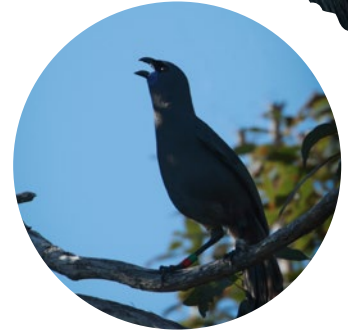


Kōkako, a remarkable bird



Kōkako (*Callaeas wilsoni*) are a member of the wattlebird family. They are endemic to Aotearoa, New Zealand and are best known for their unique appearance and melodic calls.



They are easily recognised, having distinctive blue-grey plumage with blue wattles at the base of their throats, and distinctive black patches around their eyes many liken to a 'Zorro' Mask.

Most famously, kōkako are known for their haunting, bell-like song, which can travel over long distances. Males and females will often duet, especially during the breeding season.

Kōkako are poor flyers and get around by gliding and by using very strong legs to hop from branch to branch.

At one time, kōkako could be found throughout the country. Unfortunately, they can now only be found living in scattered populations across the North Island, where they inhabit mature forests which have extensive predator control.

Kōkako are omnivorous. As well as feeding on insects, they feed on the leaves, buds, nectar and fruits of many native plants.

They play a crucial role in seed dispersal, aiding forest regeneration.

Breeding usually occurs from October to March, with a clutch size of 1–3 eggs. Both parents are involved in feeding and caring for the chicks.

As is the case with many of our native species, kōkako are threatened. They face risks such as habitat loss, predation by introduced mammals and competition for food from introduced browsers such as deer, wallabies, goats and possums.

The kōkako is indeed a remarkable bird that not only holds great significance with Māori, but also embodies our unique natural heritage. Protecting this species is essential for maintaining the ecological integrity of its forest habitats.

Continued conservation efforts and community engagement are vital for ensuring the survival of the kōkako for future generations.