The Open V U E

Open Valley **U**rban **E**cosanctuary **Project**

Guide to Dunedin Garden Birds

All of this information, and more can be found at NZ birds online (www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz)

Starling

Māori Name: -

Scientific Name: *Sturnus vulgaris*

Status: Introduced, naturalised

Identification:

If you see a medium-sized, dark-coloured bird with a yellow beak, shining purple-green feathers and white spots, you have found a Starling! Starlings have short blackish tails, edged with pale brown. You may notice that their eyes are placed far forward in their skull giving them binocular vision. Males and females look similar, but males' eyes are dark while females have a pale brown edge to their iris. Young Starlings are a greyish brown.

Starlings use their long beaks to make holes in the ground to eat pasture invertebrates, including earthworms, caterpillars, beetles and their larvae, and spiders. They will also eat grain from hen runs, and human food scraps inducing soft fruits (apples, pears, cherries, grapes) also picking small berries from trees. They will also catch cicadas in the air. Starlings will also copy nectar feeders, taking nectar from flowers, covering their foreheads in orange flax pollen. They will often fly as far as 15-30 km to find their favourite feeding spots.

Image: Marie-Louise Myburgh

Rock Pigeon

Māori Name: -

Scientific Name: *Columba livia*

Status: Introduced, naturalised

Identification:

If you see a large blue-grey bird with light grey back and wings, a white rump, and black stripes on the upper wing and a black tail, you have spotted a Rock Pigeon. Some Rock Pigeons even have a checker-board pattern on their wings. Look closely at their neck and chest, there is a broad band of shiny (iridescent) purple-green feathers. Their beak is grey-black, their cere (fleshy covering at the base of the beak) is white and their feet are pink to red-pink. Their eyes are red. Juveniles are smaller and slimmer than adults, have duller plumage without the shiny purple-green feathers and their feet are grey to pink-grey. Juvenile beaks are pink or grey-pink, their eyes are brownish, and their cere is pink or grey.

You will see Rock Pigeons feeding on a wide variety of foods, particularly food refuse and scraps in urban areas and mainly commercial grains (peas, maize, barley, wheat, oats, and clover), either newly-sown or among stubble in rural areas. They will often forage along the high-tide line for food washed ashore. Occasionally they eat invertebrates, such as earthworms and snails.

Image: Alan Tennyson

Bird Food Recipes

For fruit:

1. Cut apple into pieces.
2. Place cut apple into bird feeder.
3. Hang feeder on platform.
4. If necessary, clean feeder by scrubbing and rinsing with water and drying completely.

For seed:

1. Fill feeder to top with supplied seed.
2. Hang feeder on platform.
3. If necessary, clean feeder by scrubbing and rinsing with water and drying completely.

For fat:

1. Place three supplied fat truffles into feeder.
2. Hang feeder on platform.
3. If necessary, clean feeder by scrubbing and finishing with water and drying completely.

For sugar-water:

1. Mix 1/2 cup of sugar with 1 litre of water.
2. Fill feeder and attach to waratah above platform.
3. If necessary, clean feeder by rinsing with water and drying completely.

For control:

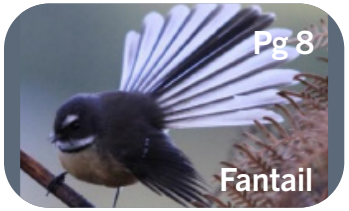
1. Attach feeder to platform without adding any food.
2. If necessary, clean feeder by scrubbing and rinsing with water and drying completely.

Picture Index

Native and Endemic Birds

Native birds are:

Endemic birds are:



Song Thrush

Māori Name: -

Scientific Name: *Turdus philomelos*

Status: Introduced, naturalised

Identification:

If you see a medium-sized bird with a pale creamy chest and belly speckled with fawn-brown, v-shaped spots, you have probably spotted a Song Thrush! Their head is grey brown. Their back and upper wings and tail are also grey-brown. If you watch them fly, you may see their upper wings are mostly only brown. Males and females both look similar. Juveniles look similar to adults, but the speckling on the chest and belly is fainter.

Song Thrushes use their robust, pointed beak to eat mainly earthworms, millipedes, various insects, spiders, snails and slugs. You may see them feeding on your lawn, under the cover of trees, hedges, forests or in woodlands. If you see a small pile of broken snail shells along a garden path or near a stone, a thrush will have been at work tapping the snail against a hard surface to break the shell and expose the animal inside. The thrush uses the hard surface as an anvil. You may also find them eating the small berries of some shrubs such as coprosma, and ripening fruit in orchards.

