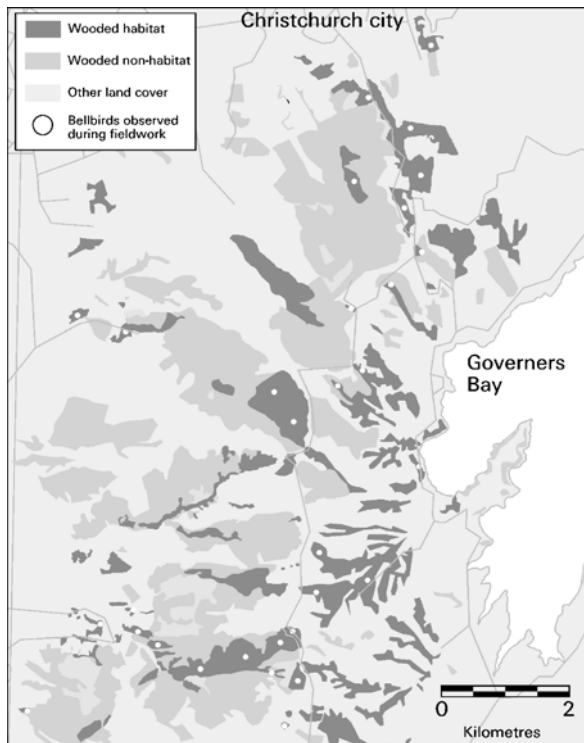


## Port Hills breeding habitat

Fieldwork on the Port Hills during the bellbird breeding season found that the birds have definite habitat preferences (see map below). Birds nested in stands of native bush, tall kanuka, mixed native-exotic forest and Douglas fir plantations.

There were wooded areas that bellbirds were not found in. This wooded non-habitat was mainly radiata pine plantations, and exotic broom and gorse scrub.

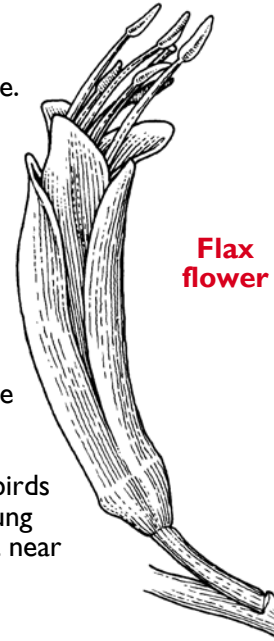


**Map of bellbird observations during the breeding season (September to March)**

## Bellbird nesting preferences

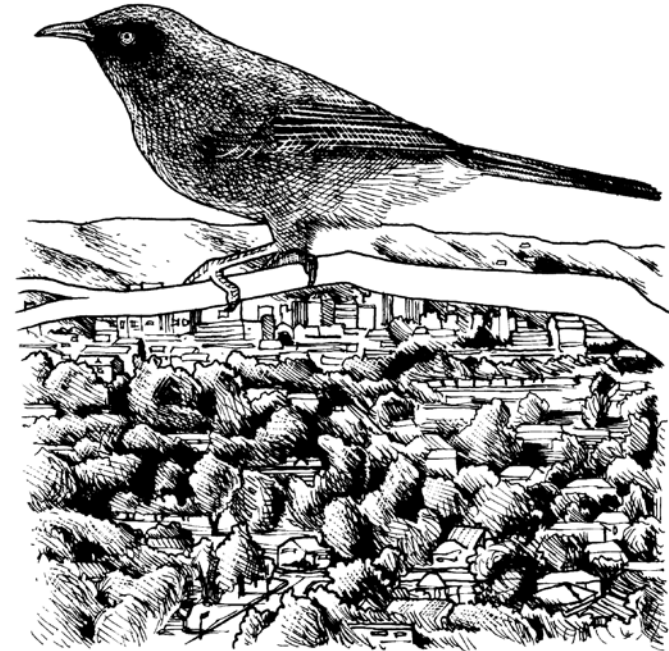
Fieldwork has shown that bellbirds prefer to nest:

- In a tall tree, native or exotic, with dense foliage.
- In close proximity to plants with sufficient quantity of food (fruit, nectar and insects).
- Where there is a range of plants with flowering and fruiting times that cover the duration of the breeding season.
- Possibly near other bellbirds (i.e. a social aspect). Young birds may prefer to nest near their parents.



