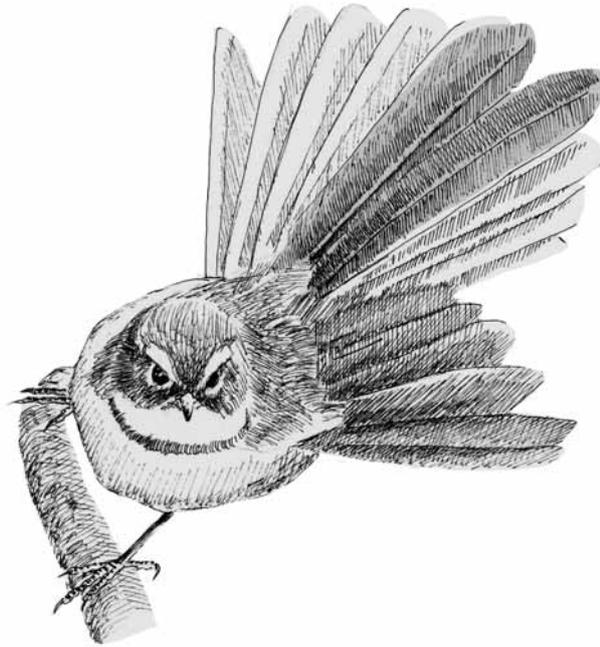


Fantail

Rhipidura fuliginosa

Piwakawakawa/tiwakawaka/piwaiwaka



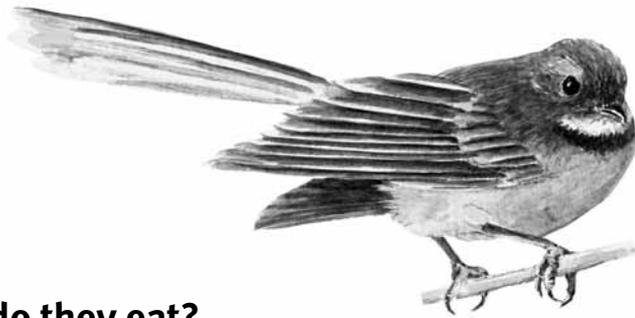
The fantail is one of our most common native birds. It is mainly a forest bird, but can be found in more open areas of bush and scrub and often in our gardens. It is quite unafraid of people and will even enter houses to catch flies. Often they can be seen flitting around the open area below the Visitor Centre, or along tracks around the island.

What do they look like?

Fantails are small birds with long tails – in fact, the tail and the body are the same length! The fantails seen on Tiritiri Matangi Island are pied ones, having a grey head, white eyebrow, and brown-grey back, with white and black bands across the chest and buff-coloured undersides. The long black and white tail fans out most of the time.

What do they sound like?

Fantails have a loud, sharp ‘cheet’ sound when communicating with each other, but the males also have a rhythmical longer song, ‘tweet-a-tweet-a-tweet’.



What do they eat?

Fantails are completely insectivorous and many insects are caught by hawking on the wing. ('Hawking' means to catch insects in flight.) The various Maori names mostly relate to the way they flit about while doing this. They follow people in order to feed on the insects they disturb as they walk by.

Breeding

Fantails breed between August and February, and pairs stay together all year round.

The female builds a little cup-like nest out of moss, soft rotten wood and grass, held together with cobwebs. They are prolific little breeders, sometimes raising four to five clutches in one breeding season.

Although pairs of fantails have set territories during the breeding season, in winter they will move outside these, sometimes in groups. So when you are walking around Tiritiri Matangi keep an eye open for these cheeky little birds and their acrobatic displays.

Where else can they be found?

All over New Zealand, as well as Australia, Norfolk Island, New Caledonia, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands.



Did you know?

Because piwakawaka laughed and woke up the goddess of death when Maui was trying to defeat her, some people feel that if a fantail comes inside the house it brings bad luck or even foretells a death!

References:

'Silence of the Fantails' David Mudge: NZ Geographic No. 55, Jan/Feb 2002.
'Dawn Chorus' Bulletin 48, Summer 2002, p3.

