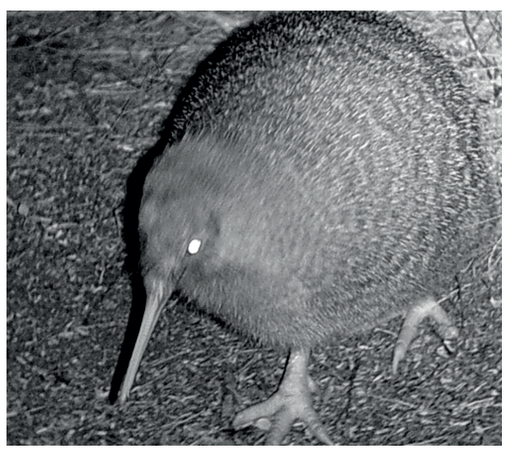
Tiritiri Matangi Kids,

by Stacey

As night falls on Tiritiri Matangi Island, the landscape transforms into a world of enchantment. The fading light of day gives way to the soft glow from the moon and the nocturnal symphony begins. It's really important to use a red torch during a night walk, as red light is less likely to disturb the wildlife. The photos featured on this page were captured with a camera on night binoculars. Read the text and see if you can figure out whether the facts are true or false. Challenge yourself to come up with as many words as possible from 'adaptations'. Enjoy.

The kiwi pukupuku/ little spotted kiwi ventures from its burrow to search for dinner in the cool, damp earth, with its diet mostly consisting of insects. While the kiwi's small eyes are not well-adapted to low light, it overcomes this challenge by feeling, smelling, and hearing its way around. It forages at night, using its beak to probe the ground up to 12 cm deep. Its large ear openings enhance its sense of hearing, and its long, sensitive whiskers and beak help it detect food hidden in the soil and leaf litter.



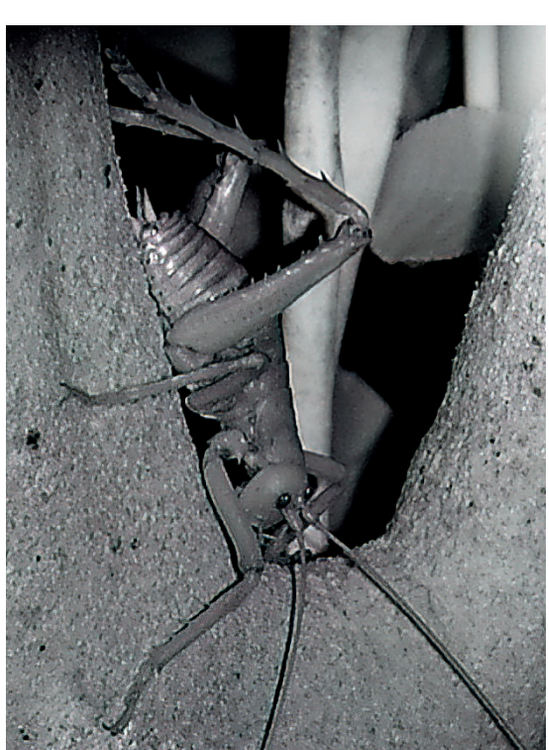
Photos: Darren Markin

1. True or false? The area of the kiwi's brain responsible for their sense of smell is notably larger than in other birds and more similar to that in mammals.

The tuatara, New Zealand's largest reptile, is mainly active at night when their food is more abundant, though they also come out during the day to bask in the sun. At night, tuatara roam around their burrow entrances to hunt for prey. As carnivorous reptiles, they catch a variety of animals, including wētā, worms, lizards, millipedes, and occasionally small seabirds.They often share their burrows with seabirds. The tuatara's closest relatives are an extinct group of reptiles from the dinosaur era. While adult tuatara hunt at night, young ones are more active during the day to avoid being preyed upon by the adults.

2. True or false? Tuatara grow fast and can live for over 50 years.

During the day, wētāpunga often hide among dead leaves and fronds from tree ferns, nīkau palms, or cabbage trees. At night, they emerge from their hiding spots to explore the trees or scuttle across the ground. Being active at night helps them avoid predators, such as birds and other animals that hunt during the day. It is also cooler and damp, which helps them stay healthy. During the hot day, they can lose water and get too dry, so being active at night is better for them. Many of the plants wētāpunga eat are more accessible or have higher moisture content at night, making it easier for them to find food. The wētāpunga is one of the largest insects in the world, with some species weighing up to 70 grams (a medium-sized apple) and measuring up to 10 cm long.



3. True or false? Wētāpunga are endemic to New Zealand**.**

Nocturnal animals help keep nature in balance. They play important roles, like spreading seeds and helping plants grow, which is essential for a healthy environment. The animals often have special adaptations, like enhanced night vision or heightened senses, to help them find food in the dark.

How many words can you make using this word?

adaptations

0-10 great start, 11-20 fantastic, 21+ you're a word genius

Answers:1, True. 2, Tuatara grow slowly and can live for over 100 years, making them one of the longest-living reptiles. 3, True, wētāpunga can only be found in New Zealand.