

A Bird Watcher

"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" **MATTHEW 6:26**

I recently had a fun conversation with a friend who is an ornithologist—someone who studies birds. He knows about all kinds of different birds, and has studied them in lots of interesting places. So I was happy to be able to tell him about a special bird I had seen.

On a trip to New Zealand I was blessed to see a kiwi bird. Even though it has little wings, the kiwi is a flightless bird. And it is nocturnal, meaning it comes out only at night. Few people ever see a kiwi, even though it is the national bird and one of the national symbols of New Zealand. They are extremely rare, with one species of kiwi described as being "critically endangered." Since they are very vulnerable to predators, some kiwi are raised in sanctuaries, like the one I was so fortunate to visit.

If you think of a fruit when you hear the word "kiwi" you're not alone. The kiwifruit was named after the kiwi bird. Kiwis live in remote areas, are very shy, and are the only bird to have its nostrils at the end of their beak (which is very long). The mother kiwi lays the largest egg of any bird in the world in relation to the size of the bird itself.

Kiwis eat worms, spiders, and insects, which they find in the ground with their long beaks and their extraordinary sense of smell. Their feathers are different from most birds and feel more like fur than feathers, and they're specially designed to keep the kiwis warm and dry.

Unlike many birds, kiwi moms and dads don't raise their young. While both parents incubate the eggs, newly hatched kiwi chicks are left to survive on their own! One thing that helps them to do this is that the belly of a newborn kiwi is swollen with enough



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yolk to provide food for the chick for several days, meaning that they have time to grow and learn how to forage for food.

Although I have seen kiwis in captivity, I was able to do something that very, very few people ever have the opportunity to do—I was able to hold one!

Because of what happened on day five of Creation week, we can see many different birds every day. Even "ordinary" birds are beautiful and interesting, and all birds are a wonder of God's creative power. Whether it is the song of a bird, their beautiful colors, or the incredible way they construct their nests (or in the case of the kiwis, their burrows), birds are a daily reminder that, like my ornithologist friend, God is also a bird watcher and loves and takes care of these amazing little creatures.

Take time today to appreciate birds. Listen to the sound of their song, appreciate their beauty, and watch them as they fly. And remember to thank God for them!! 🐾

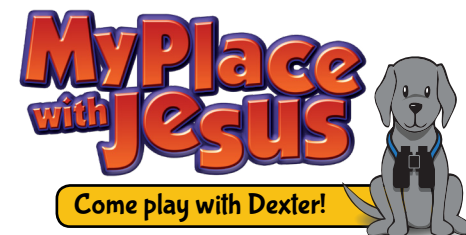
Fascinating Fact:

The kiwifruit was originally known as the "Chinese gooseberry," but the name was changed to "kiwifruit" because business people thought the new name would make it sound more attractive!



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Birding Activity

Make a list of the different kinds of birds you see in your yard or throughout your day.

Sunflower seeds will attract:

Cardinal, Goldfinch, Black-capped Chickadee, Purple Finch, Nuthatch, Blue Jay, Northern Mockingbird, and Tufted Titmouse

Millet and corn will attract:

Common Grackle, House Sparrow, Dove, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Finch, Dark-eyed Junco, and Sparrow

Attract hummingbirds by planting: Zinnia, Delphinium, and Salvia

