



AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

# NEWS

Number 48 November 1991 ISSN 0111-2252

# Kiwi & Moa

## Flightless Wonders

### KIWI & MOA: FLIGHTLESS WONDERS

#### Special Members Open Evening

Members and friends are invited to join us on Saturday December 7th at 7.30pm to visit the Kiwi and Moa exhibition. Children are especially welcome and encouraged to explore the Kiwi Activity Centre associated with the exhibition.

The kiwi and moa, refugees from ancient Gondwana are two of our most distinctive animals is the subject of a major special exhibition over the forthcoming holiday period. **KIWI & MOA: FLIGHTLESS WONDERS.**

This exciting exhibition is an extensive assemblage of New Zealand's ratites and their influences. The exhibition will be on show from 30 November to 9 February 1992 in the Special

Exhibition Hall. It will tell the birds' natural histories and illustrate their colourful contributions to New Zealand's popular culture.

**KIWI & MOA: FLIGHTLESS WONDERS** provides a rare opportunity to bring together all surviving members of the ratite family. This unusual reunion - of emu, ostrich, cassowary, rhea, kiwi and extinct moa - includes many surprises. The nature of the discovery by European science of the world's tallest ever bird, and the size of the kiwi's egg, are but two of its extreme features. All New Zealanders will recognise the extent to which the bird has penetrated our social fabric, appearing in the worlds of sport, war, gambling and commerce, to name a few. Overseas visitors will be able to contemplate how an insignificant flightless and nocturnal bird has cornered the market on our culture. ■

#### Special Activity Area For Children

We are delighted to announce a special **KIWI ACTIVITY CENTRE** for children, developed in association with the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, Kiwi Conservation Club and Point Chevalier School. The Auditorium will house a range of activities, displays and events for children from Saturday 7th December through until the 6 February. Here children will be encouraged to play, learn and touch. (Adults will be allowed entry). Many of the activities have been created and made by children for children. A list of events scheduled for the school holidays will be available to Members at the Open Evening on Saturday 7 December. ■



## Moas New Zealand's First Rockhounds?

Among the many items on display in the forthcoming Kiwi & Moa exhibition at the Museum, will be several collections of beautifully rounded and polished semi-precious gemstones made of chert, jasper, common opal and agate. They could easily have been found in a bowl of tumble-polished stones that often sit on the coffee table in the living rooms of rockhounds. The museum gemstones however are authentic moa gizzard stones that were ground smooth in the muscular gizzards of moas (thousands to hundreds of thousands of years ago.)

Like many birds, moas swallowed small pebbles which were held in the gizzard for many months or even years and used to help pulverize the fibrous plant material which they ate. Obviously softer pebbles would quickly abrade away and only the harder, mostly quartzose types (like these semi-precious gemstones) would be long-lasting. Some modern birds are known to be selective in

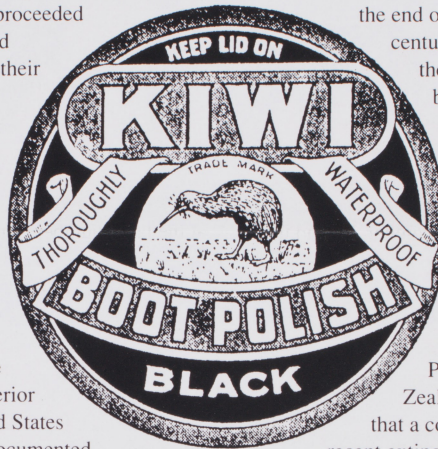
choosing the kind of grit and small pebbles they swallow as gizzard stones. It is quite possible that moas too may have

selected gleaming quartz pebbles in preference to softer and duller mudstones, limestones and other types. Certainly, by far the majority of authenticated moa gizzard stones are white quartz or coloured gemstone varieties of quartz, as are

most of the moa gizzard stones found scattered over the hills in many parts of New Zealand.

