



*Old Podocarp Species - Totara, Matai and Rimu*  
Cover Drawing by Graham Parminter

# Birds

## in the Waipahihi Botanical Reserve

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2018

# INTRODUCTION

## **Waipahihi Botanical Reserve, Taupō**

### ***A New Forest Garden Created from Scratch by Volunteers and Still Evolving***

In 1966 the 35-hectare Waipahihi Botanical Reserve was established, with the first volunteer working day taking place on 1 October of that year. It was decided to set up a group of volunteers to develop and maintain the Reserve with contractors being used for large tree pruning and earth works.

The Waipahihi Botanical Reserve is a combination of introduced and native plant species with a series of walking tracks designed around themes, for example, *Flax Grove*, *Tree Fern Alley* and *The Floral Walk*. At the same time there are areas of specialist plantings of kauri, hebe and rata. The fruit and flowers in the Reserve provide a valuable food source for many native species of birds.

Picnic tables and seats are provided throughout the Reserve and there are areas which offer wonderful views of Lake Taupō and the surrounding district.

One of the key tasks that volunteers undertake is a pest and predator control using 57 traps, with more being added as a result of a recent funding grant<sup>1</sup>. This has resulted in an increase in the numbers of native bird species found in the Reserve and surrounding areas.

The following is a brief description of both native and introduced birds that are commonly seen or heard in the Waipahihi Botanical Reserve gardens.

## **NOTE**

This booklet covers both native<sup>2</sup> and introduced birds found in the Reserve. For the native species both European and Maori names are given, while only European names are used for introduced species

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<sup>1</sup> In 2022, 250+ traps are being monitored

<sup>2</sup> Native birds are those that naturally occur in New Zealand. Most of New Zealand's native birds are endemic – they are found nowhere else.

# Native Bird Species

## **HONEYEATERS: Meliphagidea**

**New Zealand has three endemic species of honeyeaters; two of which are found in the Reserve - the tui and the bellbird.**

### **Bellbird (Korimako)**

*Anthornis melanura*

The bellbird is named for its bell-like song and is found in native, exotic forests and urban areas. It feeds on nectar and fruits and along with other native species plays a key role in the pollination and distribution of many native flowering plants.



### **Tui**

*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*

Tui (also known as the parson bird) are a medium-sized, common, widespread bird of forest and urban sites. They have a blue, green and bronze iridescent sheen with a distinctive white throat tuft. They are often seen in the Reserve on kowhai flowers during the springtime.



## **CUCKOOS: Cuculidae**

**The *Cuculidae* is a diverse family of mid-sized to large birds found in wooded habitats, savannas, or marshes around the globe.**

### **Shining Cuckoo (Pipiwharau)**

*Chrysococcyx lucidus*

The shining cuckoo is a summer migrant to New Zealand - arriving in late September to early October - from the Solomon Islands. It is a relatively small bird being more often heard than seen.



## FLYCATCHERS: Muscicapidae

The *Muscicapidae* are small passerine birds that feed on small arboreal insects they take their prey on the wing.

### Fantail (Piwakawaka)

*Rhipidura fuliginosa*

The fantail is one of NZ's best-known birds with its distinctive fanned tail and its fluttering flight while catching flying insects. It is not uncommon to be followed by a couple of fantails while walking on the Reserve's tracks.



### Tomtit (Miromiro)

*Petroica macrocephala*

Tomtits are mostly seen sitting on a branch or the side of a tree scanning the surrounding vegetation looking for small insects to feed on. They feed mostly on their own and will come within a couple of meters of people.



## KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae

The kingfisher is native to New Zealand; the Kookaburra being introduced from Australia.

### Kingfisher (Kōtare)

*Todiramphus sanctus*

Kingfishers are seen in the Reserve perching in a tree looking for small vertebrates, including lizards, mice and small birds. Once they have caught their prey they will return to the same perch for consumption.



## New Zealand's Birds of Prey

Birds of prey are those birds that hunt other birds and or animals. New Zealand has three native birds of prey: the morepork, the swamp harrier and the NZ falcon. All of which are found in or close by to the Reserve.

### OWLS: Strigidae

The only native owl found in New Zealand is the Morepork. However, there are two introduced owls; the Barn Owl and the Little Owl.

#### Morepork (Ruru)

*Ninox novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae*

Known for its distinctive “more-pork” call heard during the night, in daytime they will roost in the cavities or hollows of trees or in dense vegetation. The morepork is primarily insectivorous but will also feed on small birds, rats and mice.



### Harrier-Hawks: Accipitridae

Harrier-Hawks are widely distributed across Australasia and are one of the few birds to have benefited from European settlement of New Zealand.

#### Australasian Harrier (Kāhu)

*Circus approximans*

The harrier is New Zealand's largest bird of prey. Also known as swamp harriers, they are often seen gliding or soaring over open areas adjacent to the Reserve in search of food or perching on a fence post.



## **FALCONS: Falconidae**

There are three forms of falcon in New Zealand - the Southern, the Eastern and the Bush Falcon - all of which vary in colour and the habitats where they live. It is the Bush Falcon that is found in the Reserve and immediate areas.

