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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Morepork: pp 220-221.



## MOREPORK

**Family** Strigidae

**Species** *Ninox novaeseelandiae*

**Common names** Morepork, Ruru

**Status** Native

**Abundance** Common

**Size** 290 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Little Owl 230 mm)

**Habitat** Old forests, modified forests, exotic forests and even well-vegetated suburban gardens. Most of the big cities have breeding populations in their wooded suburbs but it is not found in Christchurch.

**Worldwide range** The Morepork is a race of the Australian Boobook Owl.

Also on Lord Howe Island. Attempts are being made to revive the Norfolk Island population with birds from New Zealand. In New Zealand it has handled development well, even establishing in urban areas.

**New Zealand range** North Island, South Island and Stewart Island but absent from pastoral areas of limited vegetation.

### **Description**

**Head** Brown sometimes with a white ring around the crown and with whitish eyebrows. **Upperparts and underparts** Mostly brown. Feathers are lightly flecked with white, tan or creamy colouring, especially around eyes and breast.

**Eyes** Yellow set in a dark face. **Legs** Brownish-yellow with brown feathers and brown toes.

### **Conspicuous features and characteristics**

- Staring eyes on the front of the face.
- Nocturnal in feeding and calling habits. This is different from the introduced European species the Little Owl (*Athene noctua*), which tends to be diurnal and is widespread over much of the South Island, east of the Southern Alps.
- The Morepork is silent in flight. The viewer senses its arrival.
- Will sit on power wires near a street light and catch attracted insects.
- Tends to favour the same daylight roosting branch from day to day.

**Call** A monotonous “more-pork more-pork more-pork” (probably male bird only). This song probably proclaims the bird’s territory. Also a series of “more more more” and “cree cree cree” screech notes when hunting. Don’t confuse in Auckland with the tri-syllabic, “kik ku koo” of the Spotted Dove or the “kru- kru” of the Barbary Dove.

**Nest** Usually a heap of sticks or debris in an old trunk or fork of tree. On offshore islands there is often the remains of the native rat, (*Rattus exulans*) and insects such as the Weta (*Hemideina thoracica*) and the Huhu Beetle (*Prionoplus reticularis*) scattered below. Up to 3 white eggs are laid.

### **Where to find – North Island – South Island – Stewart Island**

Expect to hear it at night in any forested area.