Pukeko

Porphyrio melanotus

Purple swamphen



Pukeko are native to New Zealand and are small close relatives of the takahe, both being members of the rail family. They were on Tiritiri Matangi Island long before reforestation began. Pukeko are not often seen flying, although they are strong fliers. They prefer to run away when they think they are in danger, and on Tiritiri Matangi, they often land on clumps of pohuehue (wirevine).

What do they look like?

Adults are tall and colourful, with royal blue undersides and a black upper body and head. The long legs, bill, shield above the bill and the eyes, are all red. The under tail is a showy white.

Chicks are a downy black, with a black bill. Their bill has a white tip, known as the egg tooth, on the end. As they mature, the egg tooth disappears and the black bill turns red. Feathers turn a brownish colour, and then eventually adult plumage develops.

What do they sound like?

Their usual call is a loud screech, but when ‘talking’ to their chicks they make a soft chattering sound.

What do they eat?

Pukeko are omnivorous, and prefer vegetation such as grass stems, but they will also eat insects, frogs, birds’ eggs and even baby ducklings. When they eat they often hold the larger grass stems by one foot.

Breeding

Pukeko breed in pairs, as well as in larger groups. Non-breeding birds help with incubation of eggs and feeding of chicks. The eggs of a number of females can be laid in the one nest. They like to build their nests in damp places, first beating down rushes or grass into platforms.

Where else can they be found?

Pukeko are found all over New Zealand. Although they are common in swampy areas, they are an adaptable bird and can be seen feeding at the edges of motorways and in farm paddocks.

They are also found throughout many other parts of the world. This subspecies also breeds in Tasmania, as well as northern and eastern Australia.

Paradise shelduck

Tadorna variegata

Putangitangi



Paradise shelducks are a large endemic duck and are partially protected.

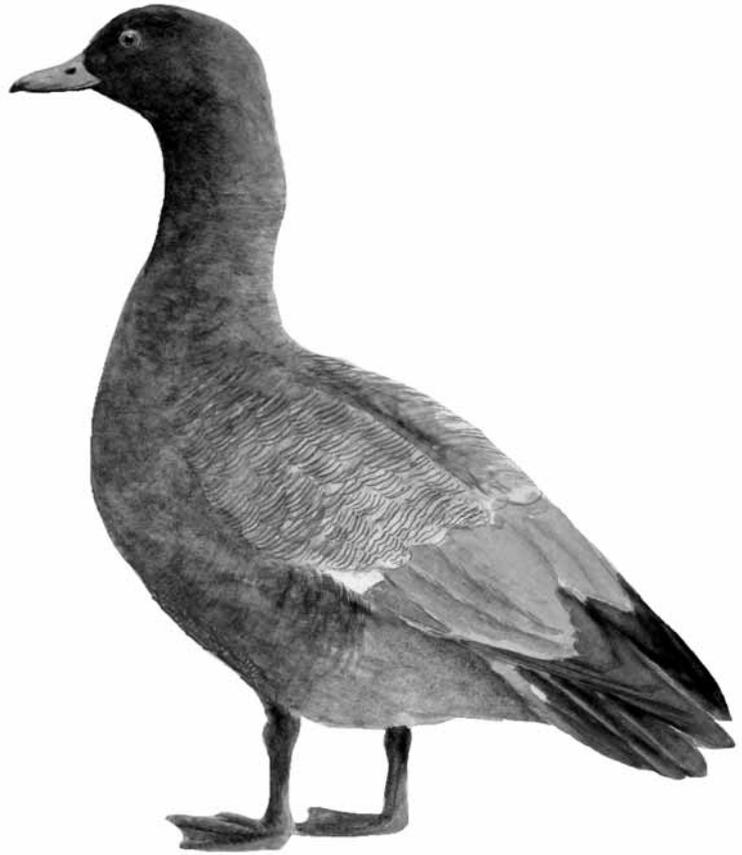
What do they look like?

The female has a white head and a bright chestnut body, while the male has a black head with greenish gloss and a finely barred, dark-grey body. Both sexes have a chestnut undertail.

Newly hatched ducklings have a pattern of brown and white stripes. Adult pairs remain together throughout the year and in the same territory except when they moult, when they join large flocks for safety.

What do they sound like?

Paradise shelducks are alert birds, and give very loud alarm calls from high points of land or while flying overhead. If their territory has been entered, the male makes a 'zonk zonk', almost goose-like sound, while the female's call is higher-pitched.



