

Breeding

Kererū breeding territories can be identified by the display flight of the male who flies up at a steep angle with wings and tail fully spread before swooping down in impressively steep parabolic dives. A kererū nest is a platform of small twigs with no lining. Nests can be found in a number of tree species (karaka, macrocarpa, nīkau, ponga) at 3-5m above the ground. Favoured nest sites are horizontal branches with sufficient overhead cover; this reduces the chances of the nest being seen by passing aerial predators such as harriers. Kanuka twigs are a favourite nest material, possibly because they are easy to break, and by visiting kanuka forest to collect nest material, kererū drop the seeds of other species which may not already exist there.



Kererū can nest all year round provided enough fruit is available. Main egg-laying is September-April, and just a single egg is laid. Females incubate from late afternoon to mid-morning then the male takes over. Incubation is 28 days and the nestling fledges at 35-40 days and is fed by its parents for a further 2 weeks.

Kererū food calendar

Food source	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Karaka												
Puniri												
Tawa												
Kotukutuku												
Kawakawa												
Five-finger												
Ti Kouka												
Nīkau												
Kahikatea												
Miro												
Taraire												
Foliage												
Pigeonwood												

Kererū activity table

Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Mouling													
Flocking													
Flight displays													
Nesting													
Fledging													

Urban kererū

New Zealand Pigeon



Kererū in urban areas

Kererū or New Zealand pigeon are large endemic birds weighing 550-850g. Their favourite food includes flowers and fruit from a wide variety of native and introduced plants.

While some individuals can spend weeks living within an area of a few hectares, such periods can be interspersed with long-distance flights to reach seasonal food sources. Kererū travel between suburbia, remnant forest patches, extensive tracts of native forest and other habitats in their quest for seasonally available foods.

Combined with the kereru's large size (and hence large gape) and diet of fruit, these landscape-scale movements make kereru the most important vector for the transfer of the seeds of large-fruited native trees between widely-spaced fragments of native forest.



Photograph courtesy of Quentin McKay ©

Plant fruiting trees and shrubs

While ripe fruit seems to be the preferred food source, in most regions fruit is not available year round, during this time kererū feed on the leaves of native and exotic trees. Important leaf sources include nitrogen-rich foliage such as kōwhai, tree lucerne, *Virgilia* and broom, as well as willow, elm and poplar.

Kererū drink considerable quantities of water which they can 'vacuum' up, much in the way mammals drink, without having to tilt their heads back.

Provide water for drinking and bathing

What to plant for kereru

Fast-growing and early fruiting:

Karaka
Kawakawa
Tī kōuka /cabbage tree
puahou/ five-finger
Māhoe/Whitey wood.
Karamu

Winter food (foliage)

kōwhai
Tree Lucerne
Virgilia
Houhere/Lacebark

Important for breeding

Taraire
Tawa
Miro
Nīkau
Porokaiwhiri/Pigeonwood

Threats

Kererū nation-wide face threats from predation by introduced mammals. Where pest populations are removed or kept to very low levels, for example at Tāwharanui and Wenderholm, kererū population's increase. Other threats include competition for food with possums and illegal hunting.

Kererū are at their most vulnerable while incubating or brooding on their nest. Apart from predation by rats and stoats, possums moving around at night can sufficiently disturb the parent off the nest rendering the contents open to being eaten.

Urban Kererū face additional threats. They are known to collide with vehicles as they swoop low across roads and motorways. Collisions with windows are also common as they appear to a kererū as a gap in the forest canopy and a short cut. There are decals available that can be applied to window panels visit (<http://windowalert.com/>)

Flocking

Although urban kererū are most often seen in pairs or as solitary birds, like other pigeon species they do gather in moderate-sized feeding flocks. Numbers are reported as 20-50, and rarely over 100 birds. Flocks of 20 or more have been reported in urban areas feeding on kahikatea fruit.