

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Bellbird: pp 252-253.



## BELLBIRD

**Family** Meliphagidae

**Species** *Anthornis melanura*

**Common name** Bellbird

**Status** Endemic

**Abundance** Common

**Size** 200 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Tui 300 mm)

**Habitat** A bird of both old forests, secondary forests, scrublands and in some areas in suburban gardens.

**New Zealand range** Well-spread throughout the forested areas of the South Island and forested areas of the North Island north to the Waikato and to the top of the Coromandel Peninsula. A few breed on the Whangaparaoa Peninsula. Also

on offshore islands but not Great Barrier Island.

**Discussion** Large populations were recorded by Captain Cook but populations declined with the arrival of the colonists to a point where many thought extinction was likely. It has since recolonised many areas.

**Description – male (above)**

**Head** Olive-green with purple iridescence on forehead and crown. **Upperparts** Olive-green. **Wings** Dark bluish-black with yellow at bend of folded wing. **Tail** Bluish-black and slightly forked. **Underparts** Pale green. **Eye** Red. **Bill** Black.

**Description – female bird (below)**

**Upperparts** Tending to olive-brown. **Cheeks** Whitish stripe under eye from gape. **Wings and tail** Brownish-black, tail slightly forked. **Underparts** Pale green. **Bill** Black.



**Conspicuous features**

- Green of the male bird.
- Purple head tonings on the male bird.
- Curved honeyeater bill.
- Female bird is duller than the male.
- Slightly forked tail.

**Conspicuous characteristics**

- Early morning chorus.
- Takes nectar from flowers in an acrobatic manner.
- Flight is fast with noisy wing rustle.

- In the forest it flies low and is manoeuvrable.
- In the open its flight becomes direct with some undulation.

**Call** Bell-like, liquid, clear and melodic which starts well before sunrise. The dawn chorus is memorable. Both sexes sing, male birds being of stronger and more persistent voice. Also has “pek pek pek” alarm calls.

**Nest** A loosely built structure of twigs and fern leaves, lined with fine grasses, usually in a fork of a tree, at about four metres from the ground. Up to 4 white, brown-blotched eggs are laid.

### **Where to find – North Island**

**North Auckland** – Whangaparaoa at Shakespear Park. Take sign to Te Haruhi Bay. P. 294.

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

**South Auckland** – Waharau Regional Park north of Kaiua on the Firth of Thames. P. 302.

**Thames** – Kauaeranga Valley at the south end of Thames. P. 305.

**Thames** – Ruamahunga Bay 18 kms north of Thames. P. 306.

**Coromandel Range** – Kopu to Hikuai road at summit.

**King Country** – Pureora by the Information Centre. P. 314.

**Taupo** – Opepe Reserve. P. 326.

**Taupo** – In town parks.

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

### **Where to find – South Island**

**West Coast** – Common.

**Fiordland** – Te Anau in lakeside trees and Eglinton Valley. P. 369, 370.