What do they eat?

They eat grass and clover, and on the mainland, they annoy farmers by grazing on crops such as grain, hay and peas. In water, they search for waterweeds and aquatic insects like diving ducks.

Breeding

The male keeps a lookout for predators while the female incubates the eggs. Once hatched, both parents take care of the ducklings.

They mate for life and are almost always seen in pairs, except in the moulting season, when large numbers gather at shallow lakes.

Nests can be in hollow logs, a hole in the ground or even in forest areas, in a tree hole up to 25 metres above ground!

Where else can they be found?

Once only found in the lower South Island, they are now common in open hill country and wetlands, in locally-concentrated areas throughout New Zealand.

Did you know?



A female paradise shelduck named Daphne made friends with staff and visitors on Tiritiri Matangi Island. It was discovered that she had been hand-reared on the mainland and when she grew up, she decided to make the island her home. Each year she returned to the mainland to join the moulting flocks, and then came back to Tiritiri Matangi when she had finished moulting. Unfortunately one year while she was moulting she was mistakenly shot while on the mainland.

Just above the bunkhouse you can see her photo on a plaque which marks her grave.

References:

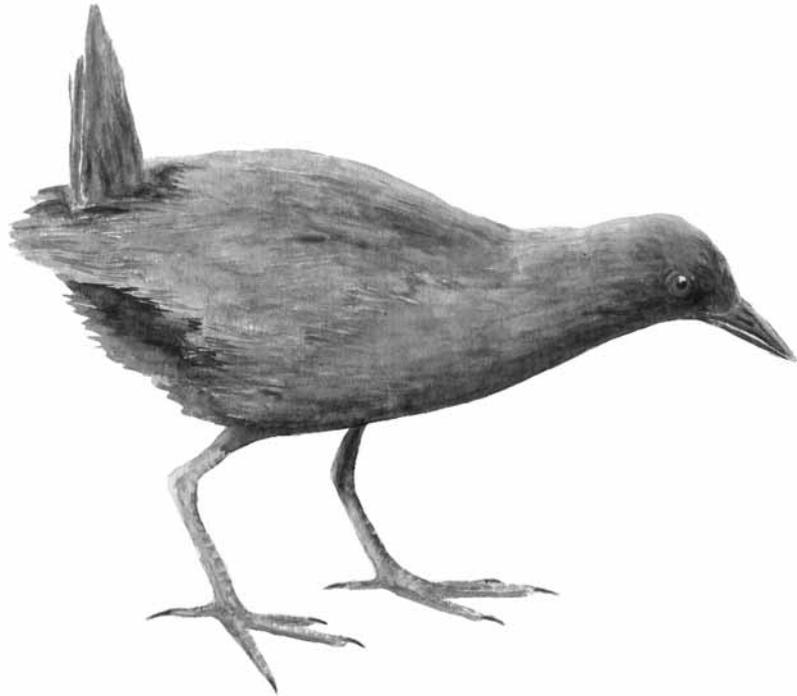
'Dawn Chorus' 61, May 2005, pp4&5.

'Dawn Chorus' 65, May 2006, pp7&11.

Spotless crane

Porzana tabuensis plumbea

Puweto/putoto



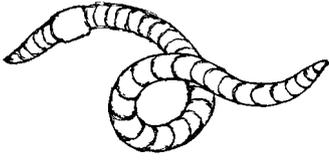
These native birds are quite common on Tiritiri Matangi, but because they are secretive, day-visitors rarely see them. However, a pair on the dam just up the road from the wharf has managed to raise chicks most years. They can be seen foraging around the edges of the dam if you sit still and wait patiently and quietly for a few minutes.

What do they look like?

Spotless crane are about as big as a bellbird. They have a dark grey, almost black body, chocolate brown underparts, with distinctive red eyes and long red legs. Juveniles have dark legs with a dull white chin and throat.

What do they sound like?

They sometimes suddenly let out a distinctive rolling 'prrrrr'. They also have other calls such as a 'crack', 'book' and a sharp 'pit pit'.



What do they eat?

