

CURIOUS KIWI

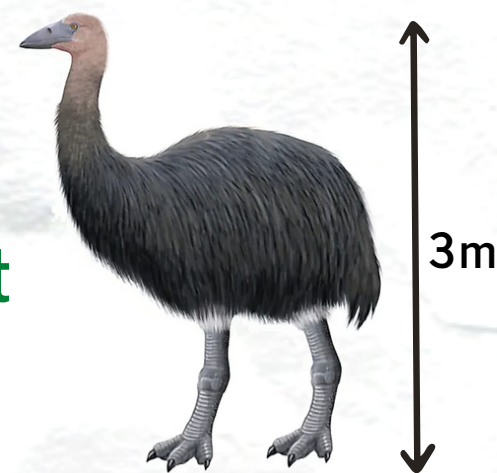


Kiwi are New Zealand's most famous native animal. There are 5 species of kiwi, all of which have some special features that make them very unusual birds.



Kiwi are part of a group of flightless birds known as ratites. Other examples of ratites include ostriches, emu and the extinct moa.

Scientists have discovered that kiwi are most closely related to the extinct giant elephant bird from Madagascar!



Kiwi have unusual features for a bird:

- chicks are well developed when they hatch
- heavy leg bones and skeletons
- cat-like whiskers on their face
- nostrils at end of their beak
- a very good sense of smell
- shaggy, hair-like feathers



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Kiwi evolved when there were no predators around. They could live safely on the forest floor, without needing to fly. They do have very small wings, but can't use them to fly.

Because kiwi do not fly, their feathers have evolved to become quite fluffy, which helps keep them warm.

Kiwi are the only bird in the world with nostrils at the tip of their long beaks. They use their great sense of smell to find food up to 3cm underground. They also use their beak to detect the vibrations of small animals moving.

Kiwi are omnivores which means they eat a bit of everything!

Their favourite foods include worms and other small animals. They also eat berries, seeds and leaves.



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In proportion to its body size, kiwi lay bigger eggs than almost any other bird. The egg can take up nearly a quarter of the female's body! Kiwi can lay up to 100 eggs in their lifetime. They can live to be 50 years old.



Kiwi chicks hatch fully feathered and very independent. They are never fed by their parents and head out from the burrow after about 5 days to find food for themselves.

Kiwi are nocturnal. They usually sleep during the day and come out at night to search for food.

Kiwi use their strong legs and claws to dig burrows, lining them with soft leaves, grass and moss.



New Zealand used to be home to millions of kiwi, but now only about 68,000 remain. Find out more about kiwi and how you can help them by visiting www.savethekiwi.nz

