

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Blackbird: pp 232-233.



BLACKBIRD

Family Muscicapidae

Species *Turdus merula*

Common name Blackbird

Status Introduced

Abundance Common

Size 250 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Song Thrush 230 mm)

Habitat Has adapted to a wide range of habitat from the suburban garden to the pastoral countryside, to native and exotic forests.

Worldwide range Europe through to Asia.

New Zealand range Found throughout New Zealand and on offshore islands.

Description – male bird (above)

Upperparts and underparts Black. **Bill** Bright yellow in the breeding season.

Eye-ring Yellow.

Description – female bird (below)

Upperparts Dark brown. **Chin** Grey. **Breast and underparts** Light brown speckled with dark brown. **Bill** Orange in breeding season. Otherwise brown.

Description – immatures

Upper and underparts Dark brown with some breast speckling.



Conspicuous features

- All black colour.
- Yellow eye-ring on the male bird.
- Yellow bill on male bird.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Commonly feeds on lawns and pastures.
- When on the ground it hops rather than walks.
- When disturbed, flies off making an alarm call.
- Has a habit of sunbathing lying under full sun with wings spread.
- Moults heavily over late summer, more so than the Song Thrush.

Call Song period is from August through to January but the “tok tok tok tok” alarm call can be heard at any time of year. The song of the male Blackbird is melodious and fluid with notes being uttered in phrases with distinct pauses between each. It does not repeat notes as does the Song Thrush but instead runs a variety of notes together. Blackbirds sing strongly at dawn and dusk.

Nest A bulky cup of grass, twigs and leaves bound with some mud and lined with fine grasses. Up to 4 greenish, brown-speckled, eggs are laid. Both birds help with nest building and the feeding of young.

Where to find

Common in most places below the snow line.