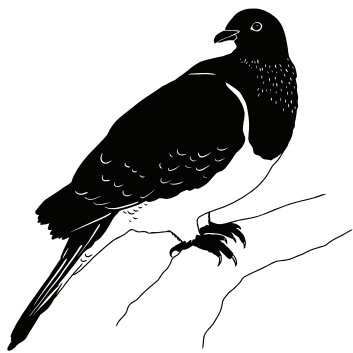




# Kererū / New Zealand pigeon

*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*

## THE GARDENERS OF THE SKY

Kererū once flocked in numbers so great, they could eclipse the sun. These days, you're more likely to spot them alone or in pairs.

### What's their superpower?

With the extinction of large birds like the moa around 600 years ago, kererū are one of very few Aotearoa New Zealand's native birds left with beaks large enough to gulp down large fruits whole.

### Why do we need them?

These plump pigeons play a major role in keeping our forests alive and thriving. That's because the fruits they eat germinate (or sprout) in their gut and get spread through droppings.

If it weren't for kererū, lots of our precious native trees, like miro, matai, taraire, tawa and puriri, would be in serious trouble or extinct. This would upset the forest's ecosystem balance and impact other species that rely on these trees for food, shelter and habitat.

**Habitat:** Forests, and kererū-friendly suburban gardens, parks and farms across Aotearoa.

**Breeding season:** November to March or year-round if conditions are right.

**Diet:** Leaves, flowers and fruit from more than 70 plant species (favourites include nīkau, karaka, pūriri and taraire).

**Size:** Up to 51 cm and around 650 g.

## Fascinating facts

**Acrobatic aviators:** Despite their hefty size, kererū can pull off impressive aerial acrobatics including sudden turns and loops in the air, especially during mating displays or when escaping predators.

**One and done:** Kererū lay a single egg per nesting attempt (although they may nest more than once each season).

**Love birds:** They stick with their mates for life, and not just during mating season.

**Taonga:** A cultural treasure to Māori, kererū were historically a major food source in Māori culture and their feathers were used in special clothing and ceremonies.

## Did you know?

After gorging themselves on native fruits, kererū like to sunbathe while their food digests. Their fruity meal can ferment in their crop (pouch below the throat) turning it alcoholic. Spot them flying in wacky patterns or acting oddly? Now you know why.

## Conservation corner

Good news: kererū are **Not Threatened** nationally. But predators, habitat loss and illegal hunting can still thin local flocks. Protect these heavyweight gardeners and you protect the forest too—their wide beaks spread the big seeds that help native trees return.

### How you can help

- ✓ **Keep your cat indoors** at night as they love to snack on kererū eggs and can kill chicks and grown birds.
- ✓ **Plant a native tree or shrub in your backyard.** Miro, puriri, kahikatea, taraire, kohekohe and tawa are great kererū-friendly habitats.
- ✓ **Choose natural pest control.** Chemicals like insecticides and herbicides on plants can be harmful to their food sources.
- ✓ **Apply window decals** or other visual markers to glass surfaces to keep kererū safe from colliding and getting injured.



Get involved with a local group: [pfwra.org.nz/find-your-people](http://pfwra.org.nz/find-your-people)

More fact sheets and information: [livingintheranges.co.nz](http://livingintheranges.co.nz)

