

# SPCA® Kids

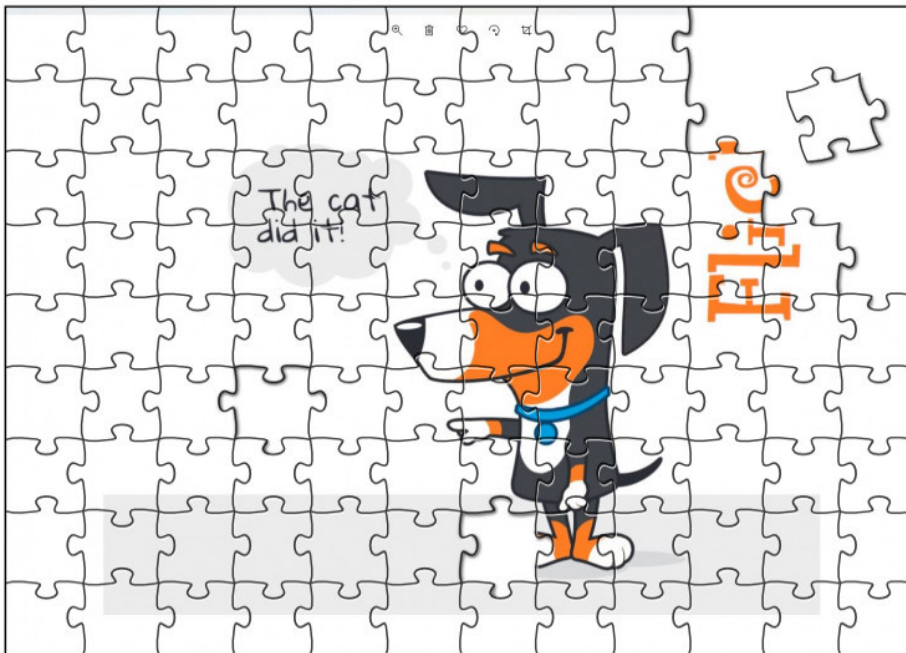
## Kind Matters

# News

Issue 11 / May 2020

Did you know that 2020 is the year of the rat, according to the Chinese Zodiac? There are 12 animals in the Chinese Zodiac which means the year of the rat won't happen again until 2032. We thought this was a great time to celebrate these clever rodents and take a closer look at some of the many things that make them so cool!

By diving into this new issue of Kind Matters, not only will you learn about rats as companion animals, but there are some really exciting crafts and activities, a new Kind Conservation animal to read about, and a special new feature – Meet an SPCA Scientist! We hope you enjoy this issue!



Be sure to check out the newest section of SPCA's Kids' Portal – [Fun Stuff](#) – where you'll find awesome activities like puzzles and colouring pages!

## SPCA Competition: Animal Portrait Photography

With the changes that have happened this year, we have decided to extend our Animal Portrait Photography Competition to give you some extra time to get the perfect shot of your companion animals!

Portraits focus on the face of the subject, so be sure that the animal's face is the main feature of your photo! Email your photo to [education@spca.nz](mailto:education@spca.nz) with the subject "Photography Competition 2020" by 20 July 2020. Please provide your name, age, school, contact details, and description of your photo!

*Please note: by entering SPCA competitions, you're agreeing for SPCA New Zealand to share your work on the SPCA Kids' Portal and within social media postings.*

## What's Inside



### A Closer Look at: Rats – Kiore

Learn some fun facts about rats.



### Kind Conservation: New Zealand Sea Lion – Rāpoka / Whakahao

Learn why these marine mammals need our help. Photo: Gareth Hopkins, DOC



### Craft Time: Wildlife Board Game

Design your very own board game.

and much more...



Visit [www.kids.spcaeducation.org.nz](http://www.kids.spcaeducation.org.nz)

# A Closer Look at: Rats – Kiore

Did you know that a group of rats is called a mischief? How cool is that? That's not the only thing that is fascinating about rats. Did you know they are nocturnal (which means they are most active at night), they are social and need company of their own kind, AND they laugh when they're tickled (though they're unable to be heard by the human ear alone). Amazing!

Rats make awesome companions and just like every other animal, they need to be cared for properly so that they are happy and healthy. Part of ensuring the very best care for your rats is by providing them with clean, fresh water, and a balanced, nutritious diet each day.

Your rats' diet should consist of rat blocks (or lab blocks) so that they are getting their proper nutrients, and about a tablespoon of rat-safe vegetables and fruit each day so that

they're also getting some variety – rats love a good mix.