It is not unreasonable therefore, to suggest that moas may have been New Zealand's first rockhounds, roaming the countryside in search of shining pebbles of quartz and semi-precious gemstones, which they proceeded to collect and polish up in their gizzards. Moas were not the world's first rockhounds however, as several herbivorous dinosaur fossils in the Western Interior of the United States have been documented as having neat piles of well-polished quartzose gemstone pebbles preserved within their fossilised rib cages. These are interpreted as dinosaur gastroliths or "stomach stones" that also aided the breakdown of plant material.

Bruce Hayward. ■



## Kiwi - Endangered Species

Some months ago whilst Museum staff were planning "Kiwi & Moa", the Kiwi Recovery Programme was announced. New Zealand was shocked to learn that its national bird was already down the road to extinction. In response, the Museum's exhibition became primarily aimed at raising public awareness of the desperate plight of the kiwi.

With this grim prospect in mind, the Museum is working with the

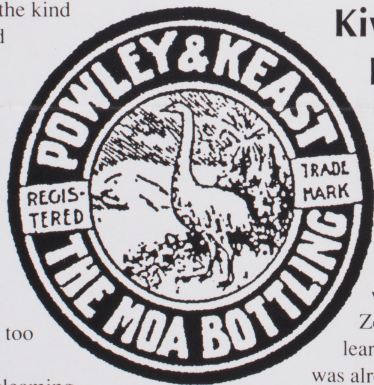
Department of Conservation, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, Kiwi Conservation Club and Auckland Zoo to provide extensive display material in the area of kiwi survival.

This was also an opportunity to compare the parallel careers of both New Zealand's ratites. At the end of the 19th century the larger - the moa - had become something of a national symbol, but it was soon to lose ground to its smaller cousin, the kiwi. Perhaps New Zealanders felt that a comparatively recent extinction did not

benefit a national symbol. But there is now the distinct possibility of history repeating itself. Among other things, we would need to seriously reconsider calling ourselves "Kiwis" if the bird went the same way as the moa. ■

## An Exhibition For Everyone

In addition to skeletons and skins, "Kiwi & Moa" will contain unconventional material, and have all age groups in mind. A giant Gondwana Jigsaw will enable visitors to work out how New Zealand got its two unusual ratites in the first place. There will be considerable kiwi and moa imagery in various media, including photographs, paintings and prints. As well as sculptural, heraldic and ceramic birds, sound archives will also be drawn upon. Exhibition-goers will be able to don headphones and compare the calls of the three species of kiwi, or listen to an account of a claimed moa sighting in 1881. ■

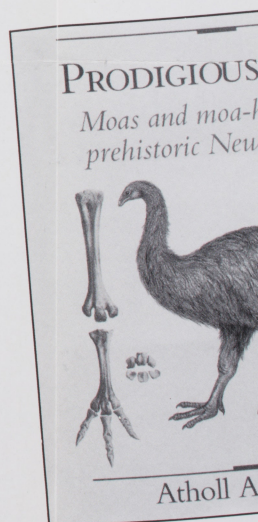


## New of B

In the Aug we announce two books re members, N EXTINCT B Curator of B KIWI: MOR the Museum Richard Wo available at Limited num will be avail Lecture on M Museum Me December 7

## "Prodigious Birds"

For those & MOA: FL WONDERS the most imp sive book ev moa-hunters available.



"Prodigious Birds and Kiwi: More



## New Books of Birds

In the August issue of the NEWS we announced the publication of two books recently written by staff members, *NEW ZEALAND'S EXTINCT BIRDS*, by the Museum's Curator of Birds Brian Gill, and *KIWI: MORE THAN A BIRD* by the Museum's Curator of Display Richard Wolfe. Both are now available at the Museum Shop. Limited numbers of signed copies will be available at the Institute Lecture on November 26, and the Museum Member Open Evening on December 7th. ■

### "Prodigious Birds"

For those of you who visit *KIWI & MOA: FLIGHTLESS WONDERS* and wish to learn more, the most important and comprehensive book ever written on moas and moa-hunters has recently become available.

