

Elwyn's Dream

Teacher Notes by Raymond Huber

Before Reading

What is he holding on the cover?

What do you know about the takahe?

What do you think Elwyn's dream is?

What decade might this story be set?

Introduction

Note: You might like to read the introduction after reading the story because it explains the plot.

Who 'rediscovered' the takahe?

Why do you think Elwyn's journey was a secret?

Why would he take chickens with him?

Try to define a 'predator-free environment'.

What does DOC stand for? Do you think it existed in the 1950s?

Define 'legislation'. Who makes these laws?

What does a sponsor do? Why? Who sponsored this story (see back cover for answer).

Comprehension Questions

What do takahe eat?

Why do you think there is only one takahe in the mountains shown in the first picture?

Can takahe fly?

Why did the three men let the bird go again?

How many years ago was this?

List three reasons for the fall in the population of takahe after its rediscovery.

How might the deer and stoats have got to New Zealand?

What kind of dream do you think Elwyn had: waking or sleeping?

Look around Elwyn's kitchen. List the things that are different to today's household kitchen.

What is a bantam?

Why did Elwyn put hard-boiled eggs under the hen?

Why did he take the bantams out on his tractor?

What is a knapsack?

Why must they stay on their nests 'no matter what'?

Why was Elwyn training the bantams with different eggs?

Why did Elwyn and the men creep into the tussock?

What does 'iridescent' mean? What other bird has iridescent feathers?

Why must chicks always be kept warm?

Do you think Elwyn should have tried to save the takahe in this way?

Exploring the Illustrations

* Medium: Look closely at the pictures. Notice the small dots. What might they be? What mediums might have been used to create the pictures? For example, water paints, pens, pastels or pencils? Or a combination of these?

* Point of View: Changes in viewpoint are used in the illustrations.

1. Looking Up: this can be a threatening view.

Whose viewpoint is shown in the picture of the man photographing the takahe? How does this help us get closer to the takahe's feelings?

Imagine you are a small ground bird. Draw a picture that shows your viewpoint looking up at a tramper.

2. Looking Down: This gives an overview of the story.

Look at the picture of the red car driving down the South island – what kind of perspective is given on Elwyn's journey?

3. Eye level: This is the main character's viewpoint.

Look at the close-up of Elwyn's face talking to the hen. What does this close-up show us about the way Elwyn's gets on with animals.

Draw a close up view of a friend's face using the angle shown in the picture.

Takahe

* Research the Takahe. The Department of Conservation has facts on their website: www.doc.govt.nz

Find out these facts:

- scientific name
- family name
- physical features
- where they live
- how they nest
- threats to takahe

* The takahe has a strong beak and feet, and vivid wing colours.

Parts of a takahe's body help it to survive in the mountains. The

beak is used to get food; the feet to dig and climb; and the feathers to attract mates.

Draw a picture of a takahe and label the parts to show their main function (use).

Extinction is Forever!

The arrival of humans in New Zealand led to the extinction of many birds, including the moa and eagle. Early Maori hunted birds for food and feathers. European settlers introduced predators such as cats, stoats, ferrets and weasels.

Native birds were easy targets because they lived near the ground and had few defences. The laughing owl, bush wren and native thrush are species now lost forever.

Humans cleared 90% of New Zealand's forests, which meant the destruction of homes for many birds.

Quiz: True or False?

1. Large birds became extinct after humans arrived. True / False
2. Maori settlers brought stoats to New Zealand. True / False
3. About 10% of New Zealand's native forests remain. True / False
4. Forests provide shelter for native birds. True / False
5. Animals are not endangered today. True / False

Flightless New Zealand Birds

* **Endangered:** Many of our flightless native birds are seriously endangered. They are killed by stoats, rats, dogs and cats.

- **Kakapo** are only found on **Codfish Island** (off Stewart island), and in **Fiordland**. There are about 80 left.
- The **little spotted kiwi** is found mostly on **Kapiti Island** (near Wellington).
- The **Okarito brown kiwi** in **Westland** is endangered – there are about 170 left.
- Some **weka** remain in South Island forests, such as the **Nelson** area.
- **Yellow-eyed penguins** on the **Otago** coast are a very rare penguin.

Write the names of the birds and the places they are found on a map of New Zealand.

* **Protecting Endangered Birds:**

1. Endangered birds can be kept safe from predators on islands and in reserves. What other animals must first be removed from these islands?
2. Some birds don't produce many babies and they need help to survive. Takahe and kakapo have special breeding programmes. Who does this work with native birds?
3. Birds' homes are often disturbed by people. How should people behave near penguins on our beaches?

* **Predators:** Write and illustrate a ***Wanted poster*** for one of these deadly bird predators – stoat, rat, ferret, feral cat.

Information to research: description of the animal, what it kills, where it's found, and how to control it. (A good reference is *Predators in NZ* by Marc Mason).

* **Don Merton** has done much to save endangered birds in New Zealand. He saved the Black Robin when there were only 5 left in the world! Read this amazing story in the picture book *Little Blue*.

Mapping

* Draw a map of Fiordland and sketch in the Murchison Mountains and the boundaries of Fiordland National Park.

* Birds can be protected in predator-free reserves. Tiritiri Matangi Island is a world famous reserve. It's a safe home for many rare and endangered birds.

Locate and label Tiritiri Matangi Island on a map of Auckland Harbour.

Chickens

* **Research** the different breeds of hen. Make a poster showing some breeds.

* Divide a page into four sections and draw a hen in the centre.

Make notes (or illustrate) the following facts:

- Food: what foods do hens eat?
- Home: where do they like to live?
- Defences: how do they protect themselves?
- Enemies: what or who is a threat to hens?

* **Language:** People have farmed chickens for thousands of years – so there are many sayings about chickens in the English language.

Explain these sayings:

To chicken out

Fussy as an old hen.

Scratching out a living

Walking on eggshells

Coming home to roost

Dumb cluck

Hen party

Chicken feed

Henpecked

Rule the Roost

Brooding over a problem

As scarce as hen's teeth

Made from scratch

* Illustrate these chicken proverbs with wacky cartoon characters:

Don't count your chickens before they're hatched

Don't put all your eggs in one basket

Getting caught with egg on your face

*Riddles: Find several answers for these famous chook riddles:

Why did the chicken cross the road?

Which came first the chicken or the egg?

Writing

* Write a short fantasy story about an explorer discovering a rare bird with dangerous powers.

* Write the diary of a day in the life of a chicken.

* Write an argument for or against factory (battery) farming of chickens.

Record Breaking Birds

Find out these birds; or matching ???

World's smallest bird: _____

World's largest bird: _____

World's fastest bird: _____

Largest (heaviest) bird egg: _____

Long distance flying record for birds: _____