

Huia

I was the first of birds to sing
I sang to signal rain
the one I loved was singing
and singing once again

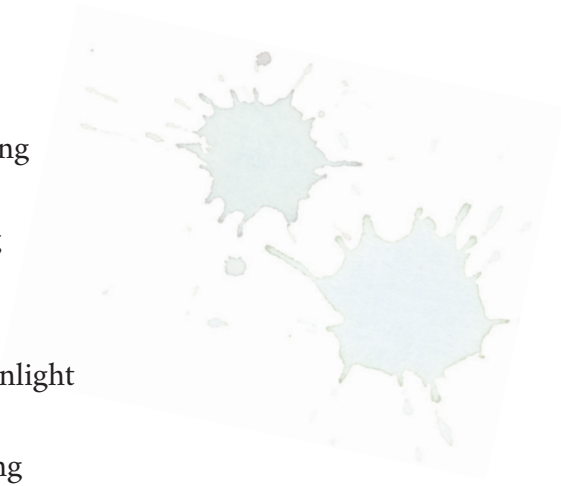
My wings were made of sunlight
My tail was made of frost
My song was now a warning
and now a song of love

I sang upon a postage stamp
I sang upon your coins
but money stepped towards me
and stole away my voice

Where are you when you vanish?
Where are you when you're found?
I'm made of greed and anguish
a feather on the ground

I lived among you once
and now I can't be found
I'm made of things that vanish
a feather on the ground

Bill Manhire

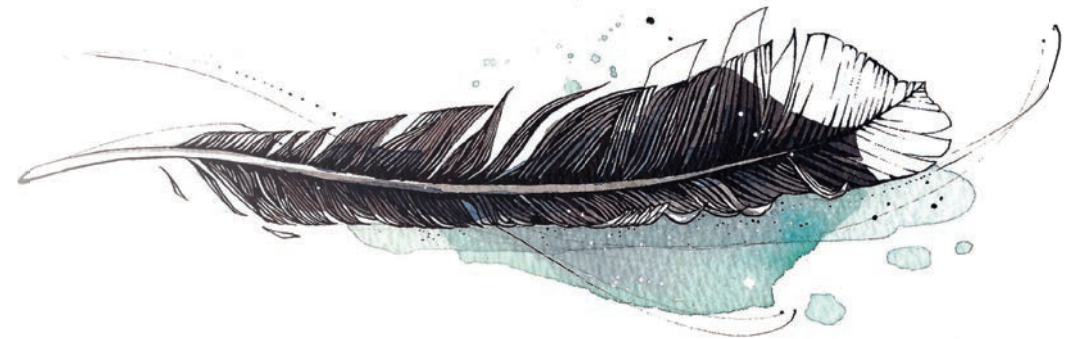


WHAT HAPPENED TO THE HUIA?

To Māori, the huia was tapu. The bird was prized for its beautiful tail feathers. Only rangatira of high rank and their whānau wore huia feathers, usually in their hair. This changed in 1901, when the Duke of York visited New Zealand. A Māori woman – as a token of friendship and respect – placed her own feather in the Duke's hatband. From that day, the bird's fate was sealed.

The huia was a social bird. Pairs mated for life. At one time, the species was found all over the North Island, but by the late nineteenth century, it was in serious trouble. Although some huia were hunted, the burning of lowland forests for farming had a bigger impact. Introduced predators and European collectors added to the death toll.

Rangatira became concerned by the bird's declining numbers, and they made certain places where the huia lived tapu. In 1892, the species finally became protected by law, but it wasn't enough. After the Duke's visit, the huia feather became popular in England, especially with fashionable people who wanted a feather for their hats. Back in New Zealand, there was good money to be made from selling huia feathers, and illegal shooting parties would kill hundreds of birds at a time. The last confirmed sighting of the huia was in the Tararua Ranges, near Wellington, on 28 December 1907.



Huia

by Bill Manhire

The Ministry of Education and Lift Education would like to thank Bill Manhire for adapting his poem “Huia” for a younger audience.

Text copyright © Crown 2020

Illustration by Rachel Walker copyright © Crown 2020

For copyright information about how you can use this material, go to:
www.tki.org.nz/Copyright-in-Schools/Terms-of-use

Published 2020 by the Ministry of Education,
PO Box 1666, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.
www.education.govt.nz

All rights reserved.
Enquiries should be made to the publisher.

ISBN 978 1 77663 743 0 (online)
ISSN 2624 3636 (online)

Publishing Services: Lift Education E Tū
Editor: Susan Paris
Designers: Jodi Wicksteed and Liz Tui Morris
Literacy Consultant: Melanie Winthrop
Consulting Editors: Hōne Apanui and Emeli Sione



SCHOOL JOURNAL LEVEL 3 NOVEMBER 2020

Curriculum learning areas	English Social Sciences
Reading year level	Year 6
Keywords	Aotearoa New Zealand’s Histories, colonisation, conservation, exploitation, extinct, history, huia, kaitiakitanga, language, mōteatea, native bird, nature, poetry, rangatira, rhyme, rhythm