



# 10 New Zealand native birds you need to know about

New Zealand is truly special in so many ways, but our native birds make this country even more spectacular. Of course, everyone knows about the Kiwi – to the point where we literally call ourselves Kiwis – but there are many amazing native birds throughout our beautiful country.

**Here are 10 of the best native birds everyone should know about, and what makes them so special.**



## 1. Tui

Tui are relatively common in New Zealand, and are known for their boisterous behaviour and cute white tuft of feathers on their neck.

A Tui's call is quite unusual, as it can switch from song-like notes to grunts, wheezes, and coughs, and they will also mimic other birds and sounds from their environment.



## 2. Kereru

The Kereru is New Zealand's beloved pigeon, known for their characteristic 'whomp whomp whomp' sound as they fly, 'chonky' stature, and beautiful iridescent green plumage. You'll find them all over the country, where they prefer wooded forest areas and some suburban parks.

The Kereru won the [Bird of the Year competition in 2018](#), in which it was noted that these clowns of the forest can sometimes eat so much fermented fruit that they fall out of their trees.



## 3. Korimako/Bellbird

The Korimako is synonymous with the sound of Aotearoa's great outdoors. Captain Cook himself said it was "like small bells exquisitely tuned", and most Kiwis (the human kind) can immediately recognise this beautiful call. Interestingly, bellbirds in different areas can have noticeably different calls. While their numbers were declining for a time, the Korimako are now making a comeback thanks to dedicated predator controls.



## 4. Morepork/Ruru

The Morepork is a small, gorgeous owl. Its big yellow eyes and deep brown feathers make it a treat to discover in the wild, but you'll likely only spot them at night, as these birds are nocturnal. The Ruru is a silent hunter, swooping down on its prey with barely a rustle from its soft feathers, whereas its call is much louder and more distinctive – it really does sound like it's saying 'more-pork'.



## 5. Weka

Not to be confused with the Kiwi, the Weka is also a small, flightless, rotund, and friendly brown bird. Unlike the Kiwi though, they have tail feathers and a short, straight beak, and are typically quite curious about humans, as they'll come up to you to see what you're doing (and if you have any food).

This makes them less popular amongst those who live near Weka, as this cheeky bird will happily [raid veggie patches](#) for their meals.



## 6. New Zealand Falcon

The New Zealand falcon is another [Bird of the Year winner](#), taking home the crown and the street cred in 2012. You'll find it both on the front of the \$20 note, and in dense forests and some tussock areas. These speedsters can reach over 100 kilometres per hour in flight, and [will attack humans](#) if you get too close to their nests.



## 7. Tomtit

There's no two ways about it, the Tomtit is simply adorable. This tiny bird would fit in the palm of your hand, and weighs in at just 11 grams on average. You can find them all over New Zealand, but only in forested areas.



## 8. The Yellow-eyed Penguin/Hoiho

The yellow-eyed penguin is a huge attraction in the South Island, where it's the largest of the penguins on the New Zealand mainland. A band of yellow wraps around their eyes and back of the head like a feathered superhero, and their large stature makes them unmistakable around the southeast coast of the South Island and on Stewart Island.



## 9. Blue duck/Whio

The Blue Duck, or Whio, is possibly the coolest duck on the planet. After all, it surfs. Hike around rivers in the South Island and you might be lucky enough to spot this endangered species – or simply take a look at the front of any \$10 note. They are known for living on the clean, fast-flowing rivers around New Zealand, cruising down the rapids in style.



## 10. Kakapo

The Kakapo is a large, bright green, nocturnal, flightless parrot, and it's an absolute treasure. Beloved for their cheeky nature and striking appearance, the Kakapo is a rare species that is making a slow comeback from the brink of extinction.

Interestingly, they can live for as long as humans do, reaching an estimated 90 years of age – although they probably aren't as interested in protecting their family's future with [life insurance](#) as humans are, considering they can leave a literal nest egg behind.

## What to pack when birdwatching

If you've been inspired to put on your boots and head outdoors to birdwatch, here's a quick list of items to pack that may come in handy:

- ☐ binoculars
- ☐ a birding field guide (the NZ eBird app is great too)
- ☐ sneakers or hiking boots
- ☐ a sunhat and sunscreen
- ☐ a spare pair of socks (in case your feet get wet!)
- ☐ water and snacks
- ☐ waterproof clothing
- ☐ a headlamp or torch and a piece of red cellophane (to go over the light when looking for Kiwis)
- ☐ a camera
- ☐ a small medical kit (don't forget the mozzie repellent)
- ☐ your phone, with a power bank to keep it charged
- ☐ a map of the area

**Finally, don't forget to tell a friend or family member that you're heading out and your plans for exploring so they can reach you.**

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