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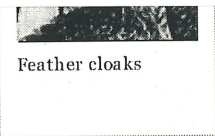
Story: Kiwi

Page 4 – Kiwi and people: early history

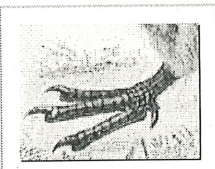
(Phillips, J., 2011)

Māori

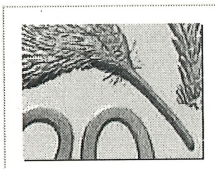
Māori always regarded the kiwi as a special bird. They know Tāne, the hidden bird of Tāne, god of the forest. Kiwi feathers, originally made by sewing kiwi skins together, were taonga (treasures) usually reserved for chiefs. Kiwi feathers, now woven into flax cloaks, are still valued. Māori also ate kiwi, preserving them in the birds' fat, and steaming them in a hāngī (earth oven).



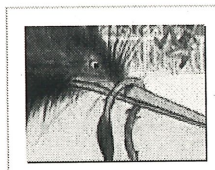
Feather cloaks



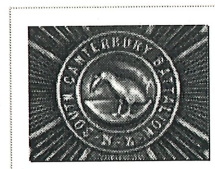
Early European engraving



New Zealand currency (1st of 2)



Trevor Lloyd cartoon



South Canterbury Battalion badge (1st of 3)

A taste of kiwi

Among the few Europeans who ate kiwi was the 19th-century explorer Charlie Douglas. He thought the eggs made great fritters when fried in oil from the kākāpō bird, but was less sure about the meat. After spraining an ankle he came across two kiwi, and being famished, he ate them. He said the best description of the taste was 'a piece of pork boiled in an old coffin'.²

Early Europeans

From the first, Europeans regarded kiwi as unusual birds. The first skin was taken to England in 1812 and inspired the first illustration of the bird, looking more like a penguin. As early as 1835, the missionary William Yate described the kiwi as 'the most remarkable and curious bird in New Zealand.'¹ In 1851, the first living bird was sent to England as a specimen for the London zoo.

Use as an emblem

As the kiwi began to disappear from the bush, its image began to appear as an emblem. In the second half of the 19th century, it was used as a trademark – for veterinary medicines, seeds, drugs, varnishes, insurance, on the Auckland University College crest, and on Bank of New Zealand notes.

When the first New Zealand pictorial stamps were issued in 1898, the kiwi was on the sixpenny stamp. About 1899, one observer said, 'From the fact that bank notes, postage stamps and advertisement chromos generally have a portrait of this unholy looking bird on them, it is evident that the kiwi is the accepted national bird of New Zealand.'³

National symbol

In the 20th century the kiwi began to represent the nation. In August 1904 the *New Zealand Free Lance* printed a cartoon which showed a kiwi growing in size after New Zealand's rugby 29–0 victory over an Anglo-Welsh team. This is possibly the first use of the kiwi as a cartoon symbol for the nation. The next year the *Westminster Gazette* printed a cartoon of a kiwi and a kangaroo going off to a colonial conference. In 1905 Trevor Lloyd also drew his first sporting cartoon using a kiwi when he showed the bird unable to swallow Wales following the defeat of the All Black rugby team. Lloyd more often symbolised the All Blacks with a moa during that tour, but by 1908 the kiwi had clearly become the dominant bird symbol in especially sporting ones.

3rd

young lion

As the moa, other symbols for New Zealand at this time included fern leaves, a small boy and a young lion

'Kiwis'

Until the First World War, the kiwi represented the country and not the people – they were En Zed(der)s, Maorilanders or Fernleaves. During the First World War, New Zealand soldiers were often described as Diggers or Pig Islanders. But by 1917 they were also being called Kiwis. It was probably not because they were thought to be, like the birds, short, stocky scrappers – this was a more common image of Australians, while New Zealanders liked to emphasise their stature and good manners. It was simply that the kiwi was distinct and unique to the country.

The kiwi had appeared on military badges since the South Canterbury Battalion used it in 1886, and it was taken up by several regiments in the First World War. Cartoonists also used the bird often during the war to symbolise New Zealand. At the end of the war New Zealand soldiers carved a giant kiwi on the chalk hills above Sling Camp on Salisbury Plain in England.

An Australian boot polish called Kiwi was widely used in the imperial forces. It was named by its founder, William Ramsay, in honour of his wife's birthplace.

Footnotes:

1. William Yate, *An account of New Zealand and of the formation and progress of the Church Missionary Society's mission in the northern island*. London: Seeley and Burnside, 1835, p. 58. >
2. Charlie Douglas, *Mr Explorer Douglas*, edited by John Pascoe, revised by Graham Langton. Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2004, p. 219. >
3. *Mr Explorer Douglas*, p. 218. >

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