

# New Zealand's Unique National Bird - The Kiwi

New Zealand's national bird evolved 50 million years ago from a flightless ancestor from the great southern continent of Gondwana. Gondwana was a supercontinent that existed from the Neoproterozoic (550 million years ago) until the Jurassic (180 million years ago).



Rare footage of a kiwi sound off during the day



[youtube.com/watch?v=zRoarshptCA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRoarshptCA)



Adult birds use their razor-sharp claws as weapons and a couple of slashes can draw blood. Conservation workers often bear the scars from putting their hand down a kiwi burrow to check for eggs or chicks.

In the wild, kiwi are big travellers. They can cover the length of 60 football fields in one night...on unlevel ground. Some run as fast as a person.



Since kiwi are flightless, their feathers have evolved a unique texture to suit a ground-based lifestyle. They are warm, shaggy and hair-like, hang loose and are much fluffier.

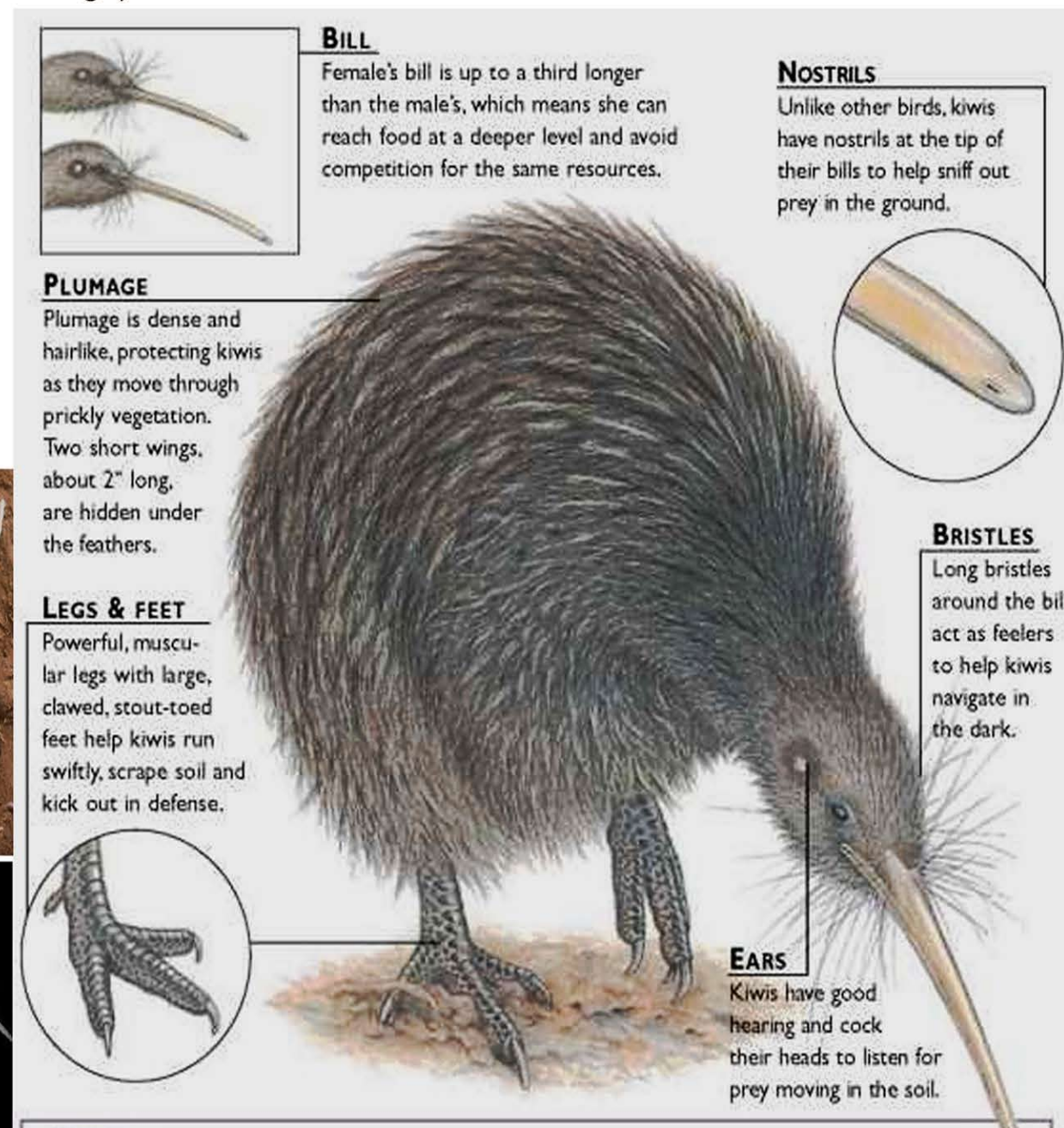
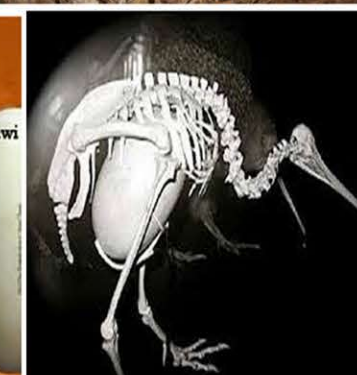


The patterns and color of their feathers help to camouflage the birds, keeping them safe from nocturnal predators.



Different kiwi taxa have evolved different feather patterns to suit their niche. Here, the great spotted kiwi (tallest species) live in high altitudes making it difficult for the dogs, cats, & felines that would prey on them.

Kiwi eggs are very large in comparison to the bird. Feral dogs kill a majority of wild birds; now believed only 68,000 exist.



About half of kiwi eggs fail to hatch. Sometimes because of natural bacteria, sometimes because the adults are disturbed by predators. Of the eggs that do hatch, 90% of chicks are dead within 6 months. 70% of those are killed by cats, stoats (weasels) etc., and about 20% die of natural causes or at the jaws/claws of other predators. Only 10% of kiwi chicks make it to six months. Fewer than 5% reach adulthood.



Kiwi live in pairs, as couples, all their lives. Male kiwi fight vigorously for a mate and the female occasionally kicks her smaller partner when warding off his unwanted advances. About every third day, the pair shelter together in the same burrow. During the night when they are foraging for food or patrolling their territory, they call to each other. The calls of the male and female are quite distinct: he utters prolonged shrill whistles, while she has a lower, hoarser cry.

Kiwi are very strong and bad tempered. Adults use their razor sharp claws to defend themselves. They protect their 'patch', which can be as large 40 hectares (nearly 99 acres), by calling, or chasing and kicking the intruder.

Like several Australian and New Zealand birds, the males do the incubation for up to 80 days. He will cover the nest with sticks and leaves to search for food. Once the chick hatches, for an entire week the yolk sac provides food for the chick. At one week of age, it leaves the nest for the first time. It looks just like a small adult kiwi. Both parents stay near the chick the first three months, then the chick will leave its home and find its own shelter during the day.

New Zealand claims the kiwi as its national animal and national bird



Yvonne Patterson-Burbach has owned birds since she was two years old. After graduating from college with a bachelor's degree in horticulture, she was growing flowers on acreage with three parrots on the premises; one she still has named Snowball, whom she got in 1969!

She has utilized birds for education since the 1970's through exhibits, trade shows, and 3 decades of rainforest photojournalism. The past 30 years, she has done programs at schools, churches, etc.

<https://www.WingsOfLoveInc.org>

