



Marvelous Manaia

National Zoo Name: Manaia

Species: North Island Brown Kiwi

Location: Smithsonian's National Zoological Park

His Story

Manaia hatched at the Zoo on February 13, 2006. He's very special guy, because he's the first kiwi chick to hatch at the Zoo in over 30 years! In fact, he surprised his keepers because he decided to come into the world early. Normally kiwis take 75-78 days to hatch, but not Manaia. He came out of his egg on day 63!

Interesting Fact: A kiwi's egg is 15-20% of their body weight. This would be like a 100 pound woman giving birth to a 15-24 pound baby!

What's in a Name?

Kiwis are named for the loud ringing sound the males make. Females make a much different sound that may remind you of the an old, rusty barn door opening. Manaia's name is Māori (a native language of New Zealand) and means "Guardian of Earth and Sky."

Did someone say food?

Manaia loves to eat and like many birds he LOVES worms. Earthworms are his favorite, but he is quite fond of mealworms as well and is given some every time he meets with the public. Kiwis have terrible eyesight, but they do have a set of nostrils on the tip of their long bill which helps them smell their food instead of seeing it. Manaia also eats "birdloaf", the Zoo's version of meatloaf which contains beef, mixed veggies, bird pellets and fruits.

A Lot to Learn

Kiwis are nocturnal which means they are usually seen at night and they are very shy which makes them difficult to study. As a result we are still learning a lot about them. However, we do know that they are very different from many other types of birds for several reasons. In fact, many consider them to be an "honorary mammal" because of the way they look and act. They cannot fly and their feathers look more like fur. They also form life-long pair bonds and are very protective of their territory. Manaia is very mellow though, and hasn't figured out that he is supposed to be aggressive yet!

Where You Can Find Him

Manaia has a very special job at the Zoo. Three times a week he can be seen acting as an Educational Ambassador for Zoo visitors. This job is very important because with the aid of an Animal Keeper, he teaches Zoo visitors about kiwis and explains why they are endangered and what is being done to help them. In the spring and summer look for him Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 11am in the Zoo Education Center, and in the fall and winter you will find him on the same days at the Bird Resource Center in the Bird House.

