

# Did You Know?

The kererū is a bird of surprises. Take a look at the list below, then answer the question sheet.



- Did you know the kererū is one of the largest pigeons in the world?
- Did you know that a mature kererū is 51 centimetres or 1 foot 8 inches in length and weighs 650 grams or 1 lb 6.9 oz?
- Did you know kererū are found most in the lowland forests of the North, South and Stewart Islands of New Zealand?
- Did you know that when Captain Cook visited New Zealand in the 1770s, an observer stated he'd seen flocks of over 100 kererū fly into the air from the bush? What a magnificent sight it must have been!
- Did you know the kereru has been totally protected since 1921 – over ninety years?
- Did you know that kererū are vegetarians? They only eat fruit, flowers, leaves, buds and roots of special plants all year round. They do not eat insects, slugs, snails or worms.
- Did you know that kererū is a VERY IMPORTANT bird in New Zealand – and why? It is the ONLY BIRD with a mouth big enough to swallow the seeds of the giant trees like kauri, and fly the long distances required to regenerate them.
- Did you know that if the kererū's numbers drop to a low level and they cannot sustain themselves – or, worst of all, become extinct – the giant trees of the forest will eventually die out? That is why we must look after them for the generations of New Zealanders to come.
- Did you know kererū mate for life?
- Did you know that when the kererū are mating, they perform an amazing aerobatic dance? The male starts with some cute bobbing up and down. He then glides high into the air where he stalls before plunging dangerously downwards in an impressively steep dive. Swiftly taking a U-turn, he ascends to form a spectacular "loop de loop". When the female joins him, they have great fun showing off to one another.

- Did you know the kererū's nest looks like a flimsy platform of a single layer of twigs with a dent in the middle for the egg? It's often seen in the fork of a tree or supported by a tangle of vines.
- Did you know that the kererū lays one egg only when it nests in spring or early summer? If fruit is plentiful, the kererū will sometimes mate more than once and raise up to 4 chicks in one breeding season.
- Did you know the kererū's new born chick is called a "squab"?
- Did you know the squab is fed on "crop milk" 2-3 times a day? Crop milk looks like a smoothie but is regurgitated food from the parents.
- Did you know the kererū share the responsibility of looking after their chick? They work in shifts: the hen through the night and morning then the male mid-day to evening.
- Did you know the chick stays in the nest for 30-45 days before it can fly? This young bird is called a "fledgling".
- Did you know the kererū's young stay with their parents for up to two years? Their parents teach them skills to cope in the wild, including which trees in the area to go to when food is scarce.
- Did you know the kererū like to take a shower in light rain? The giant bird showers by hanging upside-down, its feet firmly gripping a branch. What a clown!
- Did you know that the kereru is able to live to about 15 years? Unfortunately their average life expectancy on the mainland is only 5-7 years. This is due to predators like cats, rats, dogs, possums, hunting birds like hawks, weasels, stoats and ferrets.



**Ann Russell** WRITER

Writing Children's Stories

[www.annrussellwriter.com](http://www.annrussellwriter.com)

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