Image: Ormond Torr

Rosella

Māori Name: -

Scientific Name: *Platycercus eximius*

Status: Introduced, naturalised

Identification:

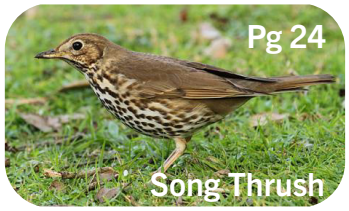
If you see a-medium sized bird with a bright red head, white cheek patches and red 'bib' extending down the chest into a yellow belly, you have probably spotted a Rosella. Look closely at all the Rosella's colourful feathers, their upper back is yellow to green, and each feather has black patches in the centre of it. Their upperwings are dark blue, with bright blue shoulders. Their long tails, almost as long as their body, are dark green in the centre, becoming light blue toward the outside. If you watch them fly away, you may see their bright green rump. Males and females have the same colourings except males are usually brighter than females. Juveniles are duller than adults, and their plumage is more green than yellow. Their green colouring extends up the back of their neck to the top of their head. Their cheek patches may be pale blue. Juveniles, and some adult females have a white bar on the underside of their wing, which you may see when they fly.

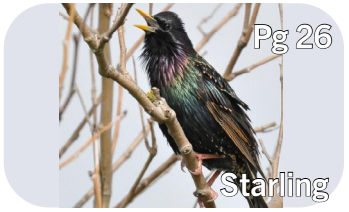
You may see Rosellas using their hook-like beaks to eat berries, seeds, fruit, nectar, shoots, buds, leaves, and invertebrates (particularly during the breeding season), often pecking on the ground but sometimes in trees. They usually forage alone or in pairs during the breeding season, and in small flocks in the winter. They also eat the seeds of many native plants including flax, totara, and pohutukawa. When they feed on the nectar from puriri flowers, they destroy the flower in the process.

Image: Josie Galbraith

Introduced Birds

Introduced birds are not naturally found in New Zealand as they were brought here by humans.





Make sure when you are looking at birds that you stay still and quiet so as not to scare them.

Yellowhammer

Māori Name: -

Scientific Name: *Emberiza citrinella*

Status: Introduced, naturalised

Male ♂

Female ♀

Identification:

If you see a small bird in flight with white outer tail feathers, and a chestnut rump, you have probably spotted a Yellowhammer.

Look out! The males and females look different! This means they are dimorphic.

Males have mostly bright yellow heads and underparts, and a darkly-streaked upper back (mantle). Females are much browner and have more brown streaks on their head and upper surface, with some yellow on their underparts.

Yellowhammers use their short cone-shaped (conical) beaks to feed mostly on seeds, especially those of grasses such as newly sown pasture seed. They often eat seeds from barley grass, ryegrass and *Poa annua*, chickweed, dandelion and *Amaranthus* and will likely frequent your garden if you have many weeds that have gone to seed. They will also eat invertebrates especially in the breeding season, including, grasshoppers, moths, caterpillars, flies, beetles, aphids, bugs, cicadas and spiders. Chicks are mostly fed invertebrates, especially before fledging.

Images: Male – Robert Hanbury-Sparrow I Female – Rebecca Bowater

House Sparrow

Māori Name: Tiu

Scientific Name: *Passer domesticus*

Status: Introduced, naturalised

Male ♂

Female ♀

Identification:

Look out! The males and females look different! This means they are dimorphic.

If you see a small chestnut-brown, white and grey bird, with a striking black chest, you have probably seen a male sparrow! Breeding males have a black beak, otherwise their beak will be pale pinkish-brown.

Females and young sparrows look similar to each other, are greyer, with lighter brown backs compared to males. Their underparts are plain grey, but their backs and wings have irregular patches of several shades of brown and white. If you look closely, you may notice their deep brown eyes or dull pink legs.

Using their robust conical bill, adults eat mainly grain, including cereal and maize crops, but also the buds, flowers, nectar, fruit and seeds of a wide range of other introduced plants (especially amaranth, birch, knotweed, meadow grass, fat-hen, chickweed and mouse-ear). Around towns and cities, they thrive on human food scraps, especially bread strewn across a lawn. They will sometimes eat invertebrates. Small nestlings are fed mostly invertebrates and as they grow will be fed more softer items of the adult diet, and many invertebrates.

