

*What motivates backyard conservation behaviours?*

Christopher K. Woolley, Stephen Hartleya, Nicola J. Nelsona & Danielle F. Shanahan

Cities can be challenging places for wildlife, yet the success of native animals in cities can contribute to their conservation while also providing human residents with valuable nature experiences. To improve the prospects of native wildlife in cities, a growing number of urban residents are engaging in backyard conservation—providing habitat for native species and removing threats to their survival. In Aotearoa New Zealand, where introduced mammals (e.g., rats, mice, hedgehogs) are a key threat to native wildlife, backyard conservation often involves recording sightings of both native and pest species, and controlling predators.

In this study, we were interested in whether different backyard conservation activities appeal to different sorts of people in New Zealand, and what motivates participation. We distributed a questionnaire survey that recorded people's interest in engaging in three different backyard conservation activities (native biodiversity monitoring, pest mammal monitoring and pest mammal trapping), as well as what motivates engagement in conservation, and other characteristics such as connection to nature and how much time they spend in nature.

We found that on average people were more interested in participating in backyard conservation if they had a strong connection to nature and if they frequently spent time in nature. This pattern was less strong for pest mammal trapping than it was for the two activities involving monitoring animals, indicating that something in addition to environmental concern might be motivating participation in trapping. We suggest that this difference might be due to there being a more direct benefit to conservation from trapping (a reduction in pest numbers) than for the monitoring activities, which have more indirect outcomes (contributing information through citizen science). Additionally, trapping likely offers multiple benefits for those who engage in it,



*A backyard in Wellington, New Zealand where residents monitored native skinks by checking 'lizard hotels' (corrugated tiles placed in sunny spots in the garden) Credit: CK Woolley*

benefiting both species conservation and people through the removal of a domestic pest. Our findings suggest conservation activities that offer co-benefits to those who perform them may appeal to a broader range of people, including those not strongly connected to nature.

Plain language summary from article: Woolley, C. K., Hartley, S., Nelson, N. J., & Shanahan, D. F. (2021). Public willingness to engage in backyard conversation in New Zealand: Exploring motivations and barriers for participation. *People and Nature*, 00, 000–000.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10243>