It's not just about what you feed your rats, but how you feed your rats is important as well. Small ceramic dishes are the best choice for food so that you do not overfeed your rats and so they cannot tip or chew the dish. There should also be two sources of water available to your rat at all times – one provided in a small animal sipper water bottle, and another in a ceramic dish. It's



important to clean ceramic dishes daily and sipper bottles once a week. Because rats are nocturnal, they should be fed before you go to bed so that they're awake, alert, and ready to chow down.

These are just a few of the things you should know about caring for rats. You can learn more about rat care on the Kids' Portal [here](#).

## Kind Conservation: New Zealand Sea Lion – Rāpoka / Whakahao

**You may already know that the New Zealand sea lion is known by some other names: Hooker's sea lion, named after British botanist and explorer, Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, as well as rāpoka, and whakahao.**



However, what you may not know is that rāpoka is the Māori name for a female NZ sea lion, while whakahao is the name for a male NZ sea lion. The reason these incredible marine mammals have different Māori names is because while they are the same species, males and females look quite different from each other.

Not only are males darker than females, but adult male New Zealand sea lions are much bigger than females and can grow to over 11 feet long and can weigh nearly 450kgs. This makes them one of NZ's biggest animals! They do share a short nose and whiskers

From Australia to the Galapagos, South America to Japan - sea lion species can be found in many different parts of the world. The

New Zealand sea lion however, can only be found in four breeding sites on the coasts of Aotearoa. These areas include the Auckland Islands, Campbell Island, the coasts of Otago and Southland, as well as Stewart Island.

The New Zealand sea lion is the rarest sea lion in the world, with a population of about 10-12,000 individuals. Sadly, their conservation status is "nationally critical," which means they have a high risk of becoming extinct.

Scientists have found that a combination of disease outbreaks and impacts of commercial fishing, along with some other threats, have contributed to the population decline of NZ sea lions.

Although NZ sea lions are opportunistic feeders, meaning they will eat a lot of different things, squid and hoki are essential components of their diet. Commercial fishing also targets these species, making it more difficult for sea lions to get the amount they need. While searching for food, sea lions can also accidentally get caught or injured in

fishing nets, causing them to drown. Sadly, if this happens to a mother sea lion, her dependent pups will also not survive.

Measures such as limiting commercial fishing within sea lion habitats and safer net requirements have been taken to protect NZ sea lions, but there's still more to be done. Losing these amazing animals would be devastating, so protecting them is paramount. Have a look at how you can help:

- > Do not disturb sea lions or their habitats. If you see a colony of sea lions, keep a safe distance.
- > If you find a sea lion in need of help, call the Department of Conservation.
- > Keep dogs under control when exploring coasts and beaches.
- > You can write a polite email or letter to the Minister of Conservation and Minister of Fisheries urging further protection of NZ sea lions.
- > Spread the word – let your friends and whānau know about the importance of protecting NZ sea lions.



## Match the guardian to the animal!

Take a look at the guardian's needs and wants and choose which animal from the list below that would be the best match for them!

### Guardians

1. I work from home, I have a big, fully fenced yard, and enjoy going for walks every day. I would like to adopt an animal that would love going on lots of walking adventures with me.
2. I have a big garden where I grow a lot of my own produce. I would like to adopt more than one animal that would be happy living in a large enclosure in my big yard and would enjoy eating fresh greens and veggies as part of their diet.
3. I live on a farm with a big paddock. I want to adopt animals that are smaller than horses or cows. I have access to lots of hay, fresh greens and other forage for food. I'd love an animal that likes to climb and play as well.
4. I have a spare room that I would like to dedicate to a companion. I would like to adopt an animal that is smart, trainable, small, and social. It would be cool to adopt two animals.

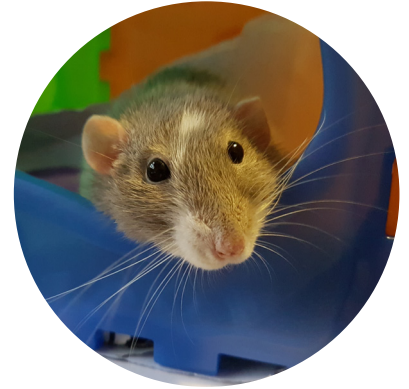
### Animals

- |            |          |
|------------|----------|
| a. Rats    | c. Dog   |
| b. Rabbits | d. Goats |

*You can check your answers on pg. 5s*

## Can you spot the difference?

Label whether the picture is of a rat or a mouse.



