

## Wild Birds of the Botanic Garden

Dunedin Botanic Garden is a prime spot to see birds. Like a well-stocked supermarket, it has such a variety of plants that there are flowers and fruit for birds to eat all year round. Birds also have a great choice of shelter and nesting sites in the variety of habitats ranging from ponds and streams, to native bush and areas of shrubs and trees bordering the lawns.

Forty species of wild bird have been recorded in Dunedin Botanic Garden but this guide covers only those most often encountered.

# DUNEDIN BOTANIC GARDEN



Just over half of the 40 are native New Zealand species, although the most numerous are the 'introduced' birds – those brought to New Zealand by early European settlers. In fact, an early purpose of the upper botanic garden's aviary was to acclimatise these recent imports.

Birds are identified by their unique size and shape, colour pattern, special markings or "bling", call and song, and by their unique behaviour.

To get maximum enjoyment from your bird-watching, quietly watch the bird for as long as it will let you. Note what the bird is doing – is it foraging, preening, fighting, displaying or singing? Observe how it moves, sits and flies. Bill shape gives a clue what the bird eats – short stout conical bills are for cracking seeds, short straight thin bills are for catching insects and curved beaks are for feeding on nectar.

Bird photos by Craig McKenzie except for eastern rosella (Nick Beckwith) and shining cuckoo (Paul Sorrell).

For more information on NZ birds visit [nzbirdsonline.org.nz](http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz)

To join with others who enjoy watching and studying birds, visit [birdsnz.org.nz](http://birdsnz.org.nz)

## NATIVE BIRDS

### Kereru

*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*

- Large green/purple pigeon
- Distinctive broad, white breast
- Often sit sunning themselves high in trees
- Feed on leaves, flowers and fruit – favours broom, tree lucerne, kowhai, cherry plums
- Whooshing wing beats

Watch for aerial displays, when birds fly steeply up high, stall, then dive swooping down

Many native forest plants depend on kereru for dispersing seeds in droppings



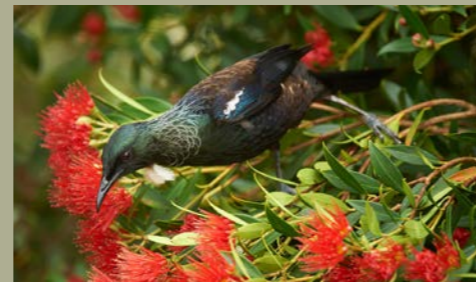
### Tui

*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*

- Iridescent blue-black
- Distinctive white tufts at throat
- Acrobatic when feeding, whirring wing beats
- Melodious bell-like song with grunts, coughs and gurgles
- Collect nectar with brush-like tongue

Look out for them on flowering kowhai, bottlebrush, flax and gums in the upper garden

Role in pollinating native plants — look for tui with head dusted with orange flax pollen



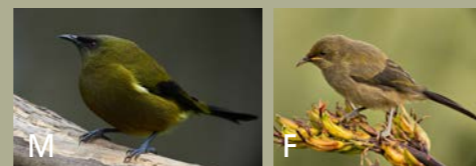
### Bellbird

*Anthornis melanura*

- Male dark olive green, purplish head
- Female browner
- Whirring wings
- Loud, rich, musical bell-like song

Look out for them collecting nectar with their brush-like tongues on flowering kowhai, flax and fuchsia

Role in pollinating native plants – look for birds with top of head dusted with violet fuchsia pollen



### Silvereye

*Zosterops lateralis*

- Small and plump
- Olive green above with fawn sides
- Distinctive white ring around eye
- Noisy flocks feed on nectar and invertebrates
- Non-descript trills and warbles

Most abundant native bird in NZ gardens – arrived from Australia in mid 1800s. The Māori name, tauhou, means 'stranger'



### Fantail

*Rhipidura fuliginosa*

- Pied brown and fawn or black
- Distinctive long fan-like tail
- Restless, fly erratically like a butterfly catching insects on the wing
- Tweets

