

Project Echo: A community partnership to protect and educate about Hamilton's long tailed bats

Gerard Kelly^{1,2,3}, Salina Huzir^{1,3}, Therese Balvert^{2,3}

¹Hamilton City Council, ²The Waikato Tree Trust, ³Project Echo, ⁴Waikato Regional Council

The long-tailed bat (*Chalinolobus tuberculatus*) is an endemic New Zealand species whose population is predicted to fall 90 per cent by 2050. Their main threat is the destruction of suitable roost trees within their optimal feeding habitats near waterways. Communities need to be integrated with environmental matters, and in Hamilton 'Project Echo' has been raising awareness about resident long-tailed bats. An important role of the group, championed by Waikato Regional Council, is advising on local government policy and supporting research output. Its advocacy objective is shared by multiple agencies and community group representatives that work together to engage a cross generational audience through public activities, bat tours and habitat enhancement. This presentation will highlight some the strategic partnerships and successful execution of events to communicate the vision of a sustainable population within this river city.