

All My Homies Love Native Manu – 95Bfm

8th July 2026 – Pīwakawaka (New Zealand Fantail).

- 1) **Play call** – <https://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz/species/new-zealand-fantail> I like the third recording.
- 2) **Classification** – Endemic. There are 4 subspecies of NZ Fantails. NI Fantail, Not Threatened. SI Fantail, Not Threatened. Chatham Island Fantail, Naturally Uncommon. Lorde Howe Island Fantail, Extinct. And the NI and SI Pīwakawaka have two colour morphs – the most common is the Pied Morph. Also have the Black Morph which is very rare in the NI and only about 5% of the SI manu. There are multiple Fantail species across the Southern Hemisphere. The Australian Fantail is called the ‘Willie Wagtail’ (love that name for it). Both the NI and SI subspecies have adapted well with human arrival – present in forests, farms, urban parks and suburban gardens. They are very fecund so multiplying comes easy to them.
- 3) **Māori relationship to the Pīwakawaka.**
 - a. **Significance for Māori:**
 - i. This manu has the most names we have come across for a native manu. There are 20-30 different names and Olive will give a speed delivery of 22 of them right now. pīwakawaka, tīwakawaka, pīwaiwaka, hiwaiwaka, tīrairaka, hīrairaka, hītakataka, hīwai, kōtiutiu, pīrairaka, pīrakaraka, pīrangirangi, pītakaraka, tīaiak, tīaka, tīakaaka, tieaka, tīrakaraka, tītaiwaka, tītakataka, tītīrairaka, tīwaiwaka
 - ii. A lot of Māori mythology around the manu. Seen as a sacred messenger – a bridge between the spiritual and physical worlds.
 - iii. Pūrākau – Māui was hunting for the Goddess of Fire, Mahuika, and came across a Pīwakawaka (being a descendent of Mahuika) – Maui ordered the manu to reveal where the goddess was but the Pīwakawaka refused and Māui grabbed the manu and squeezed it hard so that its tail fanned out and the eyeballs bulged. This is how the Pīwakawaka got these characteristics.
 - iv. Another Pūrākau : Māui thought he could eradicate death by passing through the goddess of death Hine Nui te Pō and stealing her life force. He tried to crawl inside her whilst she was sleeping and the fantail began laughing, woke Hine-Nui-te-Pō who was so angry she killed Māui, making death become permanent for all of humankind.
 - v. Therefore the pīwakawaka is a messenger, bringing news of death from the ātua to the people. If a pīwakawaka enters your house this

may be bad news! Or it may represent a visit from a deceased ancestor. However, if you look at it from Hine te Pō 's perspective the Pīwakawaka stopped Maui from violating and killing her, so it saved her life.

b. Whakatauki:

- i. "He tou tīwaiwaka" this describes a person who is restless and unable to sit still, and relates to the manu always flitting about to catch its food of flying insects.

4) How would you describe the manu Piet?

- a. These are the ultimate joy-givers to humans – they fly up to us and follow us through the forest. We think they are very friendly and sociable and I think they are indeed, but the reason they are following us is for food. So when you walk through the bush with them, shake branches and kick up leaves – they want to catch the disturbed flying insects.
- b. The Pied morph has a greyish head, white eyebrows, brown back and rump. Cinnamon colour on their breast and belly. A black, white and black band across its throat and the tail has those striking alternate black and white pattern. Beautiful manu. The Black morph is mostly black, black-brown and sometimes has a white spot over each ear.
- c. I have a gorgeous Pīwakawaka in my back yard and we have developed a close relationship. It calls me from the Haupara bushes near the deck. I go outside and it often comes and flits around my head. We then head to my compost bins where I open the lids and stir up all the fruit flies and it has a feed. It is a blessing.

5) Who do they live and what do they eat?

- a. They are very wide spread around the motu and have survived despite numerous threats.
- b. **Food** – small insects mostly caught on the wing – moths, flies, beetles, but they also catch spiders. For bigger insects they hold the prey in one foot and attack it with their beak. Sometimes also eat small fruit.

6) Breeding

- a. Super productive breeders – can have up to 5 broods per season. One monitored pair raised 15 chicks one season.
- b. Nest made from mosses, wood fibres, dried grass, hair, fern scales and tightly woven with cobwebs (so clever). Choose sheltered spots within foliage and nest often has a scraggly tail hanging underneath.
- c. 2-5 eggs per clutch, Both incubate over 14 days. Both feed chicks then the male looks after fledglings as the female starts building second nest. It's a production line.

7) Threats

- i. Predation – cats, stoats, rats, mynas. Most eggs and chicks are predated but due to their mass production of babies enough survive to keep population healthy.
- ii. Harsh winters can knock them back but they bounce back with their high fecundity.

So, one of my favourite manu and absolutely one of my spirit birds. They bring a lot of joy to people and we need to celebrate these little blessings.

Song: Marlon Williams - Hello Miss Lonesome. Great fast paced song suitable for our hyper active Pīwakawaka.