



Tēnā koutou katoa

There are so many reasons for you and your students to learn about birds! Aotearoa is a land of birds, they are an integral part of our identity and are intrinsic in kaitiakitanga. New Zealand is home to 168 species of native birds, and 93 of these are endemic (found in no other country). Four out of every five are in trouble and some sit on the brink of extinction.

It is important to monitor bird populations and there are a number of national surveys that your students can participate in, with excellent associated resources. Involvement enables your students to contribute directly to scientific knowledge about New Zealand birds and become budding citizen scientists. Monitoring birds also has clear links with the curriculum, incorporating the science capabilities: gathering and interpreting data, using evidence, critiquing evidence and engaging with science.

If you need help with a bird-related project, there are a number of Taranaki-based environmental educators who can help. I can help get your students actively protecting birds by trapping invasive predators through the Towards Predator-Free Taranaki programme. Have a look through the newsletter for other ways I can help out and feel free to get in touch to discuss ideas further.

For the ultimate experience seeing and hearing birds in a predator-free environment, book a trip to Rotokare Scenic Reserve (email educator@rotokare.org.nz). Or Experience Purangi for a lesson about kiwi, targeted at new entrants (info@experiencepurangi.co.nz).

Through predator control efforts, it's exciting to think of the changes that this generation of school-goers will witness to bird life over the next 30 years. For this to happen, we all need to get on board, so the sooner they start learning about native New Zealand birds, how to monitor them and how to protect them, the better.

Nāku noa nā,

Dr Emily Roberts

New Zealand's Birds: Taonga of an Island Nation

This SITE newsletter is all about our feathered friends, including awesome resources available to help identify birds, national bird surveys that the students can get involved with and activities for students to help protect birds.

Identifying Birds

If you are keen to get your students monitoring birds, it is key that they know what birds are out there, what they look like and what they sound like. Fortunately there are some great resources available online. Not all of these resources were developed for school students, but can be easily adapted for primary and high school use with a bit of careful guidance.

Birds by sight:

<http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/>
<https://tinyurl.com/nzgsbirdguide>

Bird calls:

<http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/>
<https://tinyurl.com/Birdsongsandcalls>

Bird footprints:

<http://nztracker.org/>

Test your knowledge:

<https://tinyurl.com/BirdIDcourse>

Other educational resources:

tinyurl.com/NZ-bird-survey
<https://www.doc.govt.nz/education-experiencingbirds>
<https://squawksquad.co.nz/>



National Bird Surveys

If you help your students collect reliable bird counts, get them to enter their data into a national online database. This way they add directly to our knowledge of birds in New Zealand, actively contributing to citizen science. How cool is that! Here are three examples of national surveys they can directly contribute to:



The New Zealand Bird Atlas is one of the largest citizen science projects ever attempted in New Zealand. The aim of this survey is to map the distribution of all of New Zealand's bird species over the next five years. The data will be used for important environmental management and decision-making purposes, so it is key that the information submitted is accurate.

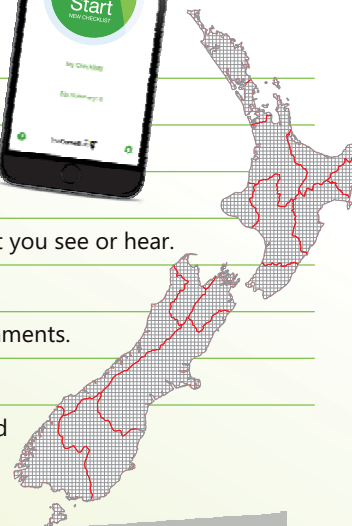
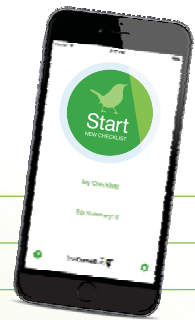
To ensure good coverage of New Zealand, the country has been divided into 10 x 10 km grid squares, with a total of over 3,200 squares across the entire country. The aim is to ensure that there is at least one complete checklist from each habitat within these squares; and for each season (Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter) during the five year data collection period.

If you and your students are keen to take part, this is what you need to do to before you start surveying:

- 1 Register as a New Zealand Bird Atlas user on the eBird website: <https://ebird.org/atlasnz>
- 2 Download the eBird app on the device that you will be using to record the survey.
- 3 Open the eBird app and login using your eBird username and password.
- 4 Go to the settings cog and set the portal as New Zealand Bird Atlas.
- 5 Select your common name language as English New Zealand.
- 6 Update your units for travelling counts to km.

