

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Stitchbird: pp 251-252.



### STITCHBIRD

**Family** Meliphagidae (tentatively)

**Species** *Notiomystis cincta*

**Common names** Stitchbird, Hihi

**Status** Endemic

**Abundance** Rare

**Size** 180 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Bellbird 200 mm)

**Habitat** A bird of both secondary and mature native forest. At times when favourite plants are in full flower it can be drawn from forest margins to feed. Flax flowers draw birds into the open on Little Barrier Island and Tiri Tiri Island.

**New Zealand range** It has a main population on Little Barrier Island north-east of Auckland. It has been transferred successfully to Tiri Tiri Matangi Island, Kapiti Island and recently to the Waitakere Ranges west of Auckland and Karori Wildlife Sanctuary in Wellington. Transfers to Hen Island, Cuvier Island and Mokoia Island

failed.

**Discussion** It has recently been reclassified (Driskell et al 2007) into its own endemic family, thought closer to the wattle birds (Callaeidae) than the honeyeaters (Meliphagidae).

**Description – male (above)**

**Head** Velvet-black with white erect tufts behind eyes. **Upperbreast and back** Black. **Wings** Feathers are black with light brown edges and a conspicuous white wingbar at base of primaries. **Lowerbreast** A band of yellow crosses the lowerbreast and the folded wings. **Rump and underparts** Pale brown.

**Description – female (below)**

**Upper and underparts** Olive-brown, similar to the female Bellbird. **Wings** Brown with a white wingbar.



**Conspicuous features**

- White wingbar separates the female Stitchbird from the female Bellbird.
- Both male and female birds have whiskers at the gape.
- Ear tufts on the male bird.

**Conspicuous characteristics**

- Birds are usually in pairs.
- In the nesting season they are strongly territorial.

- Out of the nesting season on Little Barrier Island, individual birds can be found following large flocks of Whitehead through the forest.
- Stitchbirds have a habit of alighting on a branch with the tail held high or even over their backs or with heads facing down and tails kinked.

**Call** A resonant “tik tik tik tik” and loud “t-zit”. Females make “pek pek pek”, alarm notes similar to the Bellbird.

**Nest** In holes or cavities high up, made of twigs, with a cup lined with feathers or tree-fern hairs. Up to 4 white eggs are laid.

### **Where to find**

**Little Barrier Island** – This is the stronghold of this species. P. 289.

**North Auckland** – Tiri Tiri Matangi Island. P. 292.

**Auckland** – “Ark in the Park”, Cascades Kauri Park, Waitakere Ranges. P. 296.

**Wellington** – Kapiti Island. P. 337.

**Wellington** – Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. P. 340.