

MONITORING BIODIVERSITY

WETA MOTELS – simulate refugia within mature trees

Weta motels are wooden refugia that simulate natural galleries that weta and other invertebrates use in trees. They have a hole that is only just big enough to let weta in, but too small for its predators – mice, rats, possums, hedgehogs, etc. Other insects and invertebrates also use motels including leaf-vein slugs, spiders and beetles. Weta motels are great for kids, schools, community plantings, ecological restoration projects, etc. Motels can be monitored over time to watch how motel occupation changes.

Instructions for weta motel

1. Select a tree (preferably a native) – e.g. Kanuka, Hoheria, Fuchsia, Ribbonwood are good. Choose a tree with a diameter wider than the motel and preferably trees with holes 10-18mm in diameter. Holes with webbing will most likely have spiders inside.
2. Tie your weta motel to the tree using lacing wire anywhere from 0.5m to 2m above the ground. Tie it tight enough so it does not slide down or move easily, but not too tight as to cut into the tree.
3. Check your motel every three months for inhabitants. Do not open regularly or weta or other occupants may abandon the motel. Unlock the door using pliers as the wood can sometimes swell up. Slide the front panel sideways slowly as any inhabitants present will be nocturnal and may startle in the bright light. Close door carefully ensuring weta antenna or legs are not in the way.

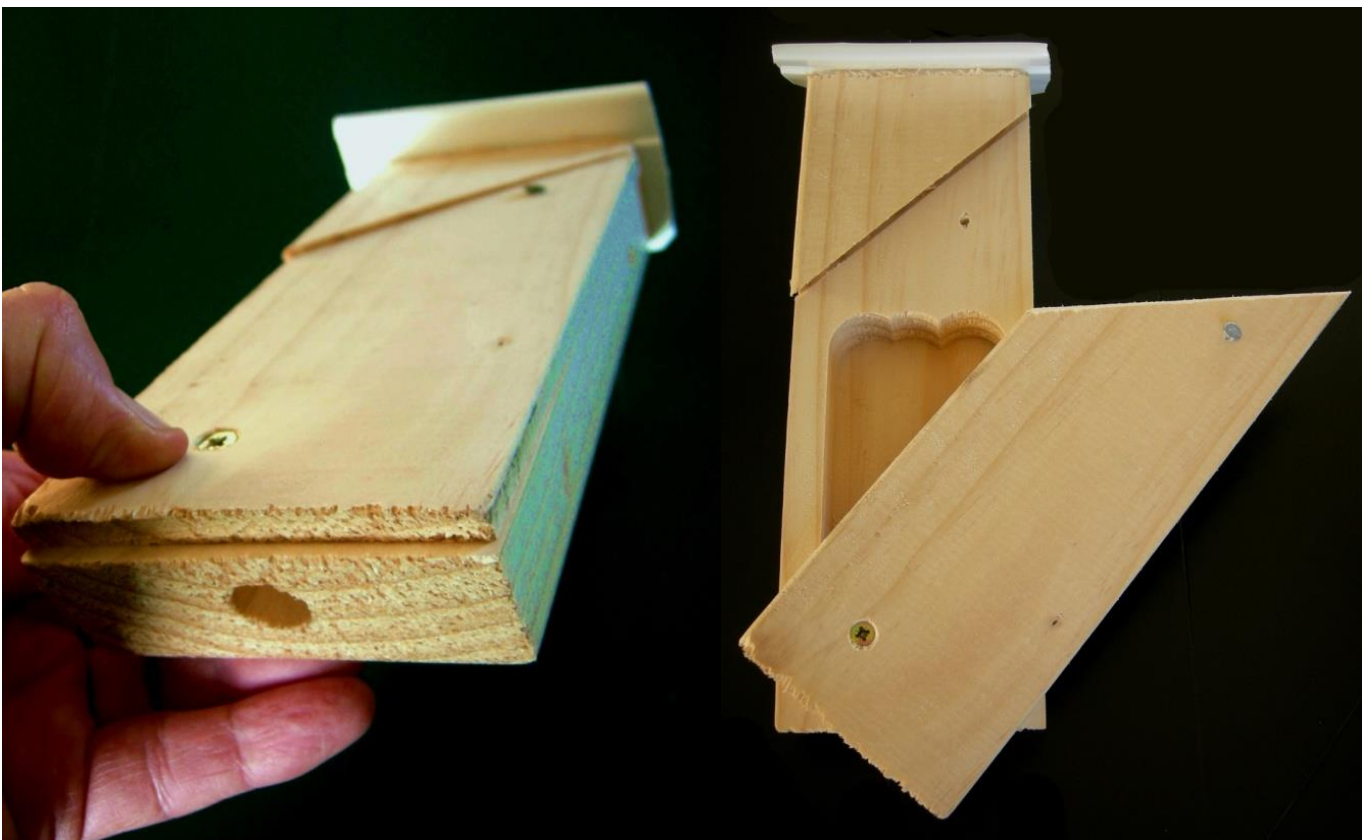


Figure 1: Closed weta motel showing entrance hole (left) and open empty motel showing cavity inside (right).

Some of the species often found in weta motels



Figure 2: Two tree weta sharing motel (adult female with ovipositor at top and adult male with large head below)



Figure 3: Darkling beetles (*Artystona* species) Figure 4: Canterbury gecko sharing motel with weta



Figure 5: Cave weta



Figure 6: Cockroaches



Figure 7: Leaf-vein slugs



Figure 8: *Cambridgea* species



Figure 9: Funnel web spider (*Porrhothele antipodiana*) with spiderlings

References

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