### **New Zealand Falcon (Kārearea)**

*Falco novaeseelandiae*

The bush falcon is often mistaken for the larger and more common Australasian Harrier. It is often seen within the Reserve perched high in trees or hunting for small prey. While mainly hunting in NZ bush, they are also found in open areas such as tussock grasslands and grazed hill country. They mostly feed on small to medium sized birds and animals, but will take larger prey such as poultry and rabbits.



## **PIGEONS: Columbidae**

The New Zealand pigeon belongs to the family *Columbidae*, which is found throughout Southeast Asia, Malaya, Australia and New Zealand.

### **New Zealand Pigeon (Kererū)**

*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*

The kererū, or wood pigeon, can often be seen feeding in the Reserve on flowers and fruit from a wide variety of plant species. The distinctive sound of its wing beats in flight are often heard overhead while walking in the Reserve.



## **SILVEREYES: Zosteropidae**

The silvereye, or wax-eye, is an omnivorous passerine bird found in the south-west pacific region. In Australia and New Zealand its common name is sometimes white-eye.

### **Silvereye (Tauhou)**

*Zosterops lateralis*

The silvereye is one of our most abundant and widespread bird species, being found throughout the country. They are small songbirds that are easily recognized by their white eye-ring while their plumage is olive-green above and cream below.



## **WARBLERS: Sylviidae**

This is a large family having powerful musical song being more often heard than seen while hunting for food in foliage and crannies in the bark of trees.

### **Grey Warbler (Riroriro)**

*Gerygone igata*

One of our smallest birds (weighing only 6g), the grey warbler is more often heard than seen, having a loud distinctive song. They are often seen moving in the canopy searching for insects on the bark of trunks and branches of trees.



## Introduced Bird Species

Introduced birds found in the Waipahihi Botanical Reserve primarily came from Europe, with introductions also from Asia, Australia and North America.

### **Starling**

*Sturnus vulgaris*

Introduced from Europe in 1862 to control insect pests, they are found throughout New Zealand other than in alpine and forest areas. At times large flocks can put on an impressive aerial display.



### **House Sparrow**

*Passer domesticus*

Found in most parts of the world, the House sparrow was introduced to New Zealand in the mid-1860s. It lives in close association with humans and was regarded as a pest in the 1880's.



### **Dunnock or Hedge Sparrow**

*Prunella modularis*

Dunnocks were introduced from England into a number of regions around New Zealand between 1865 and 1896. They are now widely distributed throughout both islands.



## FINCHES

Finches were introduced into New Zealand in the early 1860's from Britain and England and have become well established throughout the country. As part of the Reserve borders open grassland areas, it is not uncommon to see these birds.

### Greenfinch

*Chloris chloris*

The greenfinch is the largest of the finches to be introduced into New Zealand. They will form flocks during the autumn and winter months varying in size from a few individuals to several thousand.



### European Goldfinch

*Carduelis carduelis*

Goldfinches are small brightly colored finches with flashes of bright yellow and red plumage. They forage in small flocks on weed seeds and small invertebrates, particularly when feeding young.



### Chaffinch

*Fringilla coelebs*

Chaffinches are the most common and most widespread of New Zealand's finches, being found in both the North and South Islands. They primarily eat seeds and plant material however during the breeding season, the diet switches to invertebrates to feed the young.



### **Common Redpoll**

*Acanthis flammea*

Redpolls are the smallest of New Zealand's finches and are frequently seen in flocks interspersed with other finches during winter months. They feed primarily on a range of seeds often taken while hanging upside-down from seed heads or the cones of trees.



### **Yellowhammer**

*Emberiza citrinella*

Introduced from Britain between 1865 and 1879, these colourful birds are now found throughout the country. Yellowhammers eat a variety of seeds and are frequently seen on pasture, ploughed land, crops and backyard lawns.



### **Eurasian Blackbird**

*Turdus merula*

The Eurasian blackbird was introduced between 1867 and 1880 and has become one of our most widely distributed bird species. The male blackbird has an orange bill and eye-ring; whereas the female is dark brown with a streaky underside.



## **Song Thrush**

*Turdus philomelos*

The song thrush is quickly identified by a speckled brown-on-cream breast and is often heard before it is seen. It feeds on a variety of insects, snails, earthworms, slugs and small berries.



## **California Quail**

*Callipepla californica*

Californian quail were introduced to Nelson in 1865 and are now common in open shrublands throughout most of the country. They are often seen in the reserve in small groups and will, if approached, either run or fly away en masse.



## **SUMMARY**

The importance of gardens such as the Waipahihi Botanical Reserve in protecting native flora and fauna cannot be underestimated.

The voluntary pest control program will play a key role in making it possible for native birds to become established in the Taupō urban area.

There has already been an increase in the numbers of native birds seen in a couple of wildlife corridors and reserves that are in close association with the Reserve.

[www.waipahihigardens.nz](http://www.waipahihigardens.nz)