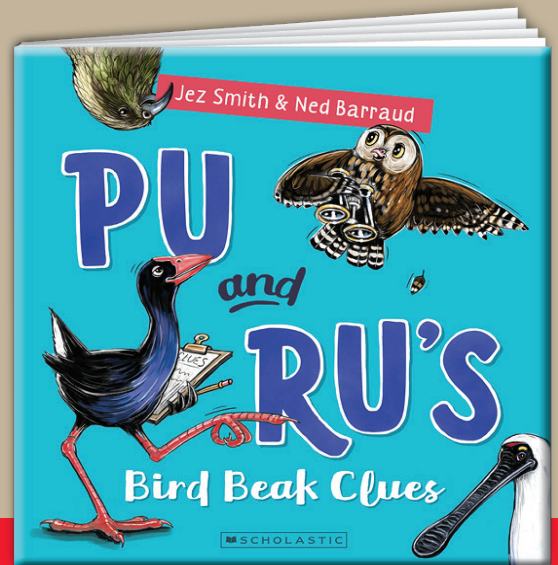


# Pu and Ru's Bird Beak Clues

By Jez Smith

Illustrated by Ned Barraud



• Reading • Writing • Science • Art

## Synopsis

Pu the Pūkeko and Ru the morepork are two friends on a quest: to find out which bird's beak is the best.

On each right-hand page is written a clue in rhyming text, and the illustration includes a visual clue of the beak as well, for the reader to guess which bird they are talking about. Then the page-turn reveals which bird owns the beak.

Pu and Ru are depicted as comic commentators throughout the story, informing the reader of other interesting facts. The bird names are given in both Māori and English when both are commonly used.

At the end of the story the reader is invited to choose which beak they think is best.

## About the Author

**Jez Smith** is a zookeeper, animal trainer, conservationist and storyteller. He has worked in zoos for nearly three decades, dedicating his life to building a better future for wildlife. He believes that storytelling is a powerful tool for teaching and connecting people with nature. "When people feel connected, they care and when they care enough, they take action. Stories can change the world!"

Jez currently works at the world-renown Auckland Zoo, where he can be seen flying birds, enthraling audiences and telling stories that matter.

## About the Illustrator

**Ned Barraud** studied art in Otago and illustration at Victoria University and has since authored and illustrated a number of children's books including the highly successful 'Explore and Discover' series about different ecosystems in New Zealand, and seven other books on his own, including *Watch out for the Weka*, and 2018's acclaimed book on insects *New Zealand's Backyard Beasts*. Always fascinated by the form and beauty of the animal kingdom, Ned produced *Where is it? A wildlife hunt for Kiwi kids*, in 2020, and since then *What happened to the Moa*, *New Zealand's Backyard Birds*, and *Incredible Journeys: New Zealand Wildlife on the Move*.

He loves to help introduce children to the natural world around them and encourages them to explore it. Ned lives in Nelson with his wife and three children.



# Writing and Illustration Style

*Pu and Ru's Bird Beak Clues* is a 32-page paperback book written for children aged 3–7. Wildlife expert Jez Smith has created two likeable birds, Pu and Ru (a pūkeko and a ruru), to help us learn all about different bird beaks and to find the best bird beak of all. The two feathery birds act as judges as they pose a series of rhyming clues for the readers to solve. Ellipses are used for effect and to encourage the reader to guess which bird is being discussed and to turn the page to reveal the answer. The birds' names are written in English and te reo Māori. Pu and Ru also provide the readers with fun facts and humorous text about each of the featured birds. This text is presented in coloured speech bubbles. There's so much information packed on each page, but there's still plenty of scope to dive deeper into the topic and learn even more about the different bird beaks.

Ned Barraud's artwork accompanies the text beautifully. Ned's a talented wildlife illustrator whose love of the natural world is evident throughout the book. His richly detailed illustrations are created with ink pen drawings and digital colouring while the type is set in Talking Cat Sans. His realistic art style and natural colour palette suit the subject matter perfectly. The many different bird characters in the book, particularly Pu and Ru, are very lively and expressive.

