

Camouflage

by Andrew Gunn



*Ready
to Read*

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wētā (weh-tah): an insect native to New Zealand

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What is camouflage?

What can you see in this photo?
An animal? A plant?
Can you tell which parts
are the animal and
which parts are the plant?

Many animals have colours, markings or shapes that make them hard to see. This is called **camouflage**.

The animal in the photo is a Wellington green gecko. It lives in the tops of trees. Birds live in trees, too – and birds eat geckos. The colour and markings of this gecko help it to hide from the birds.



If we change the colour in the photo, the gecko is easy to see.

Stick insect

Why is camouflage important?

Camouflage helps creatures to hide from **predators** (creatures that hunt and kill).



The tree wētā lives inside rotting trees. There are many predators, such as birds, cats, rats, and hedgehogs, that eat wētā. The colours and markings of tree wētā make it hard for these predators to find them.



This stick insect looks just like a twig. A predator that thinks the stick insect is just part of a bush or tree won't be interested in it. Not many predators like eating bits of wood!

Hiding on the rocks

The tuatara sunbathes on rocks. Its skin is grey and knobbly, just like the rocks. The tuatara keeps very still so predators like rats, ferrets, and possums don't notice it.



Tuatara



Otago skink

The Otago skink lives on rocks that are covered in patches of **lichen** or **moss** (plants that spread over the ground). The skin of the Otago skink is black with coloured patches, just like the patches on the rocks. These colours help the skink to hide from predators like cats, stoats, and weasels.

Hiding in the sea

Some creatures have a special type of camouflage called **countershading**, which means they have light colours on one side and dark colours on the other. When penguins are swimming, countershading makes them hard to see from both above and below.

This helps to protect them from predators like seals.

Blue penguin



This seal is hunting the penguin, but the penguin is hard to see. When the seal swims above the penguin, the penguin's dark back blends in with the darker sea below it.



When the seal swims below the penguin, the penguin's white belly blends in with the light shining down from above it.



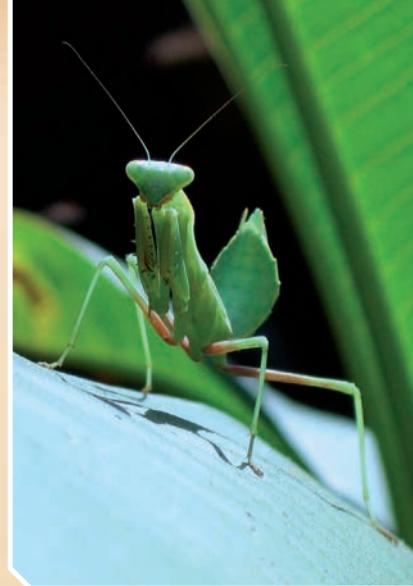
Brown kiwi

Hiding in the dark

The brown kiwi is **nocturnal**. This means it sleeps during the day and moves about at night. Even in the brightest moonlight, the brown kiwi is hard to see. Its brown feathers match the forest floor where it lives. This makes it hard for predators, such as dogs and stoats, to find it.

Hiding and hunting

Some predators use camouflage, too! They use camouflage to hide from their **prey** (the creatures they eat). This praying mantis sits very still, with its green colour matching the leaves around it, so other insects don't notice it. When a smaller insect comes close, the praying mantis pounces!



Praying mantis





Camouflage experts

The creatures in this book have different shapes, colours, and markings, but they are all alike in one way – they are all experts at camouflage.



This book is for students to read and enjoy after they have become very familiar with the big book during many shared reading sessions.

Scan the QR code or use the short URL to go directly to an audio recording of this book.



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