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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Skylark: pp 227-228.



SKYLARK

Family Alaudidae

Species *Alauda arvensis*

Common name Skylark

Abundance Common

Status Introduced

Size 180 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Habitat Open pastureland and wilderness grassland areas.

Worldwide range Europe. North Africa, North Asia to China.

New Zealand range Throughout New Zealand away from forests and alpine areas but not subalpine areas. Found on some of the offshore islands.

Description

Head Brown streaked with light brown. A crest is sometimes noticeable.

Upperparts Brown, streaked with light brown. **Underparts** Buff. **Tail** Dark brown,

the outer feathers being white.

Conspicuous features

- Crest on head.
- White tail feathers in flight.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Sings purposefully from the sky.
- Crouches on gravel country roads, flying off just as traffic approaches.
- Frequently sits on fence posts.
- Flies up in front of intruders when in long grass.
- Raises its crest when carrying out courtship and mating procedures.

Call Its song delivered by the male bird is a liquid trill uttered when flying above nesting territories. Sometimes, though, it is delivered from a fence post or even when sitting on the ground. Birds can remain singing in the air for some time. Seven minute song spans are commonly heard in spring months. Song period is concentrated in the months of July to February. Over the autumn months song is heard much less but is not totally absent. Birds disturbed on the ground utter a “chirrup” call.

Nest A neat grass-lined cup on ground or in clump of grass. Up to 4, greyish-brown, speckled eggs are laid.

From P 230-231.

Differences between the Pipit and the Skylark

- The Pipit lacks the Skylark’s crest and rather square head.
- The Pipit is of upright stance standing higher than the Skylark, which instead is inclined to sit back on its haunches with a sloping back posture.
- The Pipit has a habit of landing nearby and being a friendly and confiding bird. At such times it will bob its tail vigorously.
- Skylarks are vigorous aerial singers. Pipits sing from a perch although they will utter their “scree” note when on the wing.

Where to find – North Island

South Auckland – Miranda. P. 302.

General – Common everywhere and even in some towns.