Now you are ready to start Atlasing! When you and your students are ready to start surveying:

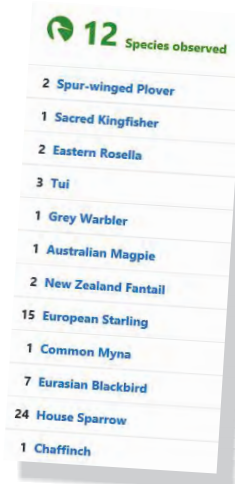
- 1 Open the eBird app.
- 2 Select Start New Checklist.
- 3 Choose a Location from Map.
- 4 Start Checklist.
- 5 Tap the + sign to tally up the number of bird species that you see or hear.
- 6 Once you have finished the survey select Review.
- 7 Add the number of observers and add any Checklist comments.
- 8 Submit.
- 9 You can now view your checklist on the New Zealand Bird Atlas eBird website: <https://ebird.org/atlasnz>



For detailed instructions refer to the New Zealand Bird Atlas handbook:

<https://tinyurl.com/NZBirdAtlasHandbook>

Last term we submitted complete checklists undertaken by students from Waitoriki, Kaimata, Omata, Highlands Schools. Here are some examples:



Happy Atlasing, and if you need help or would like me to join you for a survey, feel free to get in touch (education@trc.govt.nz).





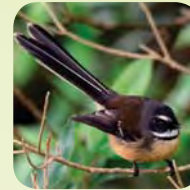
New Zealand
**GARDEN
BIRD
SURVEY**



Goldfinch



Rosella (eastern)



Fantail



Swallow (welcome)

tinyurl.com/NZ-bird-survey

The Garden Bird Survey is another nation-wide survey that your students can undertake at school and/or at home. The official survey only runs for one week each year in late June/early July but there are lots of fantastic educational resources associated with the survey that you can use at any time of the year for your own bird inquiry:

<https://tinyurl.com/Birdsurveyactivities>

Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research have been collecting the Garden Bird Survey data since 2008 and through analysing the results they have built up an impressive picture of how bird numbers have changed over the last 10 years. Check out the website to see which birds are on the increase and which birds have plummeted in numbers over the last few years:

<https://tinyurl.com/BirdsurveyStateofbirds>



Silvereye



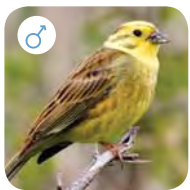
Warbler (grey)



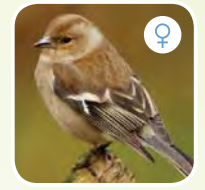
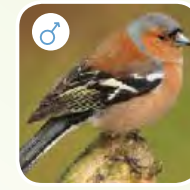
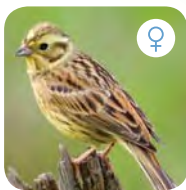
Bellbird



Pigeon (kererū)



Yellowhammer



Chaffinch

Join the fun & help make a difference

The Great Kererū Count

<https://www.greatkererucount.nz/>

The aim of this annual survey is to better understand kererū numbers and distribution across New Zealand. Kererū play a crucial role in forest regeneration by dispersing the large fruits of native trees including tawa, pūriri and matai. In common with the other surveys, there are some great educational resources associated with the survey:

<https://www.greatkererucount.nz/kereru-education-pack/>

Although the official survey only takes place once a year, at the end of September, you can still add your kereru sightings to iNaturalist NZ any time of the year:

<https://www.greatkererucount.nz/how-to-count/>



Protecting birds



GET TRAPPING

Introduced predators pose a massive threat to our native birds. Get in touch if you are keen to get your class monitoring and trapping introduced predators through the Towards Predator-Free Taranaki project (education@trc.govt.nz).

PROVIDE FOOD

Native birds don't eat bread! They mainly feed on plants (nectar, fruit and foliage), insects and other invertebrates. The best thing that you and your students can do to attract native birds to your school is provide good habitat and natural food. Here is an excellent link for finding out what plants are delicious to native birds: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/conservation-activities/attract-birds-to-your-garden/>

These planting guides, published by Wild for Taranaki, provide advice on what native species to plant to best restore your local area: <https://www.restoretaranaki.nz/resources/>

If you're keen for advice, don't hesitate to get in touch (education@trc.govt.nz). Through running a BioBlitz at your school we can identify what plants and bugs are present that attract birds and what plants are missing that could be planted.

RAISING AWARENESS

Your students can become great ambassadors for native birds! Pets can cause a threat to many species of birds. Learning how to become a responsible pet owner and spreading the word is key to protection. Get your students involved in raising awareness. These two links are packed full of information about how to become a responsible cat and dog owner:



<https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/resources/conservation-policy-dogs>



<https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/resources/cats-pet-or-pest>



Students from Mimi School have become incredible advocates for local 'at risk' coastal birds.

They have been undertaking lots of positive local action including making shorebird signs for the Mimitangiātua Estuary and penguin signs for Wai-iti Beach. They have been spreading the word about keeping dogs under control at the beach in order to keep our little blue penguins (kororā), New Zealand dotterel (tūturiwhatu) and oystercatchers (tōrea) safe. Top job!



For assistance or information on environmental education contact:
Emily Roberts, Education Officer - Taranaki Regional Council
education@trc.govt.nz www.trc.govt.nz