

Rare white kiwi chick hatches at NZ wildlife park

May 26 2011



In this May 22, 2011 photo provided by the Pukaha Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre Thursday, May 26, 2011, a rare white kiwi chick is seen three weeks after it hatched on May 1 in Wellington, New Zealand. The all-white kiwi, named 'Manukura' is believed to be the first white chick born in captivity. Kiwis are normally brown in color. The chick is the thirteenth of fourteen kiwi chicks hatched at the wildlife center this season. (AP Photo/Pukaha Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre, Mike Heydon, Jet Productions) EDITORIAL USE ONLY

A rare white kiwi chick hatched at a New Zealand wildlife reserve will have a protected early life - unlike wild kiwis that face nonnative predators that are slowly wiping them out, an official said Thursday.

The chick, named Manukura or "Chiefly One" by local Maori, was born

at Pukaha Mount Bruce National Wildlife Center on May 1, weighing about 8.8 ounces (250 grams), Department of [Conservation area](#) manager Chris Lester said.

Lester said white kiwis are spotted in the wild about every three or four years, but the last one in captivity was released in 1915. The small, [flightless birds](#) are usually brown.

Manukura is being hand-reared in the reserve's new [kiwi](#) nursery, and will remain closely protected for at least the first year of his life, he said.

Once the bird is able to fend for itself, Lester said one alternative will be that it "remains in a predator-proof environment at the reserve ... or we will release him to take his chances."

Native to New Zealand, kiwis face potential extinction from a range of introduced predators that are also killing many other native bird species.

Rangitane o Wairarapa Maori tribal chief executive Jason Kerehi said the tribe's elders saw the white chick as a "tohu," or sign of new beginnings, and a "taonga," or treasure.

"Every now and then something extraordinary comes along to remind you of how special life is," Kerehi said. "While we're celebrating all 14 kiwi hatched (at the reserve) this year, Manukura is a very special gift."

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Citation: Rare white kiwi chick hatches at NZ wildlife park (2011, May 26) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-05-rare-white-kiwi-chick-hatches.html>

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