

Little bush moa

Anomalopteryx didiformis

Skull



Not all moa were giants.

Tāmaki
Paenga Hira
Auckland
War Memorial
Museum



Little bush moa

Anomalopteryx didiformis

Conservation status

Extinct

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

Mostly found in the North Island

Diet

Their sturdy, sharp edged bill suggests that little bush moa browsed on twigs and other tough plant material.

Predators

Probably Haast's eagle and Eyles harrier as well as humans

Human impact

With the arrival of Māori, moa were hunted for food which probably led to their extinction.

DID YOU KNOW?

Little bush moa chicks may have been eaten by the introduced Polynesian dog (kuri).

Moa

Dinornithiformes spp.

Toe bones



The only wingless bird (that we know of)

Moa

Dinornithiformes rumnopitys spp.

Conservation status

Extinct

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

Nine species of moa were widespread throughout Aotearoa.

Diet

Twigs and leaves as well as some flowers, berries and seeds

Predators

Haast's eagle and humans

Human impact

With the arrival of Māori, moa were hunted for food which probably led to their extinction.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to Māori tradition, moa were swift runners that defended themselves by kicking when cornered.

Tuatara

Sphenodon sp.

Skull



Tuatara have been around since before the dinosaurs.

Tuatara

Sphenodon sp.

Conservation status

Vulnerable

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

Thriving on various offshore islands in burrows where they are protected from predators

Diet

Beetles, wētā, worms, millipedes, spiders, snails, frogs, skinks and birds eggs

Predators

Cats, dogs, rats, stoats, possums and mice

Human impact

Tuatara are threatened by humans that capture them to sell overseas. This smuggling is illegal.

DID YOU KNOW?

Young tuatara have a third eye in the middle of their forehead. This is known as a parietal eye. Scientists are still researching this third eye and believe it is used to absorb UV light and set daily routines.

Kiwi

Apteryx sp.

Skull and egg



Our Aotearoa New Zealand icon

Kiwi skull and egg

Apteryx sp.

Conservation status

Vulnerable

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

Native forests and some farmland

Diet

Earthworms, beetles, cicadas, wetā and various other insects

Predators

Dogs, cats, ferrets and stoats

Human impact

Kiwi are thriving on predator free islands in sanctuaries, however have disappeared from many other sites because of habitat loss and predation.

DID YOU KNOW?

Kiwi feed by tapping the ground with their bill. They use their nostrils at the end of their beak to detect prey before they see it. In fact, kiwi are the only bird to have nostrils at the end of their beaks.

The kiwi's egg is one of the largest in proportion to the body size (up to 20% of the female's weight) of any species of bird in the world and incubation is by the male only.

Karaka

Corynocarpus laevigatus

#KNBM



A sacred Māori plant with the power to paralyse

Karaka

Corynocarpus laevigatus

Conservation status

Not Threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

Coastal areas all around New Zealand

Human impact

These kernels of fruit were an important food source for Māori but had to be boiled, washed and steamed in water for several days. Once prepared, the kernels could be stored for use over winter or ground up into a type of flour for bread. Plants were planted outside of their natural habitat as people migrated around Aotearoa.

DID YOU KNOW?

Karaka is one of the Māori words for orange, referencing the large orange fruit. Its flesh is strong smelling and the kernel is highly poisonous to humans without proper treatment.

Rewarewa

Knightia excelsa

Seed pods



A glow-in-the-dark honeysuckle

Rewarewa

Knightia excelsa

Conservation status

Not Threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

Grows in lowland forests on the North Island

Human impact

Noted for its timber and used often in interior design, rewarewa is popular for inlay, strips and other ornamental woodwork such as cabinetry. It also has good acoustic qualities, making it suitable for making musical instruments and is often used for tool handles.

DID YOU KNOW?

Rewarewa is one of the two species from Proteaceae, macademia nut family, in New Zealand. Scientists believe that this family is a representative from the super-continent Gondwanaland. While we have only two species in New Zealand, most members of the family are found in the Africa, Australia and South America, other parts of world which formed parts of the super-continent.

Rimu

Dacrydium cupressinum

Leaves



The million year old Jurassic giant

Rimu

Dacrydium cupressinum

Conservation status

Not Threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

Found in forests throughout New Zealand

Human impact

Rimu wood was used by early Māori for weapons, tools and large waka.

DID YOU KNOW?

When burned, rimu makes a great firewood. It gives off a peculiar aroma with very little smoke, and was said to drive away spirits.

Kākāpō on islands in southern New Zealand only breed during years when the rimu tree fruits in mass (every few years).

Bracket fungus

Polypore sp.

Whole specimen



Actually a fungus, not a plant

Bracket fungus

Polypore sp.

Distribution

Bracket fungi are found worldwide, but New Zealand has a number of endemic species.