Spotless crake mostly eat worms, spiders, beetles, snails and insect larvae, as well as seeds and fallen fruits. They usually prefer wet areas but because Tiritiri Matangi is such a dry island, they can be heard throughout the bush as they search for suitable prey.

Breeding

Pairs of crake stay in their territory all year round. They lay up to five eggs in a loosely woven, bulky, cup-shaped nest made of grass, hidden on the ground in dense cover. Chicks leave the nest within two days, but are still looked after by both parents until they reach adult size.

Where else are they found?

Spotless crake are found all over Australia and New Zealand (more in the North Island than in the South), as well as many places in the Pacific islands.

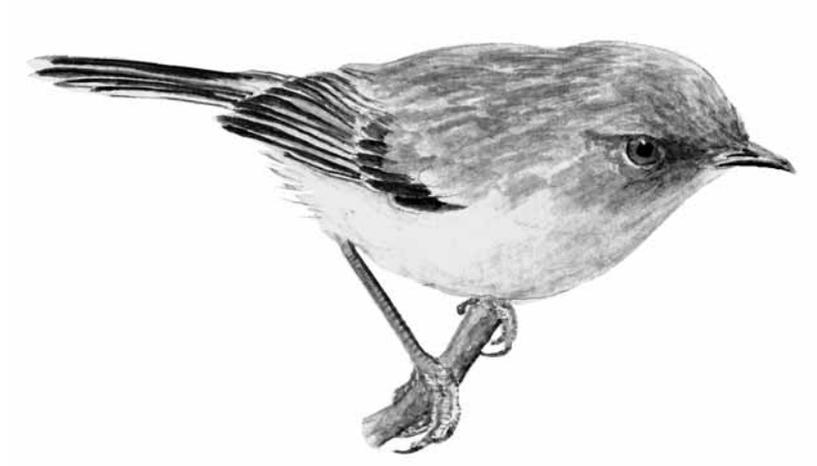
References:

'Dawn Chorus' 44, Summer 2001, p3.

Grey warbler

Gerygone igata

Riroririro



Grey warblers are common birds on Tiritiri Matangi and also in many town gardens, although because they are so small, you may not have noticed them. They are one of the few endemic birds to have benefited from the arrival of humans. They are often found in manuka and kanuka scrub, and can often be seen among the ngaio bushes on the pathway to Tiritiri Matangi's wharf toilets.

What do they look like?

Warblers are only half the weight of a tauhou (silvereeye) and they are the second-smallest bird in New Zealand.

They are grey-brown birds with a slightly darker tail that is tipped with white at the ends. They have an off-white belly and undertail. Adult warblers have red eyes.

What do they sound like?

To track down any bird, 'look first with your ears'. This is especially true for the tiny warbler, which has the most delicate sweet summery song that trills up and down.

What do they eat?

Grey warblers mostly eat insects, beetles and spiders, but they will also eat some fruits. Because they are so little and light, they are able to catch insects right at the ends of tiny twigs. They are even able to hover in mid-air to catch insects. Sometimes warblers will join flocks of other insect-eating birds.

Breeding

Grey warblers are the only New Zealand bird that builds an enclosed hanging nest, with a small entrance-hole in the side. The nest, a beautiful construction of moss, bark, small roots, cobwebs, thistle-down and tree fern hairs, is built by the female. She cares for the eggs and young chicks until she is ready to produce another brood. Then the male takes responsibility for the first brood.

It is usually when the second clutch of eggs has been laid that the shining cuckoo returns to New Zealand from its winter home in the Pacific and lays its egg in a warbler's nest. When the cuckoo chick is just a few days old it evicts the warbler eggs or babies from the nest, and the grey warblers then take care of the cuckoo chick.

Where else can they be found?

Grey warblers are commonly found everywhere in New Zealand. There is only one other *Gerygone* species in New Zealand (Chatham Islands), but several in Australia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands.



Did you know?

The grey warbler lays up to five eggs, each around 23 percent of her bodyweight – the same ratio as the little spotted kiwi.

In ancient times, Maori believed that the higher the grey warbler built its nest, the calmer the future weather would be.

They also listened for grey warbler's song in the cold days of July because it meant that summer was on its way.

References:

'Dawn Chorus' 59, November 2004.