Images: Alan Tennyson

Native and Endemic Birds

Bellbird

Māori Name: Korimako

Scientific Name: *Anthornis melanura*

Status: Endemic, not threatened

Male ♂

Female ♀

Identification:

If you see a medium-sized green bird with deep red eyes, a slightly forked tail and a short curvy beak, you have probably spotted a Bellbird! If you watch them fly, you may notice they whizz quickly about, making many whirring noises from perch to perch.

But look out! The males and the females look different! This means they are dimorphic.

♂ Adult males are a darker, olive green colour, with a slightly paler belly. If you look closely, you may see that their head is tinted purple and their wings and tail are much darker, almost black.

♀ Adult females are a browner colour with a narrow white-yellow stripe across their cheek from the base of their beak. They have a bluish gloss on top of their head.

Juveniles look a bit like adult females, but have a yellowish cheek stripe and brown eyes and don't have the bluish gloss on their head.

Bellbirds use their short curvy beak to feed mainly on nectar from many native and introduced plants. They eat fruit, and in beech forests they eat honeydew from scale insects on beech trunks. Bellbirds also eat many insects and spiders by picking them off (gleaning) tree trunks, branches and leaves and catching flying insects (hawking). Young Bellbirds are probably only fed mostly insects.

Images: Male - Craig Mackenzie I Female - Dick Porter

Black-backed Gull

Māori Name: Karoro

Scientific Name: *Larus dominicanus*

Status: Native, not threatened

Identification:

If you see a large white bird with a Black back, you will have spotted a Black-backed gull! They have a yellow beak with a red spot near the tip of their lower beak (mandible). If you look closely you will see they have pale green legs. If you see a large mottled brown bird with a black beak and legs, this is a juvenile. Their plumage lightens as they get older and they will moult into adult plumage at about 3 years old.

Black-backed gulls use their long yellow beaks to hunt and scavenge food. They catch and eat a wide range of marine and terrestrial invertebrates, fish, small mammals, birds and their eggs and chicks. You can often see them foraging for organic waste in landfills and on farms (e.g. docked lambs' tails or dead farm stock) and waiting for offal from fishing boats and processing factories. Many will gather at stranded or floating marine mammal carcasses to eat both flesh and maggots.

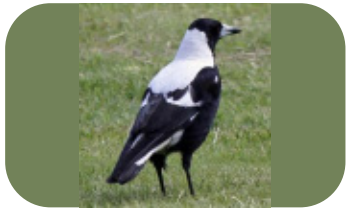
Image: Rebecca Bowater

Magpie

Māori Name: Makipai

Scientific Name: *Gymnorhina tibicen*

Status: Introduced, naturalised



Male ♂

Female ♀

Identification:

If you see a large black and white bird with a blue-grey beak with a dark tip and red eyes, you have spotted a Magpie! 18

Adult males and females look very similar but: ♂ males have white feathers behind their neck, upper back and rump, as well as shoulder patches. The upper two-thirds of their tail and under-tail coverts (feathers covering the main tail feathers) are also white. Otherwise, males are black with blue iridescent (shiny) plumage. ♀ Females are similar, but their upper back is grey, and their black plumage is less iridescent. You may also spot a male with black shoulders and upper back, with some white feathers on their mid back – this is a black-backed Magpie!

Juveniles have speckled grey plumage on their belly. There are also black morphs.

Using their robust, long beaks, you may see Magpies poking about on the ground to find and eat invertebrates living in the ground. They mostly eat earthworms in winter and large cicadas in late summer. Throughout the year they eat other insects, particularly caterpillars of the porina moth as well as army worm caterpillars, crickets, wasps, spiders, stick insects and snails. Occasionally Magpies consume carrion, lizards, mice, small birds and their eggs and chicks. Seeds and grain may be taken occasionally.

Image: Male - Duncan Watson / Female – Peter Reece

Greenfinch

Māori Name: -

Scientific Name: *Carduelis chloris*

Status: Introduced, naturalised

Male ♂

Female ♀

Identification:

Look out! The males and females look different! This means they are dimorphic.

If you see a small green bird with a yellow belly and bright yellow stripes on the leading edges of the wings, you have probably spotted a male Greenfinch.

You may also spot an adult female Greenfinch which is a small dull, grey-brown bird with some dull yellow on the wings. Juveniles look like adult females with more streaks.

