

## Child-sized parrot once lived in New Zealand

9th August, 2019



Creative Commons 2.0  
via Bernard Spragg, NZ on flickr.com

Scientists have found fossils that once belonged to a giant parrot. They say the fossilized bones are from the biggest parrot that ever lived. It was probably as tall as a three-year-old child and weighed around eight kilograms. The

researchers found the fossils in New Zealand. They have called the new parrot Hercules, after a strongman of ancient Greek mythology. The scientists studied the fossilized leg bones they found and said Hercules was around a metre tall. This means Hercules is twice the size of all other known parrots. The largest parrot scientists know of is the kakapo, a flightless bird that also lives in New Zealand. The kakapo is on the critically endangered species list.

New Zealand is famous for its flightless birds. The kiwi is a symbol of the country. Scientists say these are vulnerable. This means they could become endangered if their environment stays the same. Another famous New Zealand bird is the 3.6-metre-tall moa. These flightless birds were the biggest birds that ever lived. They were overhunted to extinction early in the 15th century. Hercules lived about 19 million years ago. A researcher said it probably ate nuts, fruit and seeds, and "perhaps even other parrots". A researcher said: "New Zealand is well known for its giant birds. Until now, no one has ever found an extinct giant parrot, anywhere. There are many more unexpected species yet to be discovered."

Sources: [cbc.ca](http://cbc.ca) / [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com) / [cnet.com](http://cnet.com)

## Writing

We should spend more money on looking for ancient species. Discuss.

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

scientists / fossils / bones / New Zealand / strongman / Ancient Greece / species / famous / national symbol / vulnerable / environment / extinction / seeds / extinct

## True / False

- a) Scientists found fossils from the biggest parrot in history. T / F
- b) The giant parrot weighed about eighteen kilograms. T / F
- c) The scientists used a wing bone to guess the size of the parrot. T / F
- d) The largest parrot in New Zealand today is the kea. T / F
- e) The symbol of New Zealand is a flightless bird. T / F
- f) There was once a bird in New Zealand over three-and-a-half metres tall. T / F
- g) The giant parrot became extinct around 19 million years ago. T / F
- h) A researcher said there are no more new species to discover. T / F

## Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1. <b>giant</b>       | a. sign        |
| 2. <b>probably</b>    | b. surprising  |
| 3. <b>ancient</b>     | c. threatened  |
| 4. <b>size</b>        | d. found       |
| 5. <b>endangered</b>  | e. of long ago |
| 6. <b>symbol</b>      | f. destruction |
| 7. <b>famous</b>      | g. huge        |
| 8. <b>extinction</b>  | h. height      |
| 9. <b>unexpected</b>  | i. well known  |
| 10. <b>discovered</b> | j. likely      |

## Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you know about fossils?
- b) Were animals from a million years ago better than today's animals?
- c) What do you think of the name Hercules?
- d) What would you do if you saw a metre-high parrot?
- e) Would you like to be a scientist on this project?
- f) What is your favourite bird, and why?
- g) What ancient animals lived in your country?
- h) How can we protect birds that are endangered?

## Phrase Match

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. fossils that once belonged              | a. 15th century            |
| 2. a strongman of ancient                  | b. bird                    |
| 3. Hercules is twice the size of all       | c. of the country          |
| 4. a flightless                            | d. extinction              |
| 5. The kakapo is on the critically         | e. other known parrots     |
| 6. The kiwi is a symbol                    | f. to a giant parrot       |
| 7. These flightless birds were the biggest | g. yet to be discovered    |
| 8. They were overhunted to                 | h. Greek mythology         |
| 9. early in the                            | i. endangered species list |
| 10. many more unexpected species           | j. birds that ever lived   |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What do you know about parrots?
- What things is New Zealand famous for?
- What is the symbol of your country?
- How happy are you there are no more 3.6-metre-tall birds?
- Do you think the Hercules parrot was dangerous?
- Would you like to visit New Zealand?
- What questions would you like to ask the scientists?

## Spelling

- Scientists have found lsfsios
- elobdgen to a giant parrot
- pyarobl as tall as a three-year-old child
- anetnci Greek mythology
- a fgstslhlie bird
- on the critically endangered picesse list
- The kiwi is a ymsolb of the country
- Scientists say these are lvebranleu
- overhunted to tcinnotxei
- early in the 15th rtnyecu
- There are many more unexpected peseisc
- yet to be rdscevedoi

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. j	3. e	4. h	5. c
6. a	7. i	8. f	9. b	10. d

## Role Play

### Role A – Swans

You think swans are the best birds. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their birds. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): eagles, penguins or parrots.

### Role B – Eagles

You think eagles are the best birds. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their birds. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): swans, penguins or parrots.

### Role C – Penguins

You think penguins are the best birds. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their birds. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): parrots, swans or eagles.

### Role D – Parrots

You think parrots are the best birds. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their birds. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): penguins, eagles or swans.

## Speaking – The Best Birds

Rank these with your partner. Put the best birds at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |          |                |
|----------|----------------|
| • swan   | • humming bird |
| • eagle  | • penguin      |
| • emu    | • pigeon       |
| • parrot | • peacock      |

### Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	F	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	T	h	F
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.