1. \_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_



3. \_\_\_\_\_



4. \_\_\_\_\_

## Fun Fact: Rats are very trainable!

Rats are amazingly smart little critters that need lots of enrichment like toys and games to keep them from getting bored. These happy and affectionate rodents not only love to dig, climb, and play, but they also enjoy learning and can be taught many tricks!

Just like dogs can be taught to sit, stay, and roll-over, rats can also be taught a variety of commands. This is due to their intelligence and awesome memory. It's important that training is always a positive thing and that you never punish your rats. Through these positive training experiences, the bond between you and your rats with strengthen and it's also great exercise for them!



*Did you get them all? Check your answers on pg 5*

# Meet an SPCA Scientist: Dr. Christine Sumner

## Did you know that SPCA has their very own team of Animal Welfare Scientists?!

Animal welfare science is the scientific study of the welfare of animals.

Animal welfare refers to the humane treatment and well-being of an animal. Here at SPCA, we have many animal welfare scientists who carry out evidence-based research to make positive changes to the way animals are seen and treated in New Zealand.

Dr. Christine Sumner is one of SPCA's amazing scientists that are making a difference in the lives of animals each day. She helped shed some light on what it's like to be an SPCA Science Officer – check it out below!

### What is your role at SPCA?

My main task is to use science to help advocate for welfare improvements for animals in the wild, zoos, aquariums, and sanctuaries and animals used in research. I spend a lot of time learning about what these animals need and want for good welfare, and work with people to raise awareness about the importance of welfare for these animals. I also spend time writing about the importance of the welfare of these animals whenever there are new laws, regulations, or plans proposed that would impact their welfare. For example, we recently wrote a submission on the importance of welfare for the proposed national management plans to protect the critically endangered Hector and Maui dolphins. These proposed plans will hopefully benefit the overall populations of these dolphins and the welfare of the individual dolphins.

### Why did you want to become an animal welfare scientist?

I love animals and think we humans can do quite a bit more to improve how we treat them. I also love research – thinking about problems, asking questions to help understand problems, and finding ways to answer those questions.

### How did you become an animal welfare scientist?

Combined, my work has heavily focused on the relationship between people and animals. I have worked with many different people and animals, which helps with animal welfare advocacy because I can recognise diverse values and perspectives about many different animals. I have a PhD in Applied Animal Biology, a Master's degree in Public Service, and a Bachelor of Art in Anthropology. My research background is understanding how farmers and veterinarians make decisions that impact the welfare of animals on farms. I spent nearly 12 years working with animals (mostly primates) in zoo and sanctuary settings, and on educational farms.

### What is your favourite part of being an animal welfare scientist?

I love doing work that positively impacts animals and people. I am curious about so many different things about animals, so approaching it from an animal welfare science perspective helps satisfy that curiosity.

### What is your favourite part of working for SPCA?

Many people in New Zealand trust and respect SPCA, so reaching out to others to work together is usually very productive. Many New Zealanders care about animals and are keen to support the work we do, which feels really good. I also love advocating for animals that may not be traditionally thought of as the focus of SPCA, including wild animals, zoo animals, and animals in research. I find many people are interested to learn more and happy that SPCA cares about these animals.



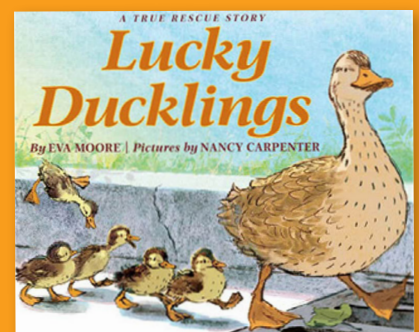
### What is your favourite animal?

The dogs in my family, Craig and Girl (pictured), are my favourites, but other than that, I love them all.

## Book Nook

Learn more about the welfare of some other wildlife you can find in New Zealand – ducks!

Lucky Ducklings tells the true story of five little ducklings that were rescued when they fell into a storm drain.



Title: Lucky Ducklings

Author: Eva Moore

Illustrations: Nancy Carpenter

Order it in at your local library!



