

of our culture, an unofficial national emblem proclaiming our uniqueness. They are, without question, among the most distinctive and interesting elements of our fauna.

### Taxonomy

Three species of kiwi are recognised – the little spotted kiwi, the great spotted kiwi and the brown kiwi. The brown kiwi is also divided into three sub-species on the North Island, the South Island and Stewart Island. Research to be undertaken as part of the recovery plan will further define the taxonomy of kiwis, and changes to the status of the brown kiwi are likely.

### Past and present distribution

#### Little Spotted Kiwi

Members of this species used to be spread throughout the North Island but were all

but extinct there by the time the Europeans arrived. They used to be common in the South Island, but declined soon after the settlers arrived and are now probably extinct on both islands. They also occurred naturally on D'Urville Island, but are almost extinct there today.

Today the little spotted kiwi is thought to exist only on offshore islands. The Kapiti Island population of between 500 and 1500 birds is the largest, and some have been shifted to Long Island in the Marlborough Sounds, Red Mercury Island off the Coromandel coast and Hen Island in the Hauraki Gulf. These new populations appear to be reasonably successful, but until they are more securely established the little spotted kiwi will be considered endangered.

#### Great Spotted Kiwi

This kiwi appears never to have reached the North Island, and to have contracted its range in the South Island over the past few hundred years. It is thought this species

### Kiwi Recovery Strategy – Aims and objectives

#### Aim

To identify the current distribution, abundance and genetic diversity of kiwi, the trends of their populations and the threats they face.

#### Objectives

- Identify current distribution and abundance of kiwi
- Identify genetic diversity of kiwi
- Determine kiwi population trends through monitoring
- Determine threats to wild populations and develop management techniques for population maintenance and recovery

#### Aim

Take action to remove the risk of extension of endangered species, prevent further declines and begin the recovery of other kiwi populations.

#### Objectives

- Ensure the survival of the little spotted kiwi
- Identify and evaluate islands available for brown or great spotted kiwi (a contingency in case island transfers are required in the short term for endangered populations)
- Manage recovery of key mainland populations
- Develop the expertise to breed all kiwi species in captivity
- Promote public interest and involvement in kiwi conservation
- Manage mainland populations to reduce their rate of decline

The last objective will be achieved by endeavouring to protect and enhance kiwi habitat and by reducing the impact of dogs, possum trapping and poisoning, and road kills. This will involve the education of private landowners, such as farmers and the managers of exotic forests, possum hunters and pig hunters. Signs could be erected on roadsides alerting motorists to the possibility of kiwis crossing the road at night.



*Brown kiwi footprints in sand dunes at Masons Bay, Stewart Island. The Stewart Island subspecies has the unusual habit of foraging in the open during daylight. Photo: Rogan Colbourne, DoC*

was once more widespread east of the Southern Alps than they are now.

The present distribution of great spotted kiwis is not known in detail. They are found in three fairly separate groups mainly west of the Alps, between the Whanganui Inlet just below Cape Farewell and the Karangarua River half way down the western side of the South Island.

#### Brown Kiwi

Brown kiwi densities which are considered exceptional today, such as that in Waipoua in Northland, seem to have been common in the North Island at the turn of the century. Large numbers were reported on Mt Hikurangi on East Cape, and in 1877 a group of hunters in the Kaimanawa Ranges southeast of Taupo were reported as having 300 skins in their possession, but kiwis are now seldom seen in those regions.

It is thought that brown kiwis died out in the Tararua Ranges before the arrival of Europeans. Bones have been found at Paremata, north of Wellington, and in caves in the Wairarapa, but now the



*Little spotted kiwi, now extinct on the mainland, are thriving on Kapiti Island. Photo: Peter Daniel, DoC.*

southern most population in the North Island is at the tip of the Ruahine Range just south of the Hawke's Bay. Their retreat northwards seems to be continuing.

The brown kiwi was formerly widespread in Marlborough and the coastal regions of Kaikoura, Canterbury and northern Otago. Today the northernmost population in the South Island is at Okarito on the West Coast.

The most successful population exists in Northland across a range of vegetation types including exotic forest and rough farmland. They extend south to a line running westwards from Mangawai Heads to the top of the Kaipara Harbour.

Brown kiwis also live in the forests of the Coromandel Peninsula, in an area that fans out west from Lake Taupo to Kawhia Harbour southwest of Hamilton in the north and Wanganui in the south, and in an area east of Rotorua, extending from the Raukumara Ranges on East Cape to the tip of the Ruahine Range. The birds are often heard and caught in gin traps in the foothills along the eastern Bay of Plenty. Populations exist on Little Barrier, Kaware and Ponui Islands in the Hauraki Gulf, Moturua Island in the Bay of Islands and on Kapiti Island.