

Tui



COMMON NAME: **TUI OR PARSON BIRD** – Gmelin, 1788

LATIN NAME: ***Prothemadera novaeseelandiae***

LATIN MEANING: *Prothemadera* Gr. *prosthema*, an appendage, an addition; *dere*, the neck; ref. the curled feathers and filamentous plumes on the neck of the Tui. *Novaeseelandiae* L. *novus*, new; Mod. L. *Zeelandia*, Zeeland, Netherlands; after New Zealand, which received its name from the explorer Abel Tasman who explored the west coast in 1642, naming it *Nova Zeelandia* after his Dutch home.

CLASS: Aves

ORDER: Passeriformes

FAMILY: Meiphagidae

GENUS: *Prothemadera*

SPECIES/SUB SPECIES: *Novaeseelandiae*

DESCRIPTION:

The sexes are alike with the female slightly smaller. Tui appear black at a distance, but are mainly iridescent green with dark bluish/purple reflections. Around 30 cm in size. The back and side of the neck are ornamented with white-shafted filamentous feathers, which curl forwards on the side of neck. Tui have a white, double, throat tuft of curled feathers. The iris is dark brown, the bill and legs black.

HABITAT / DISTRIBUTION:

Widespread in forests, open country and urban areas throughout New Zealand.

BREEDING:

Nesting starts as early as September with the peak months from November–January. Nests are built in the fork or outer branches of trees. They are an open-weaved construction of twigs and sticks with a lining of leaves, tree ferns and moss. Clutches of 3–4 elliptical eggs are laid. These are white or pink, with reddish brown specks or blotches. The incubation period is 14 days with chicks fledging 11 days later. The female alone incubates.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:

Tui are a very aggressive species and will chase other Tui and different species away from a good food source.

DIET:

Tui belong to the honeyeater family and mainly feed on nectar from various native plants flowers (eg. Kowhai, Puriri, Rewarewa, Kahikatea, Pohutukawa, Rata and flax). A number of introduced plants also provide a great source of nectar for Tui (eg. Taiwan Cherry and Camellias). Tui are also very important as pollinators of many native trees. During the breeding season and with young chicks in the nest they will take invertebrates, especially large insects like cicadas and stick insects.

PRINCIPAL THREATS:

- Introduced predators such as possums (eggs and chicks)
- Rats (eggs and chicks)
- Destruction of habitat.
- Feral cats (adults)
- Mustelids (eggs and adults)

CONSERVATION STATUS:

Common.



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