Manchester Street School in Feilding is an Enviro School, so we are always keen to look for ways to help and learn more about our environment.

Every term, the whole school sets aside one day dedicated to the environment. Every class has their own class garden, as well as enviro jobs too. They range from every kind of recycling to power and water monitoring.

We also have an amazing nursery (repurposing our old school pool) where students maintain plants, budgies, canaries, geckos and there are always new projects. It certainly wasn't an outlandish idea when students had an epiphany during reading.

“We should look after the butterflies!” uttered an excited reading group, after reading the Journal article “Tag and Release”.

Every teacher is looking for an authentic learning experience and Room S and T certainly have one from tagging. All great ideas are never created overnight, though you would have thought this possible with the enthusiasm of our Year 5 and 6 students. This whole process became their focus for each enviro day.

After discussing a plan of attack they put their ideas into action. Students put forward a proposal to the principal in writing and in person. Once this was given they then began the research and development of their garden. Working in groups, students planned different designs and plants needed. Finally their design was locked in and it was time to do the physical work and get the garden established before they even were able to get ready for tagging.

My husband had been cultivating swan plants at home ready to go. All the plants flourished and soon sunflowers towered over the rest of the garden. Protecting the plants from too many eggs was a trial. Waratahs and plastic pipe created a tunnel. The net over the top wasn’t fine enough and it was interesting watching the sneaky butterflies folding their wings to get to their target. There is definitely room for improvement for next summer.

This summer we were able to register for the first time for the tagging programme. We have learned so many things and it has been great sharing the information with the rest of the school.

Our last enviro day was a beautiful summer’s day and was hijacked by all the butterflies that kept insisting on being tagged. This was a great opportunity to refine our tagging skills and have the chance to demonstrate to other classes. We even had a grandad helping capture and tag! A magical memorable moment shared.

Now students are confidently sent around the school to tag new butterflies in other classes. Often I return to butterflies in my office, while students are busy tagging and releasing.

We are all proud that our butterfly
garden is a point of interest when Enviro leaders are doing tours around the school. Yes, it has taken a couple of years to get to this point, but the journey has been an enjoyable collaborative experience.

What next? We are planning to do a mural showing the life cycle of the butterfly for our younger learners and to have an information board about tagging and monitoring butterflies. Also we need to improve our plant protection to ensure we have plenty of food for our butterflies. Of course we all are going to keep spreading the knowledge we have all learned.

Thank you very much for all the work you (MBNZT) have done. Without it we wouldn’t have 120 students over two years (with more to come), involved in this project.