

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

New Zealand robin: pp 247-249.



### NEW ZEALAND ROBIN

**Family** Eopsaltriidae

**Species** *Petroica australis* closely related to the Australian robins of the genus *Petroica*.

**Common name** New Zealand Robin

**Status** Endemic

**Abundance** Common in selected forested areas, more so in the South Island where in some places it appears very obvious.

**Size** 180 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Tomtit 130 mm)

**Habitat** A bird of large, dark, old forests. Seldom found in small remnants. It has, though, adapted to the large exotic pine forests of the central North Island.

**New Zealand range** In the North Island confined to central areas and to Little Barrier Island, Tiri Tiri Matangi Island and Kapiti Island. Also on Mokoia Island in Lake Rotorua. In the South Island known from the forests of the north-west,

areas in Westland, Fiordland, Kaikoura, Dunedin and Southland. Known from central Stewart Island and Ulva Island in Paterson Inlet.

**Discussion** In predator-free New Zealand, has become larger, ground feeding and confiding, unlike the Australian birds of this genus. It obtained its vernacular name from early British settlers who, on first contact with it, saw similarities to that of the European Robin Red-breast (*Erithacus rubecula*). Although slightly bigger than Robin Red-breast, the New Zealand Robin is of similar character. It has the large head, the bold dark eye and the noiseless flight. Robin Red-breast, though, is placed in the family of thrushes (Muscicapidae) whereas the New Zealand Robin is placed with the Australasian robins in the family Eopsaltriidae.

**Subspecies** New Zealand Robins are divided into North and South Island forms. The Chatham Island Robin, which is all black in colour, is considered a separate species. Further scientific work may yet separate the South and North Island birds as separate species.

**Description – North Island Robin (above)**

**Upperparts** Almost black. **Frontal dot above bill** White, especially in breeding plumage. **Lower breast and abdomen** Greyish-white.

**Description – South Island Robin (below)**



**Upperparts** Almost black. **Frontal dot above bill** White, especially in breeding plumage. **Lower breast and abdomen** Yellowish-white.

**Description – female (below)**

Drabber than male birds.



#### **Conspicuous features**

- Larger than the Tomtit but smaller than the introduced Blackbird.
- Bold eye.
- White breast and abdomen markings.
- White frontal dot.

#### **Conspicuous characteristics**

- Has a confiding nature and will approach humans.
- Has a habit of just appearing nearby.
- Scratches through leaf litter on the forest floor like a Blackbird.

**Call** Delivered by the male bird is a ringing “tuee tuee tuee tuee tooo” on a descending scale. Birds are very vocal in mid-morning, especially if the day is warm, and will continue to sing for periods of up to one hour. They also have a distinctive alarm call often issued when standing on the ground, not unlike the alarm call of the introduced Blackbird. Birds sing throughout the year although not as strongly as in springtime when territories are firmly defined.

**Nest** A bulky cup of twigs, fern and moss, bound with cobwebs and lined with feathers, or tree-fern hairs. Up to 4 cream, brown-speckled eggs are laid.

#### **Where to find- North Island**

**North Auckland** – Tiri Tiri Matangi Island. P. 292.

**North Auckland** – Wenderholm park on bush walks. P. 291.

**Waikato** – Kaimai Ranges on Highway 29. P. 311.

**King Country** – Pureora Forest near the information centre. P. 314.

**Rotorua** – Mamaku Ranges in pine forests off Galaxy Road. P. 325.

**Rotorua** – Atiamuri in pine forests. P. 315.

**Urewera** – Waikaremoana on track to Lake Waikareiti. P. 327.

**Taupo** – Lake Rotoponaumu. P. 316.

**Wellington** – Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. P. 340.

### **Where to find – South Island**

**Marlborough** – Pelorus Bridge. P. 343.

**Marlborough** – Lake Rotoiti on Mount Roberts Track. P. 344.

**Dunedin** – In Douglas Fir plantations on the Three Mile Hill Road. P. 359.

**Fiordland** – Eglinton Valley at Cascade Creek. P. 370.

**West Coast** – Haast Pass on the bridal track. P. 372.