## Shared Learning and Discussion Points

Asking questions helps students make sense of what they're reading and the world around them. Open-ended questions encourage them to answer with more than a simple 'yes' or 'no' and to think more deeply about a topic. Read the book aloud and, if appropriate, have the students read alongside or by themselves. Use some of the following questions to help promote discussion and critical thinking about birds and other animals of Aotearoa New Zealand.

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the front cover and read the blurb on the back cover.

- There are four birds on the front cover. Do you know what type of birds they are?
- Which two birds do you think Pu and Ru are? What bird names are Pu and Ru short for?
- Look at the birds' beaks. Why do you think they might be different shapes and sizes?
- On the back cover, do you recognise the two birds in the trees? What are they called?
- Do you know any bird that has a long beak or a hooked beak?

### COMPREHENSION:

- What is a 'quest'? (p.2)
- Why might a long beak that can smell worms and feel the vibrations the worms make be useful at night? Do you think that this bird has good or bad eyesight? Explain your answer. (p.3)
- Why would a long, thin beak be useful for this bird? (p.3)
- If kiwi feed among the leaf litter and rotten logs, what does this tell you about where they live? (p.4)
- Do you know a bird that has a fan-like tail? What is it? (p.5)
- Why would this bird like to fly around where trampers walk? (p.5)
- Together, read the bird names in both languages. Why do pīwakawaka have to be able to twist and turn as they fly? (p.6)
- Pu likes to be funny and say funny things. What is funny or clever about the word 'FAN-tastic'? (p.6)
- What does the word 'plump' mean? (p.7)
- What does the author mean when he says 'number two'? How does this help to spread seeds? (p.7)
- Have you seen karaka berries before? Talk about how this large plump bird can feed on the berries, but that many smaller birds wouldn't have big enough beaks to eat them. Also mention that the berries are highly toxic to dogs. (p.7)
- The bird on the yellow kowhai tree has a white bib on its throat. What do you think this bird is called? Why would it slip its beak inside the yellow flowers? What kind of food would it eat? (p.9)
- Why did Pu say that 'tūi's thin tongue' was a tongue-twister? Say that sentence over and over again very quickly. What happened when you said it? What other tongue-twisters do you know? (p.10)
- Why do you think there is only one name given here for tūi? (p.10) What other bird can you think of that is known only by its Māori name?
- Which bird was chasing the kererū? What does the word 'prey' mean? (p.11)
- Why might a New Zealand falcon be able to catch a plump kererū? (p.12)



- The bird on page 13 can dive into water and hardly make a splash. Why would this be helpful when diving to catch animals such as fish? (p.13)
- If a super-fast train was modelled on the shape of the kotare's (sacred kingfisher) beak, what does this tell you about the beak's shape? (p.14)
- What is a 'cat-walk'? Why does Pu joke about the cat-walk? (p.14)
- Look at this bird's beak in the illustration on page 15. The royal spoonbill (kōtuku ngutupapa) sweeps its open bill from side to side in the water. When it catches food, it lifts its bill up and lets the prey slide down its throat. Why would a spoon shape be more helpful in the water than a fork shape? (p.15)
- Why do you think the royal spoonbill has long legs? (p.16)
- What is a 'torpedo'? Do you think this bird would be a fast or slow swimmer? (p.17)
- Does anyone know what sashimi is? Have you ever eaten it? (p.17)
- What happens when penguins moult? Have you ever seen a moulting penguin? If so, where did you see it? (p.18)
- What is rimu? What part of a rimu tree do you think the kākāpō eats? Why would a kākāpō beak need to be strong? What does this suggest about the plants that this bird eats? (p.19)
- The boom sound is the song of the male kākāpō. Several male kākāpō sing at the same time. Why would male kākāpō sing? (pp.19–20)
- What does the word 'nocturnal' mean? What other nocturnal animals do you know? (p.20)
- What are the birds on page 21 doing? Why do you think they perform those various moves and carry weeds in their beaks? Have you seen other types of birds perform special dances or moves during the breeding season? (p.21)
- What does the word 'detox' mean? Why would these birds need to detox? (p.22)
- Why might this type of duck have rubbery tips on its lips? (p.23)
- Where are rapids found? Do you usually see ducks in fast-flowing rivers? Where do you normally see them? (p.23)
- The bird on page 25 has a brain as sharp as its beak. What does the author mean by that? (p.25)
- One of the birds on page 25 has flown off with a camera and the other one is attacking the person's backpack. What does this tell you about the birds' nature? What other birds have a cheeky and inquisitive nature? (p.25)
- A flock of kea is called a 'circus'. Why is that term fitting for kea? What other name would suit a group of kea? Have you ever met a kea in the wild or in a zoo? If so, what did you like about the bird? (p.26)
- Do you think kea are the 'clowns of the mountain'? Why or why not? (p.26)
- What do you notice about the birds on page 27? How are they similar to Pu? (p.27)
- What does the word 'extinct' mean? What birds are extinct in New Zealand? Do you know of any other animals that were thought to be extinct, but have since been rediscovered? (p.27)
- Why does Pu say that it is cuddles with the takahē? Which family does Pu belong to? (p.28)
- Which bird beak do you think is number one? Explain your answer. (p.29)
- Do you think it's good to have winners and losers? Why or why not? (pp.30–31)
- Why do you think the author chose not to have a winner on the last page? (p.32)