Look for them in the native borders of the upper botanic garden



### Grey warbler

*Gerygone igata*

- Small greyish bird with red eye, fine bill
- Distinctive white-tipped tail
- Flit and hover around tips of foliage to catch invertebrates
- Constant wavering trill, like a squeaky gate

Look for them in the native borders of the upper botanic garden



### Shining cuckoo

*Chrysococcyx lucidus*

- Iridescent bronze with distinctive stripes on chest
- Repeated upwardly slurring whistle that ends with a downward note
- Lay eggs in grey warbler's nest then chick is fed by grey warbler foster parents
- Only present in spring and summer; migrate to Solomon Islands area for winter

Heard but not often seen. Listen for them in the Australian eucalyptus trees in the upper botanic garden



### Welcome swallow

*Hirundo neoxena*

- Dark blue wings and head, reddish brown throat
- Distinctive forked tail
- Most often seen in flight, wheeling and darting to catch insects in the air
- Sit on wires like a clothes peg
- Chattering song
- Arrived from Australia in the 1950s

Look up for birds hawking for insects over the pond



### Brown creeper

*Mohoua novaeseelandiae*

- Brown with dark brown face cap
- Flit through canopy in small flocks, feeding on invertebrates
- Noisy, buzzy chatter

Can be seen occasionally in the native bush areas of the garden



### Tomtit

*Petroica macrocephala*

- Pied black and white with splash of yellow on breast, female browner
- Perch sideways on trunks
- Downward warble

Rare visitor to the native bush areas of the garden



### Rifleman

*Acanthisitta chloris*

- Tiny, greenish, almost tail-less
- Fine sharp bill
- Flitting up and around trunks and branches looking for invertebrates
- Soft, high-pitched 'zit' 'zit' call

Rarely seen in the garden  
New Zealand's smallest bird



# INTRODUCED BIRDS

## Blackbird

*Turdus merula*

- Male black, orange bill; female brown with buff spots on breast
- Hop, foraging on ground, tossing debris aside looking for worms and insects; also eat berries
- Sweet tuneful musical song

Easily seen on the lawns of the lower botanic garden

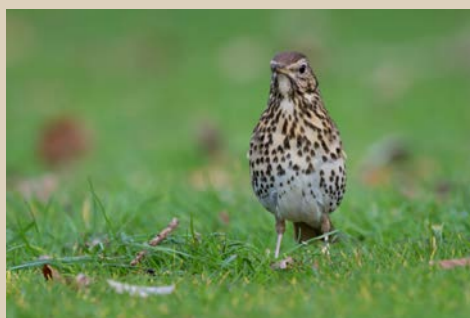


## Song thrush

*Turdus philomelos*

- Buff breast, speckled with dark brown spots
- Forage on ground for worms and snails
- Tuneful song, repeated phrases

Seen bobbing around on lawns; stops with head on one side listening for worms

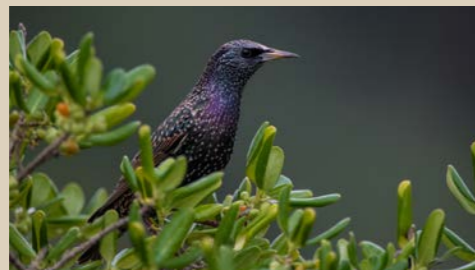


## Starling

*Sturnus vulgaris*

- Glossy black, straight pointed bill
- Speckled with star-like white spots in winter
- Strut when feeding on ground for grubs
- Usually in flocks; often gather on powerlines; squeaky chatter

Most easily spotted on playing fields beside upper garden carparks



## Eastern rosella

*Platycercus eximius*

- Multi-coloured, blue, green, yellow, red; long-tailed parrot with crimson head
- Ringing calls and chattering
- Feed on flowers, fruits and seeds

Dunedin is the only location of this species in South Island

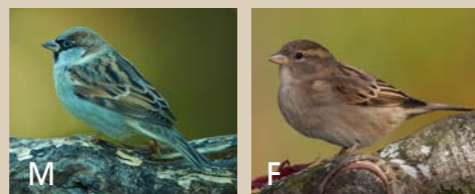


## House sparrow

*Passer domesticus*

- Grey-brown
- Male is chestnut above with a black bib; female paler
- Thick conical bill
- Gregarious
- Feed on seeds, but opportunistic in obtaining food

Check out the café for these cheeky birds



## Dunnock

*Prunella modularis*

- Mottled, streaky brown and grey
- Fine black bill
- Quiet, unobtrusive, creep mouse-like over ground and under bushes when foraging for invertebrates

Commonly seen in the hedges and shrubs of lower botanic garden

Some female dunnocks have one or two additional male partners and are more successful in raising chicks.



