



# ATTRACTING NATIVE BIRDS TO YOUR GARDEN

## 1. PROVIDE THEM WITH FOOD

Native birds that are likely to visit your garden prefer to eat fruit, nectar, insects and foliage. A small garden can still attract birds, especially over winter and spring when tūi, bellbird and kererū will travel considerable distances in search of flowers and fruit. Some common native birds and their preferred foods are listed in the table below.



### WHO EATS WHAT? DIET OF COMMON NATIVE BIRD SPECIES

Species	Fruit	Nectar	Foliage	Insects	Other
Korimako/Bellbird	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Tūi	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Kererū/Woodpigeon	✓	-	✓	-	Flowers
Kōtāre/Kingfisher	-	-	-	✓	Lizards, small rodents
Ruru/Morepork	-	-	-	✓	Small rodents, birds, lizards
Pipiwaharauoa/Shining cuckoo	-	-	-	✓	-
Pīwakawaka/Fantail	-	-	-	✓	-
Riroriro/Grey warbler	-	-	-	✓	-
Tauhō/Silvereye	✓	✓	-	✓	-



## PLANT NATIVES

Growing native plants and shrubs is the best way to attract native birds to your garden. Invite the birds into your property by planting a mix of species that provide nectar, seeds and berries throughout the year so birds always have food available to them.

Try to plant eco-sourced native plants (plants that naturally occur in your area). They are adapted to local conditions and will grow, flower and fruit better than plants from elsewhere. For advice on planting see the Living Heritage Guide at [www.nelson.govt.nz/living-heritage-plant-guide](http://www.nelson.govt.nz/living-heritage-plant-guide) or search "what to plant for birds" at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

If you have limited space for big trees, try growing plants in containers, e.g. broadleaf and cabbage tree. Some shrubs can even be shaped to fit in with your garden design – but make sure you allow them to flower so the birds benefit.

## LEAVE LEAF LITTER

When leaves fall off your plants and shrubs, do not pick them up or relocate them. A good layer of mulch or leaf litter in your garden will encourage insects like spiders, moths and beetles for insectivorous birds like pīwakawaka/fantail and riroriro/grey warbler to feed on. Birds are also a great natural way of keeping insects under control!

## ADD A WATER FEATURE

Water is even more important to wild birds than food in many areas, particularly in summer when puddles and small streams can dry up. Moving or flowing water is more visible to birds than standing water, so a small fountain or water feature can be a great way of enticing birds to your garden. However, a shallow dish will be just as welcome to a thirsty bird or add a bird bath and enjoy watching the birds splash around.

Make sure your water feature is not accessible to cats. Wash your bird bath or water feature regularly to prevent the build-up of algae and avoid the spread of disease.

## FEEDING WILD BIRDS

Many people like to encourage birds in their garden by feeding them. There is much debate about the pros and cons of feeding wild birds. Although bird feeding is well-intentioned, it can increase the spread of bird diseases, risk of predation, and amount of aggression and stress. Bird feeding can also cause nutritional imbalances and an over-abundance of dominant species like starlings.

If you do want to provide extra food for the native birds in your garden, put out fruit and sugar-water (half a cup of brown/raw sugar in 1L of water). Avoid seeds and grain as they will attract introduced birds like sparrows that will out-compete native birds. Don't give bread and milk as they can't be properly digested by birds and never put out honey or honey-water as it attracts bees and can spread bee diseases. Make sure you wash your feeder regularly to avoid the spread of bird diseases.

## 2. KEEPING BIRDS SAFE

Plant favourite bird foods like flax and kowhai where you can see them from inside the house. But avoid planting close to the house as reflections on windows can confuse birds. Place feeders and bird baths away from windows so birds don't fly into them accidentally if they get a fright. Stickers, beads and etching can be useful to reduce window impacts.

Some native birds have become wary of feeding on the ground. Try growing ground creepers in a hanging basket or climbing plants like rata and NZ passionfruit along a wall or over a pergola.

Make sure your bird bath, water feature or bird feeder is not accessible to cats – at least 1.8m off the ground and out in the open where cats cannot ambush the birds using them.

## CONTROL PREDATORS

Stoats, rats, weasels, possums, cats and hedgehogs prey on birds, including their eggs and nestlings. If you really want to create a sanctuary for birds on in your garden, controlling predators is a must.

Trap predators like rats, stoats and possums on your property. Find out more about backyard trapping at [www.predatorfreenz.org](http://www.predatorfreenz.org) and [www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/conservation-activities/trap-predators-in-your-backyard](http://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/conservation-activities/trap-predators-in-your-backyard). Traps should be in boxes or covered where appropriate to keep out native birds, including weka.

Be a responsible cat owner – neuter your cat and keep it inside, particularly at night.

## 3. RECORD WHAT YOU SEE

Be a Citizen Scientist and help our understanding of trends in bird populations and distribution in Nelson by recording bird sightings from your backyard. Record sightings on eBird at [www.ebird.org.nz](http://www.ebird.org.nz) or Nature Watch at [www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org).

Backyard rat trap in bird-safe box