Habitat

Found on standing and fallen logs in all forest types

Human impact

Early Māori used fungus for colours of tattoos.

DID YOU KNOW?

Bracket fungi can live for many years, enlarging by producing a new layer of pores on the under-surface. If the bracket is split these layers can be seen easily.

Pouākai | Haast eagle

Aquila moorei

Talon



The largest eagle species (that we know of)

Pouākai | Haast eagle

Aquila moorei

Conservation Status

Extinct

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

South and Stewart Islands

Diet

Mainly moa and other birds

Predators

Possibly humans

Human Impact

Overhunting of its moa prey by humans 500-600 years ago was probably the main cause of extinction.

DID YOU KNOW?

Haast eagle may also have been hunted by humans because its bones, some of which had been worked into tools, have been found in archaeological sites.

Ruru | Morepork

Ninox novaeseelandiae

Wing and talon



The elusive night hunter - easy to hear, but hard to see

Ruru | Morepork

Ninox novaeseelandiae

Conservation Status

Not threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Native

Habitat

Mostly found in wooded areas throughout New Zealand

Diet

Small animals, including insects, small birds, rats and mice

Predators

Cats, possums and stoats

When nesting on the ground, ruru eggs and chicks can be susceptible to predation by pigs and hedgehogs.

Habitat Destruction

Ruru habitat is unknowingly destroyed when land is cleared for housing, or large trees are removed to reduce shade or improve a view.

DID YOU KNOW?

On the top edge of their wings, ruru have a soft fringe of feathers which silences their sound in order to catch prey undetected.

Kererū| Wood pigeon

Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae

Wing and talon



The clumsy birds of the forest

Kererū | Wood pigeon

Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae

Conservation Status

Not threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

Mostly found in wooded areas throughout New Zealand

Diet

Buds, leaves, flowers and fruit from a wide variety of species, both native and exotic

Predators

Cats, possums, stoats and rats, especially when nesting

Human Impact

Kererū are considered taonga to Māori. Traditionally they were used for both their meat and feathers.

DID YOU KNOW?

Known as the gardeners of the sky, they spread precious seeds of forest giants such as tawa, miro and hinau.

Pūriri moth

Aenetus virescens

Whole dried specimen



New Zealand's largest moth

Tāmaki
Paenga Hira
Auckland
War Memorial
Museum



Pūriri moth

Aenetus virescens

Conservation Status

Not threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

Forested areas throughout New Zealand

Diet

The adult moth does not have any mouth parts and therefore cannot eat and dies after about two days. As a caterpillar it eats decaying wood and bracket fungi

Predators

Ruru, native bats, possums, cats and kākā

Human Impact

In the past Māori sometimes ate the caterpillar or used it as eel bait.

DID YOU KNOW?

The pūriri moth caterpillar spends much of its life living inside the trunk of a tree. It burrows deep into the trunk where it feeds on the stem tissue and stays there until it reaches about 10cm long. This can take up to 6 years.

It uses its own saliva to create a door to its burrow in a log.

Awheto | Vegetable Caterpillar

Cordyceps robertsii

Caterpillar that has been absorbed by a fungus and mummified



A mummified caterpillar

Awheto | Vegetable Caterpillar

Cordyceps robertsii

Conservation Status

Not threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Native

It was first described in 1836.

Habitat

Forest floor throughout New Zealand

Human Impact

Vegetable caterpillars are becoming increasingly confined to remote undisturbed forest.

DID YOU KNOW?

Awheto have been used by Māori as ink for traditional tā moko tattoos. The charred caterpillars were mixed with fat to make a rich dark ink. Awheto are also edible and considered a delicacy.

Hiore kakati | Earwig

Dermaptera sp.

Whole dried specimen



Probably won't crawl into your ears

Hiore kakati | Earwig

Dermaptera sp.

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Native

Habitat

Damp places such as under rocks, bark, leaves or inside fruit or flowers

Predators

Ruru, native bats, possums, cats and kākā

Human Impact

In the past Māori sometimes ate the caterpillar or used it as eel bait.

DID YOU KNOW?

The name earwig is thought to come from an old belief that earwigs wiggled into people's ears and fed on brains. This myth has been debunked.

Wāpi | Wasp

Vespula sp.

Whole dried specimen



Introduced wasps are one of New Zealand's most serious threat to native insects.

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Wāpi | Wasp

Vespula sp.

Conservation Status

Not Threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Introduced

Habitat

Throughout rural and urban New Zealand

Human Impact

Humans have introduced five species of wasps to New Zealand that harm native birds, insects and are a threat to human health.

DID YOU KNOW?

New Zealand has several kinds of solitary native wasps which have evolved here and have never become a nuisance.

Tātaka | Longhorn beetle

Cerambycidae sp.

Whole dried specimen



Longhorn beetles can defend themselves by biting.

