise their awareness of threats to other native New Zealand birds.