# Enrichment: Fleece Hideout

**This awesome little hideout is super simple to make as it requires no sewing. It also makes the perfect place for rats to snuggle up and keep warm!**

*Note: Be sure to use a water-based felt-tip pen so it's safe for your rats. Permanent marker used in instructions to emphasize lines.*

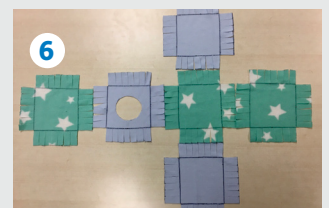
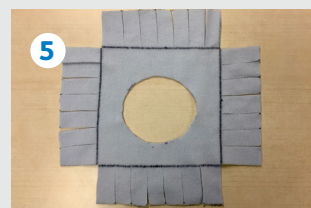
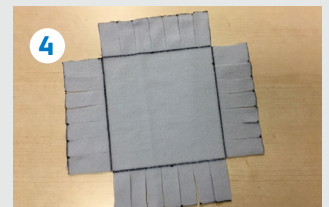
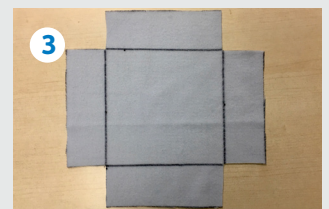
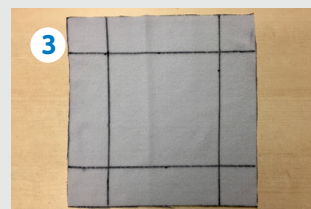
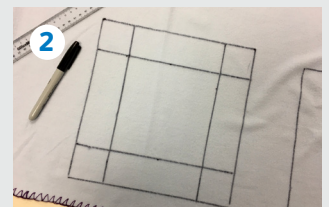
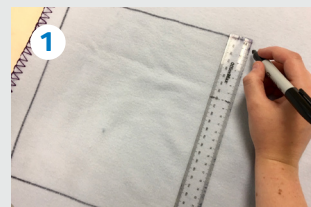


## Materials:

- > Fleece blanket(s)
- > Ruler
- > Scissors
- > Felt tip pen

## Instructions:

1. Draw 6 separate 25cm x 25cm squares on your fleece blanket.
2. Draw a line 5cm in from the outside line on each side of the squares.
3. Cut the 25cm squares out, then cut the small corner squares from the material.
4. Next, cut small strips along the sides of the squares to create a fringe. There should be the same number of strips on each side so they can be tied together – here we've cut 6 strips, 2cm wide each.
5. Cut a hole in the square that will be the front of your cube.
6. Arrange the squares like the photo below.
7. Begin tying the sides together to create a cube shape. Be sure to lay the sides with the lines on them facing each other and tie knots so that they are on what will be the outside of the cube.
8. Once the squares are all tied together, you can begin tying the sides, finishing with the top.
9. Your fleece rat hideout is now ready for your rats to enjoy or you can donate it to your local animal rescue!





# Craft: Wildlife Board Game

For this craft, you're going to design your very own board game!

The example below is a board game where you're a scientist researching animal welfare in New Zealand, just like Dr. Christine Sumner. The aim of the game is to reach the finish first by rolling the die and moving the number of spaces that comes up!

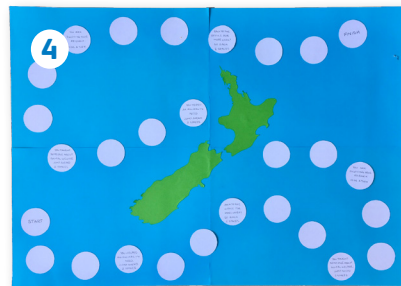
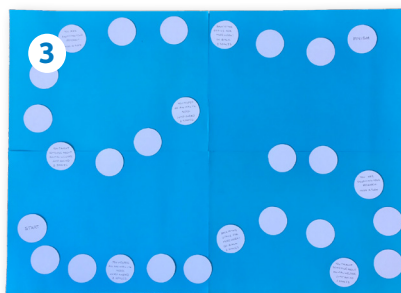


## Materials:

- > Coloured paper
- > Cardboard
- > Glue stick
- > Felt-tip pen
- > Scissors
- > Markers

## Instructions:

1. Begin by constructing your game board. This will consist of gluing paper onto your piece of cardboard. You can use old boxes for the base of your game board, like a cereal box.
2. Cut out the tile pieces for your board. You can get creative and write reasons for jumping ahead, missing a turn, or going back spaces. For example, "you taught someone about animal welfare, jump ahead 3 spaces."
3. Arrange your tiles on the board from "start" to "finish."
4. Finally, decorate your game board. You can draw or print animals, add arrows, and whatever else you would like!
5. Now grab a set of dice, something to use as a counter (like a bottle cap or button), and start your wildlife adventure!



## Share your ideas!

What animals would you like to learn more about?  
Let us know by emailing [education@spca.nz](mailto:education@spca.nz)!