# Activities

## ACTIVITY 1: PU AND RU'S BEAKS

Compare and contrast Pu and Ru's beaks using a Venn diagram. A Venn diagram is made up of two circles that overlap in the middle. The overlapping part features things that are the same about the things that you're contrasting and comparing. Look at Pu and Ru's beaks. In the left-hand circle, write down all the things about Pu's beak that is different to Ru's beak. In the right-hand circle, write down all the things about Ru's beak that is different to Pu's beak. Now, in the middle overlapping part of the diagram, write down what Pu and Ru's beaks share in common, such as they are both used to eat food. Work alone or in pairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: NUMBER ONE BEAK

Each bird in the book has an incredible, brilliant beak. Pu thought that pūkeko have the best beaks of all though! Choose your favourite bird beak from the book. Design a gold winner trophy for your bird. You could include the words 'Best Beak' or 'Beak of the Year' on it. You could also write the year for which you are presenting the trophy, as well as the English and Māori name of the bird. You could use paints, crayons or coloured pencils. Display your work on the classroom wall.

## ACTIVITY 3: MATCH THE BIRD NAMES

The author has written the bird names in English and te reo Māori. On separate strips of paper, write the following bird names in both languages: fantail, wood pigeon, New Zealand falcon, sacred kingfisher, royal spoonbill, yellow-eyed penguin, blue duck and New Zealand mountain parrot. Jumble the pieces of paper and ask a friend to match the English and te reo Māori names of each bird. Use the book to help if you need assistance.

## ACTIVITY 4: BIRD BEAK CLUES

Get into pairs. Work with a partner to write some bird beak clues of your own for the birds in the book. Then have another pair guess which bird's beak you are referring to. For instance, one of your clues might read: *This beak can open wide and fit a karaka berry inside. Which bird beak am I?* Each pair could write five clues.

## ACTIVITY 5: A BIRD SEED FEEDER

It's fun to watch birds eat with their unique and special beaks. Make a birdseed feeder to hang up in a tree for some of the seed-eating birds in your neighbourhood or around your school. You will need wild bird seed, fun-shaped cookie cutters, a cardboard straw, twine, baking paper, boiling water and gelatine. Search the Internet for a simple recipe and instructions on how to make a birdseed feeder. Alternatively, Auckland Zoo has a step-by-step guide to making a nectar feeder to attract native birds such as tūi to your outdoor spaces. Here is the link (<https://cdn.aucklandunlimited.com/zoo/assets/media/aug001-myzoo-activity-nectar-feeder.pdf>).

## ACTIVITY 6: A CLAY BIRD HEAD

A great way to find out more about bird beaks is to study them up close. Revisit the different birds that feature in the book. Look carefully at their heads and the colour, shape and size of their beaks. Then recreate the head of one of the birds using clay and paint. Focus on the head only. Look at the head, eyes, beak and feather colours, then mould your clay to match. While the clay is still moist, use tools to etch details, such as feathers, into the clay. Gently tap your bird on a table so that it'll be able to sit unaided. If you need to, research your chosen bird on the Internet and look at real photographs of it. Once the clay is completely dry, add more details using paint. Alternatively, you could use coloured dough instead of brown clay and paint. Once finished, display all your bird heads in the classroom.

Written by Janine Scott