

# Kiwi

## Information Sheet

**Species:** North Island Brown Kiwi

**Status:** In serious decline (estimated at 10% per year)

**Estimated national population:** 15000 – 20000

**Estimated Western Bay of Plenty population:** 15 – 30

**Otanevainuku Population:** 3 – 5 (2006)

Kiwi are unique in that they have many characteristics that are similar to mammals. They have marrow in their leg bones, (unlike other birds), their body temperature is much higher than most birds, they have no wishbone or flight muscles, (which means their chest area is very vulnerable to crushing when caught by a dog or people), their nostrils are at the tip of their bill and they hatch fully feathered.



### Egg development:

It takes approximately 3 weeks for a kiwi egg to form inside the female bird. For the relatively small size of a female kiwi, (2.5kg – 3kg) it produces the largest egg compared to any other bird in the world. The egg takes up about 1/3 of the female's size and weight.

### Incubation:

The male kiwi does all the incubation of eggs. 68 – 70 days for the chick to develop and hatch. Two eggs are laid in each nest. Because of the size of each egg the female can only produce 1 egg at a time. The first egg is only incubated for short periods of time during the first 3 weeks so that development is delayed until the second egg is laid. This adaptation ensures that both chicks will hatch within a few days of each.

### Chicks:

Kiwi chicks are unique in that they hatch fully feathered and are fully developed except for being very small in size. Once the chick hatches it survives for the first week by absorbing the remaining egg yolk stored inside its body. This first week is when the chicks build up muscle and fitness by following the male kiwi around and learn what foods it should eat. Adult kiwi do not feed their chicks at all.

After the first week, kiwi chicks are left on their own but sleep during the day with the adult male in the nest burrow. He protects them in and around the nest burrow but lets them fend for themselves once they go out at night. After 6 months the kiwi chick has grown to about 1kg in weight and is big enough to fend for its self against most predators.

### Adults:

Adult kiwi can live from between 40 and 50 years. Kiwi start breeding at about 2 years old. They do not mate for life but are very likely to spend many years with the same mate. Female kiwi are bigger, (2.5kg – 3kg) than males, (1.8kg – 2.2kg) and have much longer bills so that they don't compete with each other for food. Kiwi have air cells at the tip of their bills for detecting vibration which they use for finding underground insects, worms and grubs. These birds are very territorial and will often remain in the same territory for many years.