

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Welcome swallow: pp 228-229.



### WELCOME SWALLOW

**Family** Hirundinidae

**Species** *Hirundo neoxena*, now separated as a species from *Hirundo tahitica*.

**Common names** Welcome Swallow, Pacific Swallow

**Status** Native

**Abundance** Common

**Size** 150 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

**Habitat** Found over waterways, open pastureland and wilderness areas but seldom over forested areas. Regularly seen over estuaries and mudflats.

**Worldwide range** Australia and New Zealand.

**New Zealand range** Throughout New Zealand but seldom seen in drier South Island areas, and Fiordland.

**Discussion** Arrived in New Zealand from Australia in the 1950s when it established a small breeding colony in the far north of Northland. From then onwards a southward spread occurred until it became established over the

whole country. Early populations had preferences for nesting under bridges and in culvert pipes, but currently their nests can be found on the sides of buildings, under eaves as well as along cliffs and banks.

### **Description**

**Crown** Blue-black. **Forehead, throat and breast** Rusty-brown. **Upperparts** Metallic blue-black. **Underparts** Greyish-white.

### **Conspicuous features**

- Rusty-brown of the chin and throat.
- Forked tail.

### **Conspicuous characteristics**

- When feeding over water continually dips into the water.
- In winter it can be seen feeding over dams and ponds in large flocks.
- Often seen sitting along power wires in large numbers, usually towards the end of the breeding season.

**Call** A short “peep peep” is heard when birds are feeding. Sometimes a rapid twittering is uttered from a perch.

**Nests** These are found under bridges, under eaves, commonly in milking sheds, as well as along cliffs and banks of rivers. They are cup-shaped and carefully sculptured with mud pellets made of clay mixed with saliva. They are lined with straw, feathers and wool. Up to 4 pink, brown-flecked eggs are laid.

### **Where to find**

**North and South Islands** – Almost anywhere away from old forests.