

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Kingfisher: pp 223-224.



KINGFISHER

Family Alcedinidae

Species *Todiramphus sancta*

Common names Kingfisher or Sacred Kingfisher, sacred being a name derived from Polynesian reverence which all kingfishers were traditionally given.

Status Native

Abundance Common

Size 240 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Habitat A bird of forests, rivers, creeks and the coastline. Commonly seen sitting on rural power wires. Often encountered well inside old forests. Although a forest kingfisher for much of the year, it drifts coastwards in the winter months. It also drifts northwards.

Worldwide range Also in Australia, Lord Howe Island, Norfolk Island and New

Caledonia. The New Zealand bird appears larger in size and more brilliant in plumage with a wider habitat probably due to less competition from other species.

New Zealand range Throughout New Zealand and its offshore islands but not on the Chatham Islands.

Description

Cap Blue-green. **Face** A buff line extends above eye from bill to just beyond eye. Around the eye is black. Behind eye is blue. **Neck** A white collar extends from chin to nape. **Upperparts** Greenish-brown with deep blue wing primaries. **Underparts** Orange-tan. **Tail** Deep blue. **Bill** Black.

Conspicuous features

- The blue of the wings and tail.
- Heavy black bill.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Has a habit of sitting on power wires, fence wires, or high up on the branches of dead trees.
- Sits on foreshore rocks.
- Commonly sits in trees above rivers or lakes.
- Will suddenly leave its perch to take an insect or worm from the ground or from water.

Call A continuous and often monotonous “ki-ki-ki-ki”. At times, when in full song, a syllable is added. Near the nest it has a guttural screech.

Nest A hole in a clay bank or old tree. Up to 5 white eggs are laid.

Where to find – North Island

North Auckland – Waiwera at Wenderholm. P. 291.

Urban and coastal areas – Especially in areas where rock pools or mud rivulets are found.

Where to find – South Island

Southland – Not very common here but occasionally it is seen in areas near the coast such as in the Fortrose and Tokanui districts. P. 364.