

Native birds



Digging deeper...

Mōhua

The mōhua, or yellowhead (*Mohoua ochrocephala*) is a rare New Zealand native bird that lives in our bush. Mōhua nest in hollowed out trees and branches in an effort to hide from Long-tailed cuckoos, which like to lay mōhua's eggs in their nests.



Local lingo

Kererū

The Māori, and commonly used, name for the New Zealand woodpigeon (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*).



Linnaeus says...

Many native birds make their homes in the Catlins bush including the Grey warbler (*Gerygone igata*), the Brown creeper (*Mohoua novaeseelandiae*), Shining (*Chalcites lucidus*) and Long-tailed cuckoos (*Eudynamys taitensis*), and our smallest bird, the rifleman (*Acanthisitta chloris*).

'They seemed to strain their throats with emulation, and made, perhaps, the most melodious wild music I have ever heard'. This is how Joseph Banks, naturalist aboard Captain Cook's first voyage downunder described the deafening dawn chorus that greeted them when they found New Zealand.

The Catlins in South Otago has some of the best unspoilt bush remaining in New Zealand. It is still teeming with birdlife, making it a popular destination for bird watchers. The native kererū, bellbird and tui are all common and it is also one of the best places to spot some rarer birds such as the fernbird and mōhua.

Wherever you stay in the Catlins you would be very unlucky not to spot a kererū. These birds feed on young leaves, fruits and flowers of trees. Despite their plumpness they seem to pride themselves on finding the smallest, flimsiest twig of a tree to land on, which makes watching them land an entertaining pastime. Kererū have been fully protected since 1921, which has greatly aided their population recovery.

You'll usually hear a bellbird or tui before you see them. Both are accomplished singers and can sound quite alike. Bellbirds are named after their voices, which sound remarkably bell-like at a distance. They also have similar diets consisting of nectar, insects and fruits, and both are noisy flyers. Tui have a tuft of white feathers on their throats and are around 30cm long. Bellbirds have a distinctive yellow to olive-green colouration and grow to around 20cm in length.



A tui perched in a Kowhai tree



A bellbird in a Southern rata in full flower

