

Milford Sound (Piopiotahi)

WHAT DOES PIOPIOTAHU MEAN?

The name Piopiotahi means 'one Piopio' in Te Reo Māori. A piopio was a small bird that looked like a thrush. The piopio bird is now extinct, with the last recorded sighting of the South Island bird in 1905.

For images of the piopio or Milford Sound, try this website:

<http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz>



PIOPIOTAHU LEGENDS

FORMATION OF MILFORD SOUND

A Maori legend tells that Piopiotahi was carved out by Tū Te Rakiwhānoa. He was an atua (godly figure) and was given the task of shaping the Fiordland coast.

As he chanted a powerful karakia (prayer), he hacked away at the high rock walls with his toki (adze). This special adze was called Te Hamo.

Working his way up the coast from south to north, his hand improved steadily. Piopiotahi was his final masterpiece.

OTHER LEGENDS

Māui seeks immortality

In Māui's final adventures, he seeks out the way to make humans immortal. It is said that he took along with him on his quest a piopio bird.

Unfortunately he was unsuccessful in his attempt and was killed. The legend says that the piopio bird flew to Milford Sound to mourn his death.

Why there are sandflies in Piopiotahi

A goddess called Hine-nui-te-pō, who is the ruler of the underworld in Maori mythology, is said to have released the sandflies into Milford Sound. This was to prevent humans from lingering too long in such a beautiful place.

References:

<http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz>

<http://southernalps.wordpress.com>