

[Inside front cover]

[1 – Book plate]

[2 – Dedication or blank/illustration]

[3 – Title]

Koro Wētā and the Gumboot Battle

by Heather Haylock

[4-5]

I loved my gumboots.

Mud squishers

Ice smashers

Rain sploshers

Puddle splashers

At night, our gumboots lined up outside the back door like a row of soldiers.

[6-7]

Each morning, we put our gumboots on, then off we went around the farm.

Squish!

Smash!

Splosh!

Splash!

But one morning, when I put my foot in my gumboot —

[8-9]

“Arghhh!”

Thunk!

Thump!

Whack!

Whump!

My gumboot bounced down the back steps onto the driveway.

Out crawled a *very* big, and very *grumpy*-looking wētā.

[10–11]

“Awwwww!” said Mum. “He’s so big. He’s an old one — a koro wētā!”

“It’s so ugly!” I cried.

“Come here, Koro,” said Mum. She picked up the wētā and put it under some ferns.

The next day, I turned my gumboots upside down and banged them on the steps.

Nothing.

I put on one boot. Then the other —

[12–13]

“Arghhh!”

Thunk!

Thump!

Whack!

Whump!

“That thing’s trying to get me!”

“It’s more frightened of you than you are of it,” said Dad.

“I don’t think so!” I cried.

“Come on, Koro,” said Dad. Into the flax bush went Koro Wētā.

[14–15]

That night, I scrunched up some old newspapers and put them into my gumboots.

I shouted out into the inky blackness, “Oi! Koro Wētā! These gumboots are *mine!*”

In the morning, I pulled the newspapers out and gingerly slid my feet inside ... nothing!

“Yes!”

So that night, I stuffed the newspapers into my boots again.

[16–17]

The next day, I plunged my feet straight in, no worries —

“Arghhh”

Thunk!

Thump!

Whack!

Whump!

Mum just smiled and put Koro Wētā in a pile of logs by the woodshed.

[18–19]

Before I went to bed that night, I shoved a pair of Dad's socks into my gumboots.

Those stinky, holey things would keep Koro Wētā away.

I wasn't taking any chances, though.

In the morning, I tied some string to Mum's phone.

I set it up to record a video, and lowered it down, down, into the gumboot.

I pulled it back out and watched the video.

[20–21]

“Arghhh!”

There was Koro Wētā staring right back at me with his black beady eyes, and twitching his crazy long antennae.

“Why is he always in my gumboots?” I cried.

“He’s probably come from that pūriri tree the neighbours cut down,” said Dad.

“He’s looking for somewhere to hide,” said Mum, “and your gumboot is just the right size for him.”

“Well it’s just the right size for me too!” I wailed.

“Maybe it’s going to take a while for him to find a new home,” said Dad.

[22–23]

At lunchtime, I watched some builders nailing boards to the new house next door.

Bang! Bang!

Bam! Bam!

Bwok! Bwok! Bwok!

And *that's* when I got the idea.

If I built that wētā a house of his own, he'd stay away from my gumboots!

[24–25]

So Mum, Dad, and I made Koro Wētā a little whare of his own.

We sawed and we sanded and we hammered.

Rrrrr! Rrrrr!

Shhh! Shhh!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The whare had a door so we could check in on Koro. I painted his name on it so he'd know it was his.

We nailed his new whare to the shady side of the tōtara tree.

[Illustrator Note: Please make the whare look similar to a real wētā house/motel. You can check out the below links to see what they look like.]

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/toyota-kiwi-guardians/take-action/build-a-weta-motel/>

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/conservation-activities/exploring-nature-with-children-booklet/in-your-own-backyard/build-a-weta-motel/>

<https://kcc.org.nz/portfolio/make-a-weta-house/>

[26–27]

The next day, sure enough, Koro Wētā was in my gumboot.

I picked him up and put him inside the wētā whare.

His whole whānau moved in eventually.

And he never came back to my gumboots again.

[28–29]

When those gumboots got too small for me, we nailed them onto the tree as well so the wētā whānau could have room to spread out.

“I surrender, Koro Wētā,” I said. “You can have them now. You and your moko wētā.”

And I got some new gumboots. Warm, cosy, dry ... and see through!

What's so wonderful about wētā?

Wētā live only in New Zealand. They are large, nocturnal insects with long, slender antennae, thorny legs, and ears on their knees!

Many people think wētā are scary to look at. In fact, the Māori name for giant wētā is wētā punga, named after Punga, the atua of ugly things.

Most wētā make a chirping sound (stridulate) by rubbing their bumpy legs back and forth across ridges on their abdomens — like insect violins! When threatened, they can fill air sacs on their sides to amplify the sound.

While they are young, wētā shed their skins (moult) as they grow. When they moult, they puff themselves out so as their new skin hardens it is bigger than they need. This gives them some growing room — a bit like when your parents buy your school uniform too big so you can grow into it!

There are five main species of wētā:

Tree Wētā The most common of New Zealand's wētā species. They live in forest areas and gardens in most parts of the country. They feed on flowers, fruit, and small insects at night. During the day, they hide away from predators in 'galleries' — tunnels and holes in trees and logs. (Or in gumboots!) Koro Wētā is a tree wētā.

Giant Wētā These now live only on New Zealand's off-shore islands. They can be huge — the weight of a small bird! Their Latin genus name, *Deinacrida*, means 'terrible grasshopper'.

Cave Wētā These wētā have long, slender legs, and can leap up to 3 metres! They cannot hear, but can sense ground vibrations through pads on their feet.

Ground Wētā These wētā live in holes they excavate in the ground. They enter their tunnels backwards so they can meet their enemies head-on. They do not stridulate like other wētā.

Tusked Wētā Male tusked wētā use their long, curved tusks for fighting. Some tusked wētā found in the Raukūmara Range can hide underwater when threatened!

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