

Attracting Native Birds to Your Garden

Eastbourne, which is flanked by nearly 2000 hectares of lowland beech and mixed broadleaf forest, has a rich native bird population. Five-minute bird counts conducted by MIRO in spring each year confirm the presence of around 14 native bird species in the Northern Forest. This includes bird species that are regionally rare, such as rifleman, tomtit and whitehead.

Judicious planting of suitable native vegetation in urban gardens will encourage visits of native birds from this surrounding forest, as they look for food and nesting sites. Helping our native species is particularly important at present, as we are facing a biodiversity crisis and many species in both our flora and fauna are under threat.

Some things to consider when planting native trees and shrubs to attract native birds:

- Grow natives that provide a range of food—nectar, fruit/seeds and insects
- Grow a range of trees to provide food all year round
- Grow plants that vary in height
- Mix species to provide diverse habitats
- Allow leaf litter to accumulate to attract insects for birds to feed on

Common bird species you are likely to encounter, and their preferred food:

	Nectar	Fruit/seeds	Foliage	Insects
Tūi				
Korimako (Bellbird)				
Kōtare (Kingfisher)				
Pīwakawaka (Fantail)				
Riroriro (Grey Warbler)				
Tauhou (Silvereye)				
Kererū (NZ Pigeon)				

Even small gardens can accommodate a wide range of native trees and shrubs to attract birds if selected carefully. For example:

- Small trees: kōwhai, wineberry, fuchsia, cabbage tree, whārangi, kāwakāwa, marble leaf
- Shrubs, etc.: kākābeak, hēbe, flax, rēngarēnga lily
- Climbers: rātā vine, native clematis

Larger gardens and gardens bordering reserve land can be used to enrich the adjacent native forest with the addition of larger canopy species much loved by birds for fruit, seeds and nectar. For example: kāhikatea, tītoki, northern rātā, nīkau palm, and mahoe.

Ideally plants should be eco-sourced (from the local area) but this is not always possible. Discuss with your local nurseries—they may be able to advise the source of their stock.

Make your garden safe for native birds to visit by controlling predators:

- Keep cats indoors at night and have them wear bells on their collar
- Trap rats and mice or use bait stations
- If you have a bird feeding station or bird bath, place it out of reach of cats

Finally, keep your garden or bush free from exotic plants that are attractive to native birds, but are weedy and invasive of our native forest. This will prevent birds, both native and exotic, spreading seeds from these plants into surrounding native forest. Exotic cotoneaster species, ivy and asparagus scandens are just a few examples of problem weeds in East Harbour Regional Park and surrounding areas that are spread widely by birds.

Chinese Proverb: *The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second-best time is now.*

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