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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Tui: pp 254-255.



TUI

Family Meliphagidae

Species *Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*

Common name Tui, Parson Bird (old settlers' name)

Status Endemic

Abundance Common

Size 300 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Blackbird 250 mm)

Habitat A bird of forests, secondary forests and vegetated suburban areas in many towns and cities. Can be found from sea level to sub-alpine forests.

New Zealand range Well-spread throughout the North Island but generally absent in districts of intense farming activity such as the Waikato. In the South

Island it is found throughout most forested areas but is absent from Canterbury grassland areas and is seldom seen in the beech forests of Fiordland. Common on Stewart Island.

Description

Upperparts and underparts Black with green-purple iridescence. **Wings** Black with white wingbars, conspicuous when in flight. **Neck and nape** Black with a lacy white collar. **Throat** Black with two white throat tufts. **Bill** Black.

Conspicuous features

- Glossy plumage with considerable iridescence in good sunlight.
- Conspicuous white feather throat tufts.
- Slightly larger than the common Blackbird.
- White wingbars.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Flight is jerky and erratic.
- After about six wing beats, the bird pauses in flight before resuming.
- Sometimes rises vertically to great heights with very rapid wing beats, before plunging down again.
- A noisy flier, fast and manoeuvrable.
- Regularly feeds on flax (*Phormium tenax*), five-finger (*Pseudopanax spp.*), kowhai, (*Sophora spp.*) and the coastal pohutukawa tree (*Metrosideros excelsa*).

Call The song, delivered by both sexes, is of bell-like notes, similar to the Bellbird, but less pure, incorporating many guttural notes and gurgles. Some notes are beyond human hearing. Dialects have developed in some areas. When in full song, birds will sing from vantage points. It is one of the first birds to start singing in the morning usually uttering its first notes at least an hour before sunrise. In summer birds will sing from day break to dusk. Birds sing throughout the year.

Nest A platform of sticks lined with fine grasses, in a fork of a tree or on an outer branch at about four metres above ground. Up to 4 white, brown-blotched eggs are laid.

Where to find – North Island

Northland – Can be found in most areas.

North Auckland – Wenderholm. P. 291.

Auckland – A resident in many parts of the city.

King Country – Pureora. P. 314.

Taupo – Opepe. P. 326.

Central North Island – Found in all areas of forest and secondary forest, and even in the large pine forests (*Pinus spp.*) which have a native under-storey.

Wellington – Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. P. 340.

Where to find – South Island

Marlborough – Pelorus Bridge. P. 343.

West Coast – Common in all forests.

Canterbury – Alford and Mount Peel forests west of Ashburton. P. 353.

Southland – Common in forested areas away from Fiordland and especially the eastern Southland forests of Catlins and Chaslands. P. 363.

Where to find – Stewart Island

Oban – Very common in the town of Oban. P. 367.

SEASONAL FEEDING PREFERENCES OF TUI

Spring Feeds on the nectar of flowers and in particular, the kowhai tree. These are yellow, bell-shaped and rich in nectar. Callistemon (bottlebrush) varieties growing in suburban gardens, especially *Callistemon citrinus*, provide a large nectar food source over spring and summer months in many parts of New Zealand and will even still be flowering into the autumn. It is well worth planting for Tui and Bellbird food.

Summer Feeds on nectar from flax, coastal pohutukawa and inland rata flowers. Also berries from matipo (*Mrysiine australis*), mahoe (*Melicytus ramiflorus*) and Karo (*Pittosporum crassifolium*).

Autumn Feeds on fruiting podocarp trees and takes large numbers of cicada species especially (*Amphispalta cingulata*) and (*A. zelandica*). It also feeds on the berries of karamu (*Coprosma robusta*) and kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*).

Winter Feeds on nectar from the flowers of exotic eucalypts but in the north on nectar from Puriri flowers. Will travel large distances to find winter food.