

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Little owl: pp 221-222.



### LITTLE OWL

**Family** Strigidae

**Species** *Athene noctua*

**Common names** Little Owl, German Owl

**Status** Introduced

**Abundance** Common

**Size** 230 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Morepork 290 mm)

**Habitat** Frequents open farmland and arable land which has sufficient scattered vegetation or hedging to provide cover. Prefers hedging varieties such as pine (*Pinus radiata*) or macrocarpa (*Cupressus macrocarpa*).

**Worldwide range** Europe, North Africa and Western Asia.

**New Zealand range** South Island only with largest populations in Southland but fairly widely spread from Southland north to the Marlborough Sounds.

**Discussion** A European introduction which is widespread and well known for its diurnal habits of hunting in full view in late afternoon. In New Zealand it has become common in the South Island and noted for appearances when disturbed in old barns and hedgerows.

## **Description**

**Head** Grey brown finely streaked with cream above eyes and on cheeks.

**Upperparts** Grey-brown speckled with white. **Underparts** Grey-brown, flecked with white vertical markings. **Eyes** Yellow.

## **Conspicuous features**

- Smaller in size than the native Morepork.
- Yellow eyes.

## **Conspicuous characteristics**

- When disturbed it will fly out from cover and sit on a wire or a branch in full view.
- Has an undulating flight pattern.

## **Where to find – South Island**

**Christchurch** – Around the city and in Hagley Park. P. 349.

**Southland** – Best locations are in areas where roadside hedges are dense and trimmed. These give good shelter. Sometimes when walking along these hedges birds can be flushed. Also expect them in open barns.

**Southland** – Winton district has good numbers. P. 369.