Tātaka | Longhorn beetle

Cerambycidae sp.

Conservation Status

Not Threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Native

Habitat

Throughout New Zealand from the coast to the mountains

Human Impact

European settlers brought predatory species such as rats, mice and hedgehogs, which found beetles to be easy prey.

DID YOU KNOW?

Beetles can play a vital role in helping forest litter to decompose, and as predators of pest species. They can be useful indicators of forest health.

Pāpapa | Ground beetle

Carabidae sp.

Whole specimen



Tāmaki
Paenga Hira
Auckland
War Memorial
Museum



There are over 29,000 species of beetle known worldwide and about 430 in New Zealand.

Pāpapa | Ground beetle

Cerambycidae sp.

Conservation Status

Not Threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Native

Habitat

Throughout New Zealand from the coast to the mountains

Human Impact

European settlers brought predatory species such as rats, mice and hedgehogs, which found beetles to be easy prey.

DID YOU KNOW?

Ground beetles with unpleasant smells are known in Māori as kurikuri, referring to this smell as being dog-like.

Kawakawa

Piper excelsum

Leaves



A plant with the power to heal

Kawakawa

Piper excelsum

Conservation status

Not Threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

Mostly found in forests and coastal areas

Human impact

The fruit, bark and leaves of the kawakawa all have medicinal properties. It is one of the most important healing herbs used by Māori and still widely used today.

DID YOU KNOW?

Māori wear wreaths of kawakawa around their head as a sign of mourning

Kihikihi wawā | Cicada scars

Amphipsalta spp.

Egg scars



Artwork left behind by a female cicada

Kihikihi wawā | Cicada scars

Amphipsalta spp.

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Description

Cicadas lay their eggs in thin soft branches. As the female pierces the plant tissue with her ovipositor, a herringbone pattern is created.

Habitat

Cicadas typically live in forests and areas with open bush. They are mostly commonly seen in summer.

DID YOU KNOW?

Twigs and branches can be weakened and break in high winds when cicadas make these cuts. Also, open cuts can provide entry for wood boring insects.

QUESTION

What other animals or insects do you know of that create patterns in nature?

Harore | Mushroom

Cortinarius sp.

Whole specimen



Don't touch them!

Tāmaki
Paenga Hira
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Museum



Harore | Mushroom

Cortinarius sp.

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Native

Habitat

Mostly New Zealand fungi live in forests. Many help to rot fallen trees, but some attack living trees.

DID YOU KNOW?

A common rule when it comes to mushrooms growing in the wild is that none should be eaten because it could be poisonous.

Harore | Mushroom

Hypholoma brunneum

Whole specimen



Don't touch them!

Harore | Mushroom

Hypholoma brunneum

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Native

Habitat

Mostly New Zealand fungi live in forests. Many help to rot fallen trees, but some attack living trees.

DID YOU KNOW?

A common rule when it comes to mushrooms growing in the wild is that none should be eaten because it could be poisonous.

Kahikatea

Dacrycarpus dacrydioides

Leaves



Can live more than 600 years old

Kahikatea

Dacrycarpus dacrydioides

Conservation status

Least concern

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

North Island and coastal South Island

Human Impact

Humans build many things out of kahikatea, from bridges to butter containers! Unfortunately, scientists estimate 98% of natural kahikatea forest has been lost.

DID YOU KNOW?

Kahikatea are the tallest native tree in Aotearoa. They can grow up to 80m tall. What can you think of that is also 80m tall?

Mataī

Prumnopitys taxifolia

Leaves



The tree of medicine and music.

Mataī

Prumnopitys taxifolia

Conservation status

Not Threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

Found in lowland forests throughout New Zealand

Human impact

Due to its hardness, matai wood was heavily sought after by early settlers till mid 1800s for building bridges, house siding and floorboards. Now, mataī's natural population is greatly reduced due to the past logging practices.

DID YOU KNOW?

Māori used the sap obtained from mataī tree as an antiseptic. The durable red-brown wood was used in various handicrafts and was important material for building waka. It was also the preferred wood of choice for making Māori musical instruments.

Tree wētā

Hemideina thoracica

Various pieces



These wētā were found in the stomach of a ruru.

Tree wētā

Hemideina thoracica

Conservation Status

Not threatened

Endemic | Native | Introduced

Endemic

Habitat

As the name suggests, they live in trees inside a burrow known as a gallery and can be found in forested areas and suburban gardens including woodpiles.

Diet

Mostly leaves, lichen, seeds, fruit and flowers

Predators

Birds, mice, rats and hedgehogs

Human Impact

Because tree wētā are able to survive in suburban areas and backyards, some people will build a wētā hotel out of old logs which can be used as a habitat.

DID YOU KNOW?

The ear of the wētā is found just under their knee.