

Haast's Eagle

by David Chadwick

In the 1870s, some bones of a huge bird were found in a Canterbury swamp. Scientists named the bird Haast's eagle. Since then, bones of more Haast's eagles have been found, including ten complete skeletons.

Scientists have been able to learn a lot about Haast's eagle by looking closely at the bones. The eagle was big, fast, and strong, and it ate other birds, mostly **moa**. It would dive down from the sky and strike its **prey** with its powerful legs and long, sharp claws.

But when humans arrived in Aotearoa, they cleared a lot of the bush where the eagle lived, and they killed all the moa, which were the eagle's main food.



About five hundred years ago, the Haast's eagle became extinct – there were none left.

Some Māori myths are about a giant bird called the hōkioi. Scientists say that the Haast's eagle was the largest eagle that ever lived. They think that the hōkioi and the Haast's eagle were probably the same bird.

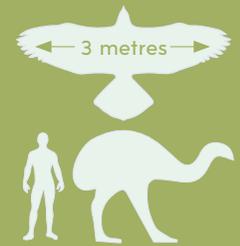
Haast's Eagle Facts

Wingspan: 3 metres

Weight: 12-13 kilograms

Top speed: 80 kilometres per hour

Claws: 9 centimetres (as long as the claws of a tiger!)



Glossary

moa – a large, flightless bird that lived only in New Zealand

prey – an animal that is hunted by another animal

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