Greenfinches use their small conical (cone-shaped) beaks to eat a wide variety of seeds from many different plants including seeds from weeds (thistles, wild turnips and radishes, Amaranthus, chickweed, fathen, dandelion, Poa annua and wireweed) and berries (*Cotoneaster* and African boxthorn). They also eat seeds from cultivated plants such as cereals, sunflower, maize, clover, rapeseed, tamarillo, kiwifruit, passionfruit and apple. They will sometimes eat invertebrates, such as aphids, caterpillars, moths, flies, beetles and bugs and one has even been spotted eating bees at the hive!

Images: male – Dick Porter I Female – Rebecca Bowater

Fantail

Māori Name: Pīwakawaka

Scientific Name: *Rhipidura fuliginosa*

Status: Endemic, not threatened

Identification:

If you see a small bird with a greyish head, big eyebrows, brown back and behind, a cinnamon-coloured chest and belly, white and black bands across the upper chest, and a long black and white tail that opens in a fan, you have probably spied an adult Fantail. Both males and females look the same.

Juvenile Fantails are have mainly brown tones over the head and body, lack the striking pale eyebrows and chest bands, and are more rufous (reddish) on the breast, eyebrows and on the tips of the primary coverts than adults.

Fantails use their small, sharp beak to mainly eat live small invertebrates, such as moths, flies, beetles and spiders. They belong to the family of flycatchers. Fantails control large prey by holding it in their foot against a perch and pecking it many times. Anything they can't digest, like wings, they throw away before eating the rest. Fantails will sometimes eat small fruit.

Image: Jenny Atkins

Grey Warbler

Māori Name: Riroriro

Scientific Name: *Gerygone igata*

Status: Endemic, not threatened

Identification:

You may not see the Grey Warbler, but you will likely hear them singing loudly from the upper part of trees (canopy). If you do see a tiny (6.5 grams!), grey songbird, that has an olive-grey back, grey face and pale underparts, you might have been lucky enough to see one! They have a dark grey tail that gets darker at the end, except for its white-tipped tail feathers that display a white band in flight. If you look closely you may see their bright red eyes, and their black slender legs. Males and females look the same.

Their finely pointed black beak is perfect for eating insects, such as caterpillars, flies, beetles, moths and other small invertebrates. You may see them plucking (gleaning) insects from the bark of trunks and branches of trees or just hovering on the outside of the canopy gleaning from the outer leaves. They are the only New Zealand bird that hovers on the outside of the canopy while feeding so they can be identified by their behaviour from a long distance. Very occasionally they may feed on small fruits of native shrub species such as coprosma.

Image: Oscar Thomas

Goldfinch

Māori Name: -

Scientific Name: *Carduelis carduelis britannica*

Status: Introduced, naturalised

Identification:

If you see a small bird with a bright red, white and black head and a bright yellow stripe on their wings during flight and at rest, you have probably spotted an adult Goldfinch! Other than the yellow stripe, their wings and tail are black with some white spots near the tip of their tail. Their back is a brownish colour, while their belly and legs are pale.

Males and females look very similar, but males have a redder head, especially above and behind their eye. Juveniles have a dull brown head. You will likely see them in flocks (small or large groups), flying as if they are bouncing in the air and frequently calling to each other with their fluid tinkling calls.

You may see them using their short, conical (cone shaped) beaks to forage together on the ground or at different levels of vegetation, eating mostly weed seeds from plants such as thistles, pigweed and fat hen (*Chenopodium spp.*), dandelion, chickweed, *Poa annua*, ryegrass, creeping rosemary, paspalum and other grasses. They sometimes eat small invertebrates, especially during the breeding season, to feed their growing chicks.

Image: Tony Whitehead

Dunnock

Māori Name: -

Scientific Name: *Prunella modularis*

Status: Introduced, naturalised

Identification:

If you see a small, dull-brown, slim bird, with a slate coloured underbelly you may have seen a Dunnock! On their back and flanks, their brown plumage is streaked with darker brown, merging into their distinctive greyish eyebrow, chin, throat and chest. Their legs are orange-brown. Males and females look similar. You can identify adults by their red-brown eyes as juveniles are similar but have brown eyes.

Using their fine pointed beak, Dunnocks usually eat small invertebrates such as beetles, flies, ants, worms and spiders. You may see Dunnocks foraging on or low to the ground in bushes or shrubs. Sometimes they will eat small berries and seeds. They will often forage alone or in small groups of up to five adults. Nestlings are often fed with much larger insect prey, e.g. adults will catch moths up to 5-10 times their beak length.

