

The Kingfisher - Kotāre

We were out in the playground early last Friday morning when you asked urgently: "What's that noise?" I stood with you, Jimmy, as I tried to work out which one of the many sounds we could hear that you were referring to. There were cranes, trucks, cars, a compacter in the near distance ... and birds up in the big palm trees outside Mātangi Awhio.

A weka shrieked up on the hill whilst we were listening and then a kingfisher called out in short shrill cries. This really took your attention - I think this was the sound you had heard initially.

We tried to identify where exactly the call was coming from and, in the process of looking all around to locate it, you saw lots of sparrows up in the tall palm trees and a small flock of sea gulls above the roof of the Trafalgar Centre. Finally a kingfisher showed itself and flew over from the palm trees to the big oak tree just above the building where the School office is.

By this time a number of tamariki had gathered. Your sister Mia and Liliana finally spotted it - hard to see amongst all the new spring growth. Jimmy, you were fascinated and we probably spent about 15 minutes up there chatting about the kingfisher. You guessed from the kingfisher's name what its favourite food might be! I found a kingfisher's picture on my phone (courtesy of Rebecca Bowater) and you told the other children that we had heard a 'goldfish'! This led to a korero about your goldfish at home.

Fiona arrived into work and you shared with her that you had seen a goldfish. Fiona informed us that kingfishers often perched on the black rope which supports the sail cloth in summer. Jimmy, we must keep a look out for them there - it would be great if you could see one much closer, now that you know what they sound like .. and what they like to eat!





Jimmy, I appreciated your curiosity about the sound that had taken your interest - and your determination to find out what it was amongst the cacophony and blur of the many sounds outside the kindergarten. It was very special to take the time with you to notice and try to identify some of these sounds. You were genuinely fascinated by the birds around your kindergarten and you appeared to be vitally interested in these wondrous flying creatures.

There is a wealth of learning here for you - we know from our curriculum and from literature how important it is that children feel a connection and form working theories about Papatūānuku - about the earth and all life within it : plants and animals.

White and Hutchison (2008) tell us that children experience the natural environment differently than adults.

"Adults usually see nature as background for what they are doing, as a visual aesthetic experience. Children experience nature not as background for events, but rather as a stimulator and experiential component of their activities.... children have an innate biological tendency to bond with the natural world known as biophilia regular positive interactions within nature allow children to feel comfortable in it, develop empathy with it and grow to love it" (p.1).

So, Jimmy, now that we know of your interest in sounds and in the birds around Mātangi Awhio, we will ensure that we follow any further interest you show in this area. I will bring in my book of New Zealand birds and pair of binoculars and we will continue our bird watching from a good vantage point in the playground - there is so much bird-life going on in the trees above us, not to mention the sparrow visitations into our indoor environment. We may be able to build a bird table outside such as the one in Teina, and feed our manu regularly.

"There's no way that we can help children to learn to love and preserve this planet if we don't give them direct experiences with the miracles and blessings of nature" (Anita Olds).

References:

White, R. & Stoecklin, V. (2008). NURTURING CHILDREN'S BIOPHILIA: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Retrieved from http://www.live-learn.org/resources/teachers/A_Sense_of_Place_Conference/Biophilia.pdf

Learning tags:

Being involved

Communication with others

Enviroschools

Exploration-mana Aotūroa

Taking an interest

Working theories of natural, physical, material worlds

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