Kingfishers are small to medium-size birds with a dumpy body, short neck, short legs, large head, and a bill that looks too large and heavy for its size. Often not at all associated with water. They sit patently on a branch, powerfully or other prominent perch and dart or glide to snatch prey from the ground surface, or up to plunge into shallow water. Calls are harsh.

**KINGFISHERS**

**Halycon aurora**

24 cm 9 inches, Small dog gory but buffy, green grading to blue on the head and upperparts. Pale yellowish-buff to off-white underparts and collar round back of neck. Immature has orange wash on head and upperparts. Often seen perched on powerlines, or on branch and rocks near water. Call a loud, rapid, repeated "kaw-kaw-kaw-kaw-kaw-kaw-kaw". Usually in estuaries and rocky coasts; movement towards the coast in winter. Breeding: May 30.

**KINGFISHERS**

**Haliocyd aequatorialis**

About 86 species worldwide; 1 is native to New Zealand, and 1 is introduced and also possibly a vagrant.

The kingfishers are brightly coloured birds with a plump body, short legs, tail and neck, a large head and a long, broad and dagger-like bill. Their flight is fast and direct. They often perch on posts, branches and powerlines.

**KINGFISHERS**

**Haliocyd aequatorialis**

Other names: Kotare, Sacred Kingfisher, New Zealand Kingfisher
Size: 24 cm, 9 inches
Geographical variation: Of eight subspecies in Australia, New Caledonia, the Loyalty, Lord Howe, Norfolk and Kermadec Islands and New Zealand, the New Zealand subspecies in vagrants.

**KINGFISHERS**

**Haliocyd aequatorialis**

Endemic: Widely on the Kermadec, North, South and Stewart Islands and most offshore islands, but not the Chatham or subantarctic Islands. Uncommon well inland and in the southern South Island. They occupy many habitats, especially bush patches near the coast, in tidal estuaries, and in mangrove swamps, especially near the coast. They also live in developed farmland with scattered trees, and breed inland along river and stream edges or by lake shores, along forest margins and well into forests, both native and exotic. In winter, most birds that breed at high altitudes or in forests move to lowland farms and the coasts.

Population: Common and widespread, especially in coastal districts and lowlands in winter.

Conservation: Protected native. Although kingfishers occasionally live well into forests, they have probably benefited from the clearance of forest and the creation of forest-edge habitats and riparian margins of willows and poplars along rivers and near lakes. Artificial structures such as powerlines and posts in estuaries are excellent elevators for members to hurt from.

Breeding: Kingfishers nest in rotten tree trunks, knotholes or hollow branches, in the soil held by the roots of blown-over trees, in riverbanks, roadside cuttings, beside cliffs, holes, and cliff-face to the ground, or dive into water, to catch their prey. Despite their name, kingfishers do not necessarily catch fish; some species are entirely terrestrial.

They nest in tree hollows or earth banks, which they excavate by repeatedly flying at the vertical surface and sparring with their mates. The nest skeleton has special shock-absorbing structures.

**KINGFISHERS**

**Haliocyd aequatorialis**

Plate 63

**Acridinae**

**Plague locust**

281 mm 11 inches, Grasshopper-like, with long wings.

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