Orbell, M. 'Birds of Aotearoa. A Natural and Cultural History' Auckland: Reed, 2003.

Morepork

Ninox novaeseelandiae

Ruru



The morepork is a protected native owl commonly found throughout New Zealand. It has large ear openings, giving it excellent hearing, and its extremely soft plumage, including the edges of its wing feathers, allows it to fly silently.

Some morepork breed on Tiritiri Matangi every year, roosting in trees with plenty of cover. Although they usually roost silently during the daytime, they can sometimes be discovered when they are betrayed by flocks of small birds finding and mobbing them, and calling out in alarm. The position of their roosting sites can also sometimes be indicated by the presence of pellets of indigestible material which has been regurgitated onto the ground below. Morepork are one of the island's natural predators.

What do they look like?

The morepork is a small brown owl, spotted and streaked with white. Its eyes are large and yellow, and set in a dark circular mask of feathers, which help direct sound to it.

Like all owls, morepork are able to rotate their whole head so they can search for prey in front, at the sides and even behind them.

What do they sound like?

Morepork call any time from dusk to dawn, with their usual call being the sound which has given them their European name. However, when hunting, they make a screeching 'cree' sound, and when feeding their young, a 'chirr' sound can be heard.

What do they eat?

They mostly eat large insects such as weta, cicadas, moths, beetles and occasionally small birds. On the mainland they also eat mice and young rats. They hold larger prey in one foot and tear off pieces to eat.

Breeding

They usually nest in hollow trees but will use other sites such as tree forks, pohutukawa roots and cabbage trees.

The female incubates, broods and guards the chicks, and until the chicks are older, the male brings food to his mate at the nest site. Both parents feed the fledgling chicks.

Where else can they be found?

Morepork are found throughout New Zealand, as well as in Australia, where they are called Boobook.



Did you know?

The Norfolk Island morepork became so rare, its population was reduced to one female. Two males were sent from New Zealand and the population is now recovering.

Reference:

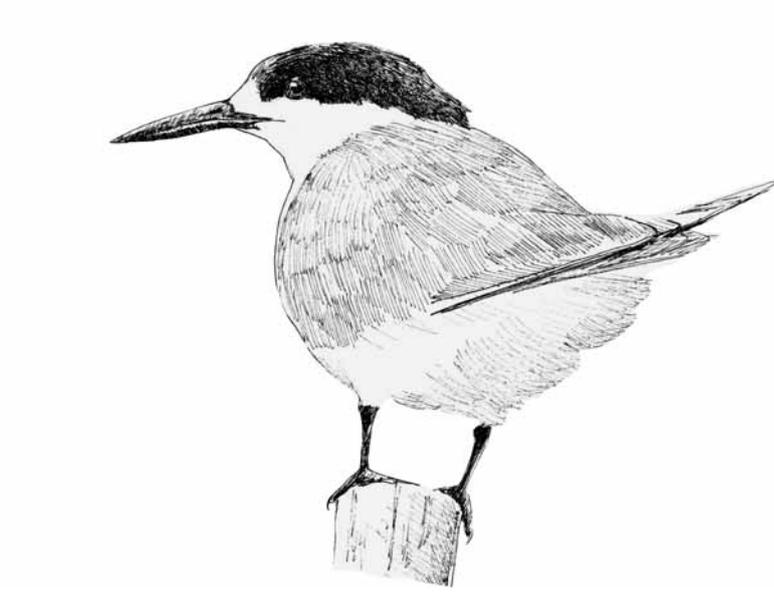
Moon, Geoff. 'Morepork' in New Zealand Geographic 32, October – December 1996, pp86-96.

'Dawn Chorus' 52, Summer 2003, p3.

White-fronted tern

Sterna striata

Tara



These native birds are the most common terns on the New Zealand coast. They can often be seen, especially during breeding season, flying across the island from their nests on the eastern coastal rocks, to hunt for food in the sea on the western side of the island.

What do they look like?

They have a long black bill and short blackish legs. Their breasts are white and their backs a pearly grey. They get their English name from the band of white which passes across their forehead. This stands out because their head is black-capped. When they are at rest, their long forked tail is very obvious, as it pokes out longer than the wings.

What do they sound like?

They have a high-pitched repetitive 'siet' call, especially when flying.