If you get the chance to explore the Dunedin Botanic Gardens and see some Dunnocks living there, you may notice they have brightly coloured rings on their legs. The University of Otago has been studying the population of Dunnocks at the Botanic Gardens for many years, using the brightly coloured rings to identify the different individuals.

Image: Ormond Torr

Red-billed gull

Māori Name: Tarāpunga

Scientific Name: *Larus novaehollandiae*

Status: Native, nationally vulnerable

Identification:

If you see a medium-sized bird that is almost completely white, with pale grey back and wings and striking red beak and legs, you have probably spotted a Red-billed gull!. The main flight feathers are tipped with black and white. They have a white iris, with scarlet eyelids. Their beak and feet are both scarlet, especially in the breeding season. Over the rest of the year their beak, feet and eyelids are duller. Males and females look very similar except males are slightly larger and have a longer and stouter beak.

Young Red-billed gulls (immature) look similar to adults but have brown patches on their wings. The tips of their flight feathers are a brownish colour rather than black. Their iris, beak and legs are deep brown instead of scarlet.

The main food at the largest colonies are small-shrimp like crustaceans (euphausiids) called krill *Nyctiphanes australis*. Outside of the breeding season, some feed at sea while others eat small invertebrates along the shore or on park lawns. You may see them 'dancing' on wet grass, they are paddling the ground to bring invertebrates to the surface to eat. While others will eat human handouts in towns or cities, rubbish at dumps or offal being thrown away by fishermen on fishing boats.

Image: Peter Reese

Silvereye

Māori Name: Tauhou

Scientific Name: *Zosterops lateralis*

Status: Native, not threatened

Identification:

If you see a small bird with a bright white eye-ring around their dark reddish brown eyes and an olive green head, you have probably spotted a Silvereye. They also have olive green feathers on their lower back and upper tail. You may notice grey feathers on the back and sides of their neck and their back, but dark olive green feathers on their upper wings and tail. Their wings also have narrow yellow-green lines. Underneath, their colours are much paler. They have a whitish-cream throat and chest, creamy grey belly and under tail. They have pinkish-yellow-brown flanks and white thighs. Their legs and feet are pale brown. If you see them fly you may see they have creamy-white colours under their wings. Males and females look similar. If you see a Silvereye without the distinctive white eye-ring, it will be a juvenile as they look similar to adults.

Their fine, short and sharp dark brownish-black beak is perfect for eating a range of different foods (omnivorous) from small insects, to fruits, nectar and fat from bird feeders. Silvereyes like to eat foods such as aphids, caterpillars and flies, also spiders, picked (gleaned) from shrubs and trees, small berries and ripening fruit including grapes, cherries, apples, pears, figs, apricots and peaches, nectar of native and exotic plants including kowhai, fuchsia, eucalypts, coprosmas and bottlebrushes and fat and lard left out on birdfeeders by swinging onion bags, especially over winter.

Image: Tony Whitehead

Chaffinch

Māori Name: Pahirini

Scientific Name: *Fringilla coelebs*

Status: Introduced, naturalised

Male ♂

Female ♀

Identification:

If you see a small bird in flight that has white outer tail-feathers, it's likely you have seen a Chaffinch!

Look out! The males and females look different! This means they are dimorphic.

You may notice the males in spring and summer as they have brightly coloured brick-red chests and chestnut-coloured upper backs (mantle). The top of their head (crown) and neck are greyish- blue. Their wings are black and you will see their white wing-bar and shoulder patch. During winter, they are duller as they have yellow-beige (buff) feather tips that wear off by early spring.

Females are much duller brownish-grey colour compared to males and only share the similar wing markings as the males.

Chaffinches have short, stout cone-shape beaks perfect for eating a range of seeds including those of beeches, *Pinus radiata* and rimu, mainly in winter. They will often eat flax seeds directly from heads, or on the ground. You may often find them on or near the ground eating other seeds including cereals, fat hen, chickweed, *Amaranthus*, dandelion and thistle. During the breeding season, they will often eat invertebrates, including bugs, flies, beetles, moths, caterpillars, aphids, cicadas and spiders and feed their chicks almost entirely on invertebrates both before and after fledging.

Images: Neil Fitzgerald

Introduced Birds

Blackbird

Māori Name: Manu pango

Scientific Name: *Turdus merula*

Status: Introduced, naturalised

Male ♂

Female ♀

Identification:

Look out! The males and females look different! This means they are dimorphic.