## Chaffinch

*Fringilla coelebs*

- Male has blue-grey head, chestnut-pink face and breast
- Female is brown-grey
- Distinctive white wing-bar
- Feed mainly on seeds

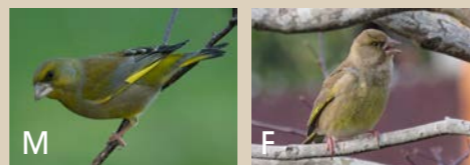
Check out the area around the beech trees in lower garden, especially in autumn



## Greenfinch

*Carduelis chloris*

- Greeny-yellow
- Distinctive yellow on edges of wings and tail
- Female browner and duller than male
- Stout conical bill, seed eater



## Goldfinch

*Carduelis carduelis*

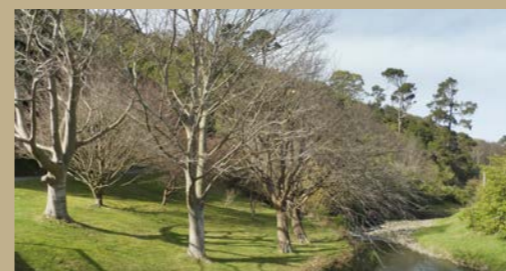
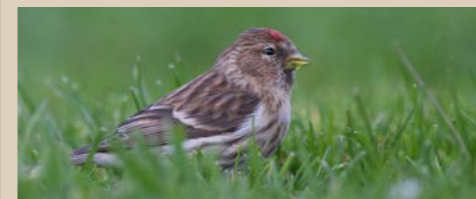
- Colourful finch, both sexes red face
- Distinctive gold on wings and tail
- Usually in small flocks, twittering to each other
- Favour dandelion and thistle seeds



## Redpoll

*Carduelis flammea*

- Small, finch-like, streaked dull brown
- Pink forehead and breast in summer
- Flock together in seeding grassland
- Buzzing calls



# BIRDS AROUND THE PONDS AND CREEKS

## Red-billed gull

*Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*

- Small white and grey gull, grey wings with black tips
- Distinctive red bill
- Adapted to life as a scavenger in cities
- Native, also found in Australia.

One of the largest nesting colonies in NZ is at Taiaroa Head, and can be seen from the carpark there



## Southern black-backed gull

*Larus dominicanus*

- Large white gull with black wings and back
- Heavy yellow bill with red spot at tip
- Juveniles mottled and barred dull brown
- Predator and scavenger
- Strident calls
- Native, but found worldwide



## Paradise shelduck

*Tadorna variegata*

- Large chestnut brown goose-like duck
- Female has white head and male a black head
- Male call 'zonk zonk'; female call 'zeek zeek'
- Native, found only in New Zealand.

Pair often seen on lower garden pond



## Mallard

*Anas platyrhynchos*

- Male in breeding plumage has glossy green head and chestnut breast
- Female streaked and mottled brown and buff
- Dabbles and up-ends in water for aquatic invertebrates and plants

Introduced for duck-shooting, now most numerous duck in New Zealand. Many have interbred with native grey duck and hybrids have brown and cream stripes on head



## Little pied shag

*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*

- Small black and white shag, variable plumage from all black to all white breast
- Stubby yellow bill and longish tail
- Hangs out wings to dry while perched
- Native

Sometimes seen in Lindsay Creek and Waters of Leith



## Rock pigeon

*Columba livia*

- Grey plumage highly variable with glossy greens and purples
- Pale grey wings with black bars
- Fast, direct flight
- Strutting, pigeon-toed walk
- Introduced, found worldwide

Adapted to living alongside people so are attracted to the pond and information centre

