

Six varieties, four species

An early result was the discovery, by genetic studies in 1993, that there are at least four, not three, species of kiwi. What had been known earlier as the brown kiwi through the country, was found to be two or more quite distinct, although physically similar (cryptic) species. They are now known as the brown kiwi in the north and tokoeka (their Ngai Tahu name which literally means 'weka with a walking stick') in the south.

The split is not at Cook Strait, but between Okarito and Haast on the West Coast. The Okarito brown kiwi, or rowi, of South Okarito forest is more closely related to the brown kiwi of the North Island than to those living less than 200 kilometres away near Haast, even though they look more like their southern cousins.

Among tokoeka, the birds living in the mountains behind Haast are genetically and physically different from those in Fiordland or Stewart Island, being rufous in colour, with a down-curved bill. They are now called Haast tokoeka, while the others are called southern tokoeka.

The great spotted kiwi and little spotted kiwi complete the kiwi family. (The current distribution of the six varieties of kiwi is shown opposite.)

The path to extinction

Estimated kiwi population figures, projected from the year of Forest and Bird's foundation and its 1998 jubilee, show the birds will be functionally extinct on the mainland in another 75 years. The figures track the effect of a 5.8 percent annual decline in mainland populations. The offshore island populations, protected from mustelids, are stable for the North Island brown kiwi and the southern tokoeka. Only the number of little spotted kiwi (already extinct on the mainland) shows some improvement on predator-free islands.

	1923	1998	2073
North I Brown Kiwi			
North I	2,640,000	30,000	340
L Barrier I	1000	1000	1000
Okarito Brown Kiwi			
South I	11,000	130	1
Haast Tokoeka			
South I	18,000	200	2
Southern Tokoeka			
South I	530,000	6,000	68
Stewart I	20,000	20,000	20,000
Great Spotted Kiwi			
South I	1,760,000	20,000	226
Little Spotted Kiwi			
South I	3000	0	0
Islands	50	1100	1500
Mainland	4,962,000	56,330	637
Offshore islands	21,050	22,100	22,500
Overall	4,983,050	78,430	23,137

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Nature in Action

NIKON ACTION BINOCULARS

NATURALIST IV

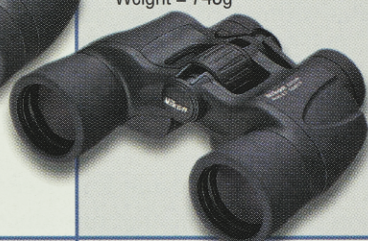
7x35CF



Magnification = 7 times
Field of view at 1000m = 163m
Close focusing distance = 5m
Weight = 690g

EGRET II

8x40CF



Magnification = 8 times
Field of view at 1000m = 143m
Close focusing distance = 5m
Weight = 745g

LOOKOUT IV

10x50CF



Magnification = 10 times
Field of view at 1000m = 114m
Close focusing distance = 7m
Weight = 960g

FIELDMASTER

12x50CF



Magnification = 12 times
Field of view at 1000m = 96m
Close focusing distance = 7m
Weight = 945g



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As a World Environment Partner of BirdLife International, Nikon helps to protect bird species threatened with extinction.

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