If you see a medium-sized bird that is completely black, has a bright yellow beak and a yellow ring around its dark eyes, you have seen an adult male black bird!

You may see a bird with a light brown beak, yellow eye ring, mostly dark brown upperparts, light brown or grey on their throat, and dark brown with some spots (mottling) on their chest and belly. These are the adult females. Juveniles are similar to adult females, but with light spots (mottling) over their body.

Blackbirds use their strong beaks to mostly eat earthworms, caterpillars, insects, spiders, snails and slugs buried in the soil or among leaf litter. You may see them foraging on the ground in your garden, on pasture, or under trees, hedges, forests or in woodlands. You may also see them eating the small berries of some shrubs such as coprosma and pittosporums, and on ripening fruit trees, such as apples and plums in orchards.

Images: Male - Philip Griffin I Female – Neil Fitzgerald

Tui

Māori Name: Tui

Scientific Name: *Prosthemadera noeaeseelandiae*

Status: Endemic, not threatened

Identification:

If you see a large almost black bird with white two curled feather tufts (poi) under its chin, you have probably seen a Tui. Their almost-black heads, underparts, wings and tails also shine blue and green (iridescent). Their upper back and flanks are very dark reddish brown with a bronze sheen. You may see small white thread-like feathers on the nape and sides of their neck. If you watch them fly you may see small white patches on their shoulder and upperwing. If you listen closely, you may hear their whirring flight. The beak and feet are black, and the eye dark brown. Males are larger than females, otherwise they look the same. Juveniles also look similar to adults but have a browner body and don't have any white feathers under their chin.

Tui eat nectar and fruits they can find depending on the season (seasonal availability). Their favourite foods are honeydew and nectar often from stands of puriri, kowhai, fuchsia, rewarewa, flax, rata, pohutukawa, gums and banksias. In the breeding season, Tui also eat large invertebrates such as cicadas and stick insects obtained by catching in the air (hawking) or by picking (gleaning) them from the outside of trees. In the autumn, they also like to eat medium-sized fruit such as wineberry, kaikomako, mahoe, ngaio, rimu or kahikatea.

In winter, they eat nectar from flowering gums, banksias, puriri, and tree lucerne, as well as sugar-water from feeders in gardens.

Image: Craig Mackenzie

Welcome Swallow

Māori Name: Warou

Scientific Name: *Hirundo tahitica neoxena*

Status: Native, not threatened

Identification:

If you see a small, elegant bird with a blunt head, a deeply-forked tail and long pointed wings, you have spotted a Welcome Swallow. Adults have a reddish-brown forehead, neck and chest, with a black eye-stripe. Their flanks are a pale reddish-brown and their underparts are pale. Look closely at their back and upperwings and you will see that they are blue-black. Their tail is dark and spotted white towards the ends of the feathers. If you have the chance to use some good binoculars, look closely at them in flight, the dots form a row when the tails is spread during flight. Males and females look very similar except females' tail streamers are slightly shorter and their tail spots are slightly smaller. Juveniles are also similar but have darker heads and are overall duller in colour.

Welcome Swallows use their short, broad, black beaks to forage aerially for small invertebrates. Occasionally will perch on plants to eat insects or sweep them up from the water. They also scoop water from lake or pond surfaces during flight to drink.

Image: Ormond Torr

Wood Pigeon

Māori Name: Kereu

Scientific Name: *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*

Status: Endemic, not threatened

Identification:

If you see a large bird with a white belly and chest and blue-green head and wings, you've probably spotted a kereru! Look out for the shiny purple-bronze (iridescent) feathers on their neck, upper back (mantle) and edge of their wings (coverts). Their beak, feet and eyes are all red. Fledglings and juveniles have duller plumage, and often the white chest is smudgy white-grey, and the demarcation between dark and white feathering is ragged and may have a narrow border of cinnamon wash over the upper white feathers.

Kereru are now the only seed-dispersing birds with a beak large enough to swallow the fruits of karaka, miro, tawa and taraire. They also like to clamber about on vines, shrubs and trees to eat buds, leaves, flowers and fruit from both native and exotic species and have been known to eat so much and fall out of trees! Sometimes they will eat clover and possibly other herbs on the ground. They may also eat leaves of kowhai, tree lucerne, broom, willows, elms and poplars if no ripe fruits are available.

Image: Ormond Torr