

MAP IT! Aotearoa, Land of the Taniwha

1: Earthmovers

Legend has it that taniwha helped to shape the geography of New Zealand as we know it. Can you match these legends to the North Island (Te Ika a Māui) and South Island (Te Wai Pounamu) on the map?



1. Two taniwha got sick of living in a lake. They busted out ... and made Wellington Harbour. Ngake made it to Cook Strait, but Whāitaitai got stranded. His spirit took the form of a bird called Te Keo, which flew to the top of a mountain and wept (*tangi*). Which mountain, you ask? Mount Victoria: Tangi te Keo.
2. Mahu, worst dad ever, was mad with his kids for not bringing him the water he wanted, so he tried to drown Haumapuhia in a spring. (I know! This is a terrible story! Stop reading immediately!) She didn't die, but turned into a taniwha, tunnelling and thrashing to form a lake with waters as rough as the sea, Lake Waikaremoana (Lake of the Ocean Waves.) The other kids got off lightly; they were turned into stones: Te Whānau a Mahu (Mahu's Family), which you can still see today. Poor taniwha-girl is now a rock in the lake, her long hair its waterweed.
3. Sometimes it's hard to talk! The taniwha Horomatangi needed to chat with some sisters, but he couldn't reach them. He went for a long swim, floated to the surface of the water, and breathed out so hard, the Karapiti blowhole at Wairākei was formed. His breath condensed as scalding steam. Whoosh! Did the sisters notice? Yes, they did! But next time, he's just going to text...

4. A taniwha went to warm up in the hot pools at Hamner Springs. While it was toasting its toes, the demon of the North-West wind blew in and wrecked its garden. The taniwha took revenge. It threw huge rocks into the Rakaia Gorge to make the river narrow and fast and trap the wind demon, who grew so hot as he struggled to escape that he melted the snow. Drops of taniwha sweat blistered the rocks – you can see it today as rock crystals. Eww! They should have just gone to the gym ...
5. The dreaded Ngārara Huarau kidnapped a woman called Ruru, but she escaped. She and her people tricked him into coming to their pā (village), where they set him on fire and stabbed him. Go to Takaka Hill, and you will see the monster's charred scales turned to stone. His severed tail landed in the pool at the bottom of Wainui Falls, staining the rocks there with the reddish-brown colour of taniwha blood.

2: Shapeshifters

Is it a whale? A dolphin? A weird-looking log? Or is it a TANIWHA? Match these legends to places marked on the map!

6. Humuhumu the guardian taniwha was seen as a tōtara log, strangely floating against the current near the Kaipara Harbour. He disappeared when his people took *kai moana* (seafood) from his lagoon. The moral of the story: don't be greedy, kids.
7. Ruatapu had 70 brothers. Imagine! It was very annoying! He made a hole in their waka and drowned them all except Paikea, who was saved by a taniwha in the shape of a whale. Paikea made it to the East Coast of the North Island, where the whale became an island you can still see today. Ruatapu drowned, which you might think served him right. Don't murder your 69 brothers, kids.
8. The taniwha Mataura was a rākau tipua (enchanted log) which floated around Lake Rotoiti, Tasman, its head poking spookily out of the water. It was seen as an omen of doom, foretelling terrible sickness or death in battle. That's one scary stick!
9. Opo is New Zealand's most famous friendly dolphin. He played with swimmers in Opononi in the summer of 1955-6. Some think he was a kaitiaki, a guardian taniwha.
10. A mean tohunga (priest) was tricked into going on a hunting trip to the volcanic Whakaari (White Island) and abandoned in the sulphur and steam – but he called up a taniwha in the shape of a whale to give him a lift back to the mainland. When his people saw they'd been outwitted, they nearly died of fright and shame. Don't ditch your mates on volcanic islands, kids.

3: Killers and Guardians

Ravenous monsters? *Kaitiaki* (guardians)? ... Or maybe both? Match these legends to places marked on the map!

11. A chief named Tara used two hundred dogs as bait to trap the dreaded taniwha Te-Tau-a-Porirua in a giant *hīnaki* (eel pot) in a lake. When the monster from Heretaunga (Hastings) was killed and cut open, there were more than two hundred victims inside. The victims were buried, and Tara and his people ate the taniwha as revenge. Yum, anyone for seconds?
12. The taniwha Hine-Kōrako married a human, but his relatives bullied her and she fled to live under the Te Rēinga Waterfall in Wairoa, near Khipene (Gisborne). Then the Wairoa River flooded. Her relatives' canoes were in terrible danger! What do you think she did? Save their *waka* from being swept down the waterfall? Or watch them getting smashed to pieces? She saved them. Pretty lucky, considering!
13. The terrifying taniwha Te Kaiwhakaruaki of Collingwood in Te Tai Tapu (Golden Bay) was huge. So huge, it could guzzle two hundred victims for breakfast, and be hungry again by lunch. 'I can slay the beast, easy-peasy,' said a seal hunter. He punched him on the nose ... and was swallowed whole. Luckily, he had a back-up team of 340 warriors, who killed the taniwha and cut it open. There were many bodies inside, as well as bones, wood and treasures such as *pounamu* (greenstone). But did the boastful seal hunter escape from the taniwha's belly? Nobody knows. What do you think?
14. Katatore was a pet taniwha which lived in a cave near Tikitapu in Rotorua. It was very friendly to the *iwi* (tribe) it protected, but it had one little bad habit: it ate strangers. A war party from another *iwi* strangled it with ropes, killed it, and ate its heart – tasty! After that, the two tribes were enemies. The moral of this story is: don't let your pets eat people. And don't eat other people's pets. Easy-peasy.
15. Hotupuku was one of the most ferocious taniwha of all times, terrorizing people crossing the Kāingaroa Plains between Rotorua and Taupō. He was lured from his *rua taniwha* and killed in a huge noose woven from cabbage tree leaves. Some say this was how rope-making began. When the warriors cut the monster open, they found undigested bodies, weapons, clubs and darts, mats, precious clothing decorated with rare feathers, sharks' teeth, *mere pounamu* and other treasures. 'How wonderful to find a taniwha who is not a fussy eater!' cried the people. Actually, they didn't. But they *might* have. After all, this is just a story. Or is it...?