It is Atholl Anderson's, "Prodigious Birds: Moas and moa-hunting in prehistoric New Zealand", published by Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989.

The book is divided into two sections, the scientific discovery and biology of moas, and moa-hunting, processing and extinction.

The first part looks at the history and distribution of moa and the development of current ideas which list eleven species in six genera. It also looks at the origin of moas, their ecology and behaviour.

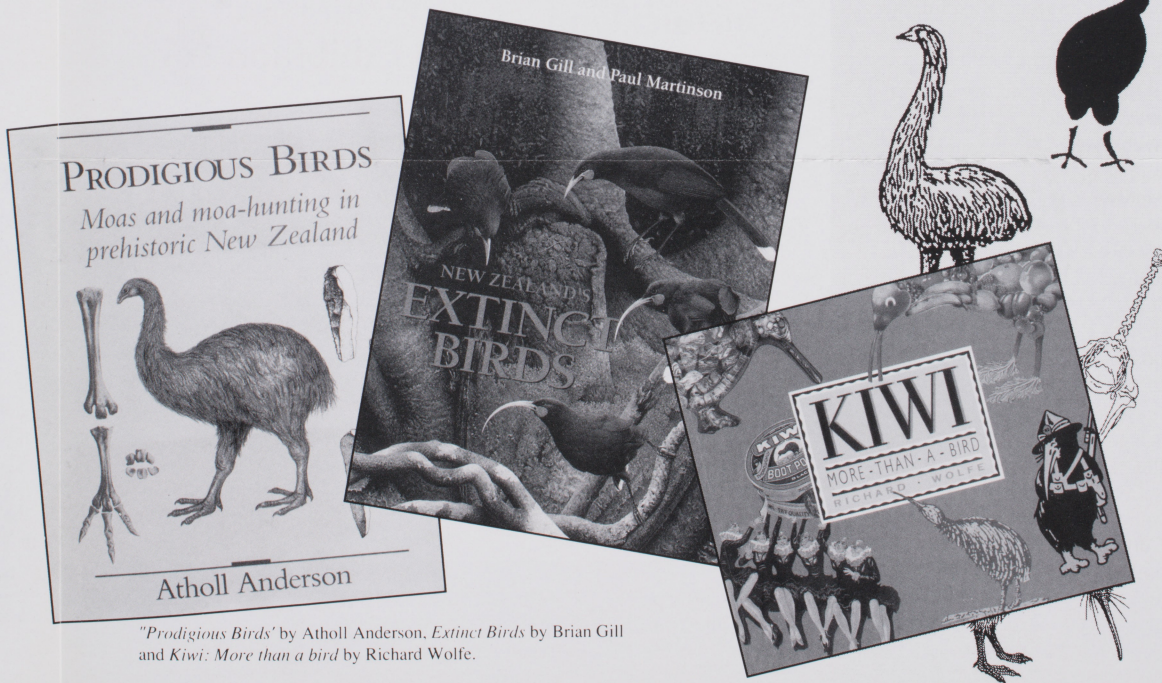
In the second part the author looks at the large number of moa-hunter sites which have been found, mostly in the South Island but also in some parts of the North. Several chapters look at the relationship of man and moa, including hunting methods and the influences that the new predator had on the birds ultimate extinction.

This book will answer all the questions you may ever have had concerning the moa. It is available in the Museum Library. Nigel Prickett. ■

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 25 November  
1991 8pm School Room

Institute Members attending this year's Annual General Meeting will receive a rare treat - two speakers will address aspects of the forthcoming Kiwi and Moa exhibition. Dr Brian Gill, Ornithologist, will briefly outline the biology of ratites and the Kiwi and Moa in particular. Richard Wolfe, Curator of Display and Coordinator of the exhibition will talk about the storyline of 'KIWI AND MOA: FLIGHTLESS WONDERS'. A light supper will follow.



"Prodigious Birds" by Atholl Anderson, *Extinct Birds* by Brian Gill and *Kiwi: More than a bird* by Richard Wolfe.