What do they eat?

Mostly, they eat small fish that swim in shoals close to the sea's surface. They can often be seen fishing in large flocks, sometimes with other sea birds.

Breeding

White-fronted terns nest in large colonies. They usually attempt to breed on the reef that can be seen across from Hobbs Beach, but that is prone to being swept by high tides in rough weather. Mostly they nest on the rocky outcrops on the eastern coast. The young are fed by the adults until they are about three months old, then chicks join 'creches'. Most white-fronted terns don't start breeding until they are at least seven years old.

Where else can they be found?

White-fronted terns are found throughout New Zealand, and on islands in Bass Strait. They sometimes spend the winter in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, in Australia.



Did you know?

White-fronted terns have been recorded living for more than 26 years.

Silvereye

Zosterops lateralis

Tauhou



These common but cute little birds were already on Tiritiri Matangi Island when it was being prepared as an open sanctuary. The Maori name means ‘little stranger’. It is believed the silvereyes arrived in large numbers in the mid-nineteenth century. They are probably now the most common native bird on the island.

What do they look like?

They are small, with olive-green heads and upper backs, creamy-white underparts, pinkish-brown feathers on their upper legs, and white rings around their eyes. Their beaks are finely tapered.

What do they sound like?

Single birds make a repetitive ‘cree’ sound, while flocks excitedly chatter with ‘cli cli cli’. Males have warbling trills that they make during the breeding season.

What do they eat?

Silvereye have a brush-tipped tongue suitable for drinking nectar, but they also eat insects and fruit. One of the reasons they have been such successful colonisers in New Zealand, is their ability to vary their diet. If you

find silvereyes in your garden in winter, you may like to feed them on ‘bird pudding’ made of fat and bits and pieces of leftovers, or a light sugar and water mix. They can also be pests in vineyards and orchards, as they nip holes in grapes and cherries in their search for sweet food. However, they compensate for their destruction to some extent by eating woolly aphids and greenfly, and have been known as the ‘blightbird’ because of this.

Breeding

Silvereye mate for life, and pairs remain together all year, even when in winter flocks. During the breeding season they build a lovely delicate suspended cup-nest out of fine grass, fibres, moss, spider web and thistle-down. Both male and female incubate the eggs and care for the fledglings.

Where else can they be found?

There are up to six sub-species in Australia, and it is the Tasmanian one that now lives in New Zealand. There are also silvereyes in the south western Pacific Islands and, since the early twentieth century, on Norfolk Island. They have also spread from New Zealand to places such as the Kermadecs, the Chathams and Campbell Island.

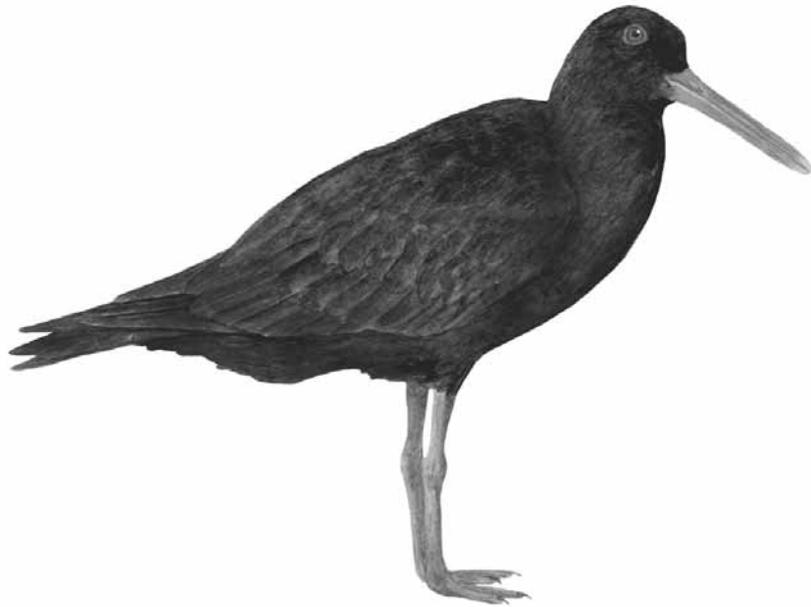
Reference:

‘Dawn Chorus’ 46, Winter 2001, p3.

