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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Silvereye: pp 249-250.



SILVEREYE

Family Zosteropidae

Species *Zosterops lateralis*

Common names Silvereye, White-eye, Grey-backed Silvereye (Australia)

Status Native

Abundance Common

Size 120 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Grey Warbler 100 mm)

Habitat Found anywhere where there is suitable vegetative cover from suburban gardens, to hedgerows, to exotic plantation and native forests.

Range Throughout New Zealand and the offshore islands.

Discussion A self-introduced bird which colonised New Zealand in the 1850s, probably from Australia. It is also found around the Pacific on many islands such as Norfolk Island, Lord Howe, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji and Tahiti. It is very common in New Zealand where it is popular as a bird which comes to bird tables and feeders. Has a brushed-tongue for taking nectar.

Description

Head, nape and rump Green. **Back** Grey. **Wings** Green, primaries edged with brown. **Chin** Yellowish. **Underneck and breast** Pale grey. **Flanks** Pinkish-brown. **Abdomen** Whitish. **Eye-ring** White. **Tail** Above green, edged with brown, with white undertail.

Conspicuous features

- A small green bird.
- White eye-ring.
- Grey back.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Gathers into large winter feeding flocks.
- Often seen feeding alongside the Grey Warbler in canopy trees. The white tips to the Grey Warbler's tail separate it from a distance.
- Will come and feed from bird tables in winter.

Call Several songs have been detected. The alarm note is a noisy “tchirrup”, while the territorial song, delivered by the male bird, is rapid and warbled, not unlike a thin rendition of a Blackbird's song. In autumn, birds often sing softly from within trees and shrubs.

Nest A rather flimsy cup woven from fine grasses, mosses and twigs, hung between two branches, very often placed at the extremity of branches and up to three metres from the ground. Usually 3 pale blue eggs are laid.

Breeding habits Because Silvereyes often place their nests on the end of flimsy branches, it is likely that they are beyond the reach of rats (*Rattus rattus*). It breeds from September through to March.

Where to find

Suburban gardens, parks, orchards, forests and roadside verges.