### GLOBE THEATRE HANGINGS

This very successful exhibition closed on a high note on September 22. Since that time we have received a number of enquiries regarding tour dates elsewhere in the country. Venue and dates are:

**November 20 - January 12 1992**

Manawatu Art Gallery  
Palmerston North

**January 27 - March 1 1992**

Sarjeant Gallery  
Wanganui

**March 1992**

James Cook Hotel  
Wellington

### SPECIAL THEATRE PRIVILEGES

Recently returned from the Edinburgh Festival, Jim Moriarty performs in "Michael James Manaia" by New Zealand playwright John Broughton at the Watershed Theatre. The season extends from November 24th - December 15th. Members can attend this play for the special price of \$17. Contact the Corner Booking Office for details Ph 303-3206.

### CHRISTMAS CLOSURE

The Library and Administration areas will close at 1pm on Wednesday 24th December and will reopen at 9am (1pm for the Library) on Monday 6 January 1992. All areas of the Museum will be closed on December 25th.

### NEW POSTAL ADDRESS

Members please note changes:

**Auckland Museum Private  
Bag 92018 Auckland 1.**

**Telephone: 309-0443**

**Fax: 799956**

### ANNUAL LIBRARY CLOSURE

The Museum Library will be closed between Monday 2 December 1991 and Saturday 14 December 1991 inclusive. It will reopen at 1 pm Monday 16 December 1991.

During this time the Library staff will undertake collection management tasks (particularly cataloguing of original materials) which have not been possible during opening hours.

We apologise if this closure causes any inconvenience to our members and other Library users, but it is essential for the efficient running and maintenance of the Library's collections.

If you wish to return Library books during this period there will be a 'book returns' bin on the ground floor of the Administration area near Reception.

## Kiwi & Moa

Flightless Wonders

### Christmas Carols at Auckland Museum

The Oriana Consort will sing Carols and Motets at the Auckland Museum on the following dates.

**Sunday 1 December 2.30-3.30pm**

**Sunday 22 December 2.30-3.30pm**

The performances will take place from the first floor gallery over the foyer and in the World War II Gallery. The Oriana Consort have performed on a number of occasions at the Museum and have entranced visitors with their singing and enlivened the wonderful acoustic quality of the building. Come along and join us for these occasions.

## FORTHCOMING PUBLIC PROGRAMMES

### MUSEUM FIELDTRIPS

By popular demand we intend to organise a repeat of the Geology and Archaeology fieldtrips in the New Year. Announcements will be made in the next issue of the NEWS.

### RESOURCE MANAGEMENT LECTURE

As a part of the Australasian Conference on Coastal and Ocean Engineering there will be a public seminar discussing 'Resource Management Law Reform in New Zealand.' This will take place on Wednesday 4 December 1991, 7.00pm at the University Conference Centre, Symonds Street. All Members are welcome.

### NEW ZEALAND'S EXTINCT BIRDS

BRIAN GILL

**Tuesday 26 Nov 1991 1.00**

**Supper Room**

Ornithologist Auckland Museum

Brian Gill will give an account of the extinct birds of New Zealand, of which there are 57 species. These comprise species known from fossilised bones up to 40 million years old, including 13 species of penguins; species known from sub-fossil remains, including the eleven moas; and species that became extinct after European settlement. They include such unusual birds as the Adzebill, the New Zealand Owlet-night jar and Shirtons's Falsetoothed Pelican. The talk is illustrated with pictures from Brian's book entitled New Zealand's Extinct birds (with paintings by Paul Martinson).

Auckland War Memorial Museum was erected in the Auckland Domain in 1929 and extended in 1960 as the Memorial to those from Auckland Province who died in the two World Wars. It is administered by the Auckland Institute and Museum, whose origins go back to the first Auckland Museum of 1852.

Auckland Museum News is issued free to members of the Institute and Museum, a group of friends and supporters to the Museum. **Auckland Institute and Museum, Private Bag 92018, Auckland 1, Phone 0-9-309 0443.**