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THE APTERYX, OR KIWI.

The apteryx, or kiwi, is a native of New Zealand, and is a very strange, weird bird. It has scarcely a trace of wings, and is on that account called apteryx, or wingless. It has very little similarity to other short winged birds. Its body is compact, its neck short but thick, the wings so stunted that they are scarcely visible, except in the skeleton. The plumage consists of long, lancet shaped feathers, which are covered part of their length with shiny silken down. The quill portion of the feathers is very short. The general color of the apteryx is chestnut brown. The bird has no tail. The beak is long and curved; the nostrils, very small and narrow, are set on each side of the tip. The legs are very strong and short.

Not many years ago the apteryx was thought to be a fabulous bird, and its veritable existence was denied by scientific men. The first one brought to Europe was called the *Apteryx Australis*; it was killed in the forests of New Zealand, on the south-western coast. A second one from the same locality was carried to the British Museum.

Almost all the specimens found in collections now come from the North Island, and belong to another species (*Apteryx mantelli*). This bird is called kiwi by the natives. Bartlett says that this species is distinguished from the others by being somewhat smaller; it has also longer legs and shorter claws, and there are long bristly hairs on the head. The color of the plumage is darker and more reddish.

The kiwi lives in the uninhabited forest regions of the North Island but is wholly extinct in the inhabited regions, and is not very easily captured. Dieffenbach, who resided in New Zealand eighteen months only obtained only one skin although he offered large rewards to the natives.

The bird is found now most frequently in Little Barrier Island, a small uninhabited island covered with dense forests, situated in Hauraki Gulf, near Auckland, and in the forests of the mountain chain between Cape Palliser and the East Cape, on the Southeastern side of the North Island. This island consists of mountains about seven hundred

metres high, is only accessible in a quiet sea, and the existence of these wingless birds there proves that it was once connected with the other part of the Island. Two of these birds male and female, were captured alive near the source of the Rocky and Slate

Rivers, on a dangerous height a thousand metres above the sea. The natives carried them to Hochstetter, who paid five pounds sterling for them.

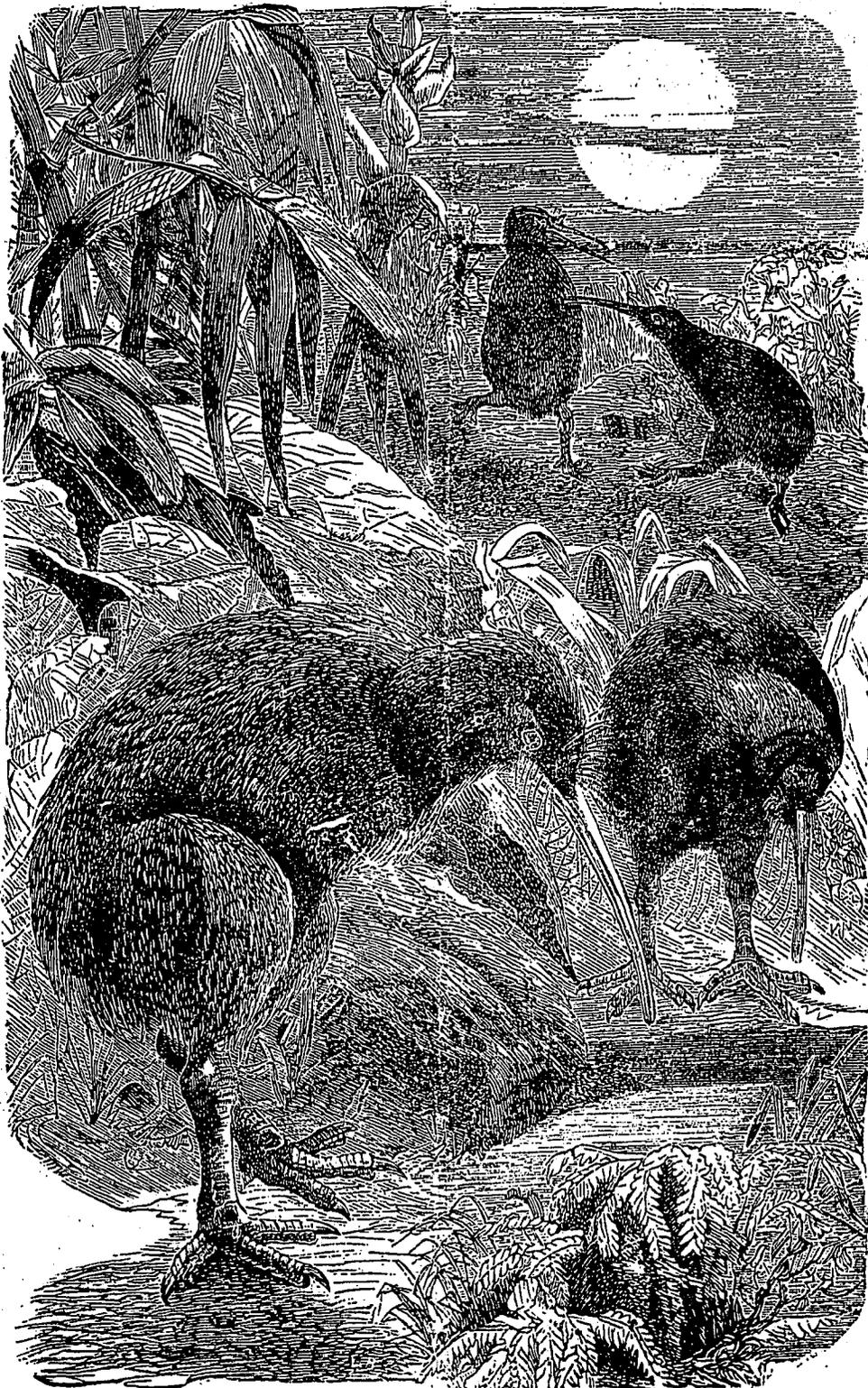
In the year 1861 Skeet found the kiwi very abundant upon the grassy mountain

ridges on the eastern side of the Owen River. With the help of two dogs he caught every night from fifteen to twenty of these birds. He and his people subsisted upon their flesh.

These birds are nocturnal, and during the day hide in holes in the earth or under the roots of large trees, and only come forth at night to obtain their food. They live upon insects, larvae, worms, and the seeds of various plants. The natives hunt them only at night, and often bewilder them so with the glare of their torches that they can be caught by the hand or knocked down with sticks. They are remarkably fleet of foot, which makes up for the absence of wings. When running they take long strides, hold their body in an inclined position with the neck stretched out. They moved cautiously, and as noiselessly as a rat. If disturbed during the day they yawn frequently, and wrench their wide open jaws out of shape in the most singular manner. If provoked they raise their body to an erect position, lift up the foot to the breast, and strike with it, their only but not insignificant weapon of defence. It has been said that they attract worms to the surface by striking on the ground with their powerful feet.

While in search of food they make a constant snuffling sound through the nostrils. It is doubtful whether they are guided by the sense of feeling or of smell. It is certain that the sense of feeling is strongly developed, for they touch every object with the point of their bill, whether they are eating or examining the ground. When they are confined in a room or cage, the snuffling sound is only heard during the night when they are in search of food or eating, and is not heard when they softly touch the walls of the cage. Buller has observed these imprisoned birds searching the ground in the immediate vicinity of a lost worm, without finding the morsel again, and has noticed that they are never able to take a piece of meat from the ground or from a vessel of water until they have touched it with the point of their bill.

It is very amusing to see the free birds searching for worms. They



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