Match the guardian to the animal!

Answers:  
1. c  
2. b  
3. d  
4. a

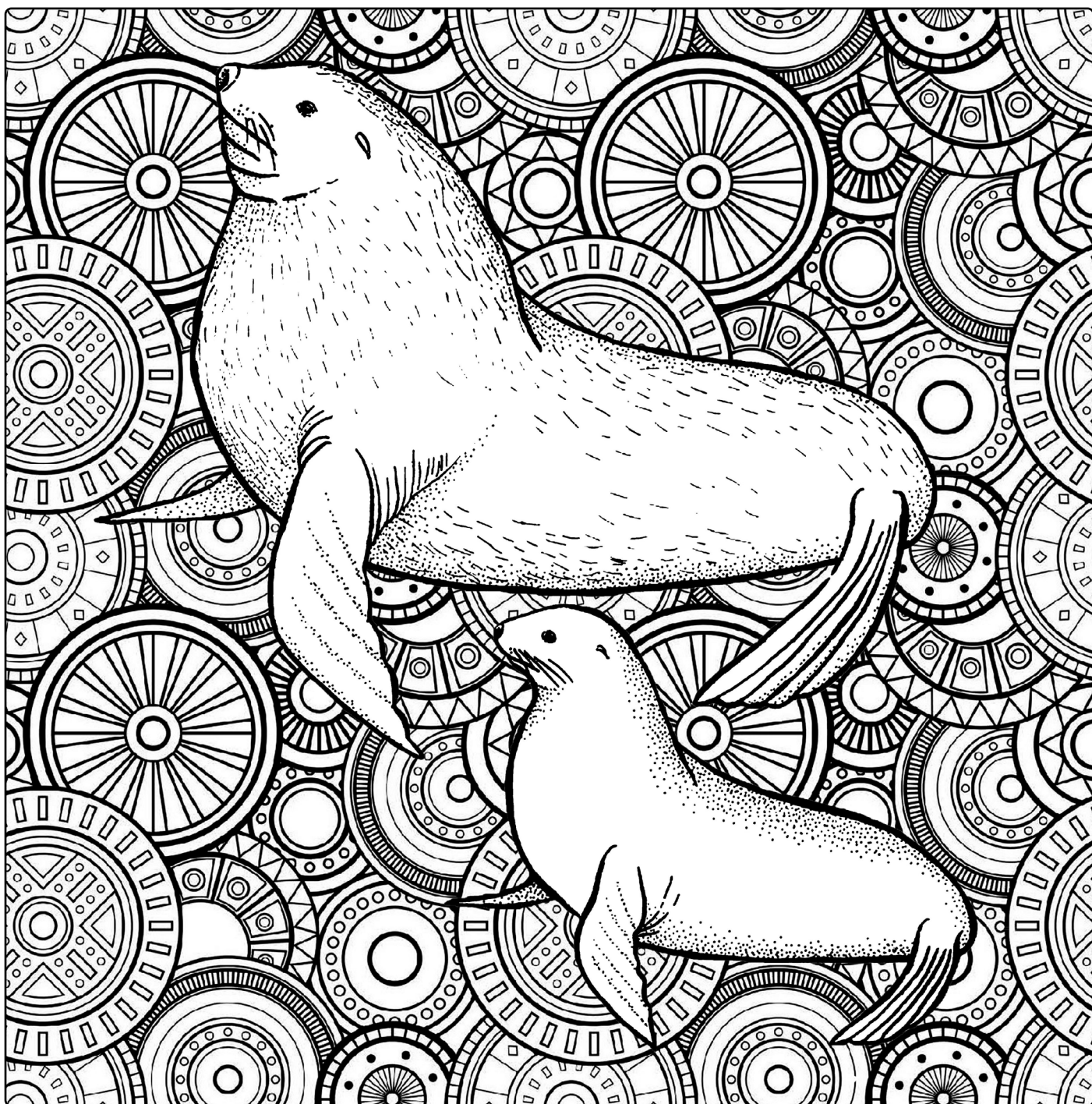
Can you spot the difference? Answers:  
1. Rat  
2. Rat  
3. Rat  
4. Mouse

"Not only are mice are smaller than rats, but they have a more triangular nose and big, floppy ears."



## Mindfulness Colouring

Mindfulness is the process of keeping your attention and thoughts on the present moment. It can help to improve your mood, concentration, focus and well-being – which are all super important things! These mindfulness colouring pictures are a great way to practice this valuable skill. Grab some colouring pencils, felts, crayons, or even paint and give them a go!



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