Variable oystercatcher

Haematopus unicolor

Toreapango



The variable oystercatcher is a protected endemic bird.

What do they look like?

They have a long, stout red bill, and solid, short pink legs. Their eyes are red. They are larger and heavier than pied oystercatchers and have a heavier bill as well. They are called variable because their plumage varies from pure black through to black and white. The birds on Tiritiri Matangi are mainly black, sometimes with white on the underwings.

What do they sound like?

When flying they call with a loud, high-pitched 'kleep' sound.

What do they eat?

Variable oystercatchers eat mostly bivalve shellfish, worms and crabs, as well as other small invertebrates and sometimes small fish. They usually open the shellfish by stabbing between the shells and then twisting them apart.

Breeding

Variable oystercatchers breed on rocky and sandy coasts, not far above the high tide mark. They do not migrate like pied oystercatchers, but remain in their home area all year round.

Most summers, a pair of oystercatchers can be found with their chicks among the rocks near the wharf. It is important that visitors keep clear of this area to avoid upsetting the birds.

Where else can they be found?

Although after breeding, variable oystercatchers sometimes join small flocks, or are even found on the edges of flocks of pied oystercatchers, they are more likely to be found in pairs, away from other oystercatchers for most of the year. They are found throughout New Zealand.

Tui

Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae

Parson bird



The tui is a common endemic bird. (It is rare in New Zealand to see the words 'common' and 'endemic' in the same sentence).

Visitors to Tiritiri Matangi usually see plenty of tui, even when all the other birds are playing hard to get. They are noisy and aggressive and can hardly be missed. However, numbers fluctuate depending on food supplies, and as they are excellent fliers, they are quite capable of visiting the mainland for a few weeks until Tiritiri Matangi's plants produce what they have been waiting for.

Tui are inclined to dominate the other birds on the island. They use their wing-whirring to scare others and aggressively dive-bomb on attack.

What do they look like?

Tui look black on a dull day, but in the sunlight their feathers are iridescent green, blue, purple and brown. They have a lacy collar of fine white feathers on the back of the neck, as well as having the white neck tufts – pois – at the front (juvenile birds don't have the pois). Tui are considerably heavier and larger than bellbird or saddleback.



What do they sound like?

Tui have a lovely clear liquid song, similar to that of the bellbird, but their song is regularly interrupted by clicks, chuckles and wheezes. When they are establishing their territories, they do a lot of beak-clicking.

What do they eat?

Tui are known as nectar feeders, and they have a specially-designed brush-like tongue for this, but they also eat insects, grubs, berries and fruit. They specially love the flowers of flax, and when it is blossoming, visitors are treated to the sight of orange-headed tui. Their fine curved bills are especially suitable for reaching into both flax and kowhai flowers.

Breeding

In November and December, in the sub-canopy of the forest, female tui build a bulky nest of sticks and twigs, and line it with fine grasses. At first the female feeds the nestlings, then both parents share the task. As well as nectar, the chicks are fed insects and berries. When they are breeding, tui will commute more than ten kilometres to visit a good source of nectar, and out of the breeding season, they will even fly 20 kilometres or more.

Where else can they be found?

Tui have adapted well to changes to the environment made by humans, and are found all over New Zealand including cities (although rare in Christchurch and the Canterbury Plains). They are also common on the Kermadec and Auckland islands.

Did you know?



There is a notch in the eighth primary feather which makes the wings flutter and that is what makes the noise we hear when a tui is warning other birds to keep out of its territory.

Some Maori have special names for tui: a tui nestling is called 'pi', a fledgling 'pikari', and a fully grown, fat tui 'koko'. A flock of tui is a 'whiri koko'.

Some Maori kept tui as pets and the tui were trained to talk. Some trainers inserted a small plug down the tui's throat to widen it; some split the tui's beak and shaved the little hairs along the sides of the tongue. These procedures were designed to improve the tui's speech.

If a tui talked at night it was considered to be a bad omen.

The tui was the most commonly eaten bird by Captain Cook's crew when he visited New Zealand. They called it the 'poi bird', as the white throat tufts resemble poi, which they had seen in Tahiti.

Reference:

'Dawn Chorus' 60, February 2005, p3.