

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Grey warbler: pp 241-242.



GREY WARBLER

Family Acanthizidae

Species *Gerygone igata* Closely related to the Australian *Gerygone* genus.

Common names Grey Warbler, Riroriro

Status Endemic

Abundance Common

Size 100 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Habitat Found from low secondary vegetation to tall forests.

New Zealand range Found throughout New Zealand and on offshore islands where vegetation exists.

Description

Upperparts Grey-brown. **Face, throat and breast** Pale grey. **Underparts** Whitish.

Tail Grey with white tips, the white being absent on the central tail feathers. The long tail separates the bird from the smaller Rifleman.

Conspicuous features

- Long tail with white end markings.
- Smaller than a House Sparrow but larger than the Rifleman.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Has a habit of feeding on the wing.
- Flutters wings quickly as if trying to fan the leaves to dislodge insects.
- Moves quickly through the branches usually in the middle canopy.
- Regularly warbles as it feeds.
- Often to be seen flying high above the canopy chasing other warblers.

Call Song is a sweet and fragile warble. Dialects vary from district to district. Birds quiver right to tip of tail when in full song. Male birds can be heard singing at any time of year but they are particularly vocal throughout the spring and summer breeding season.

Nest Nests are of domed construction, pear-shaped, with a small hole on the side for an entrance. They are made of twigs, lichen, bark and moss, and lined with feathers. Up to 4 white, brown-speckled eggs are laid.

Parasitism by cuckoos The Grey Warbler is the major foster parent of young Shining Cuckoos. Therefore they nest early so that one brood of warblers is on the wing before the arrival of the cuckoo in September or October. In northern New Zealand the first brood is usually fully-fledged by early August. The Shining Cuckoo lays one olive-green egg in the warbler's nest. This egg is larger than the Grey Warblers but the host birds accept it. A recent study suggested that to lay the egg the cuckoo enters the warbler's nest head first with wing tips and tail exposed and then backs out after laying without damaging the nest. It takes a warblers egg away with it as it leaves (Briskie J V, Notornis, 2007, Vol 54: 15-19).

Where to find

This bird is found wherever there is vegetation. It is often in suburban gardens and parks. It is a bird which can be found without even leaving the city environs. It is present in all the areas where the rarer forest birds might be sought.