# Bellbird (Korimako)

## In Canterbury



**Bellbird overlooking Christchurch**

Pamphlets in this series are:

1. Bellbird identification
2. Bellbird in Canterbury
3. Bellbird predation
4. Bellbird food sources

This is a joint publication by  
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School of Biological Sciences, University of Canterbury

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## Bellbirds in Canterbury

Bellbirds were abundant throughout New Zealand until the mid-1800s, at which time numbers went into decline. Factors that contributed to this decline include loss of habitat and predation by introduced animals such as stoats, possums and rats.

The lowest bellbird population in Canterbury was recorded in the early 1900s. Since then, the population has increased so that we now see bellbirds in many wooded areas of Canterbury, as well as in urban settlements.

Numbers are highest in native forest areas such as the Port Hills, Ashley Forest, and Craigieburn Forest. Bellbirds have also been observed in Douglas fir forest and urban and country gardens.

There are no recent reports of bellbirds breeding in the Botanic Gardens or Riccarton Bush. However, bellbirds have been observed at the edge of Bottle Lake Forest during the breeding season.

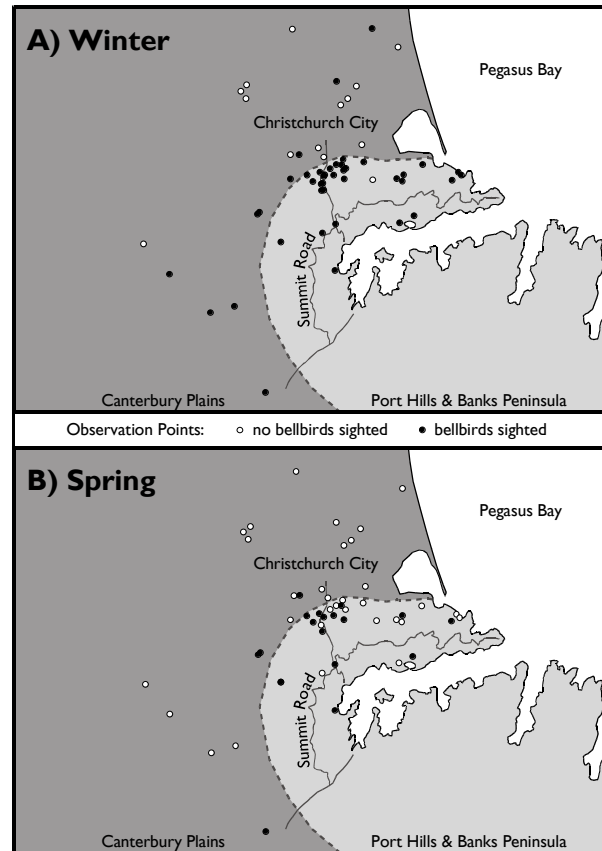
Bellbirds are known to visit urban gardens looking for food particularly in winter. Native plants including kowhai, fivefinger, flax and lemonwood provide valuable nectar and fruit sources. During winter months some exotic plants such as gums, red hot pokers and proteas are rich nectar sources.



Lemonwood flower and fruit

## Seasonal distribution patterns

In the vicinity of Christchurch City, bellbirds nest (approximately September to March) mainly in the Port Hills bush patches. Residents of Christchurch City, Lincoln, Tai Tapu and surrounding areas more commonly see bellbirds in their gardens during the winter months. At that time of year, many bellbirds leave their breeding territories and may travel up to 15 km to feed.

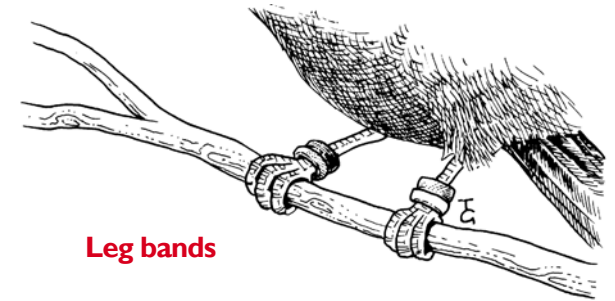


The above maps are constructed using bellbird observation data collected by members of the public in 2002. The first map (A) shows data collected from May until August, when birds have dispersed away from the Port Hills. The second map (B) shows data collected during the breeding season, September and October, when bellbirds are found mainly on the Port Hills.

## Colour-banding project

A bellbird colour-banding and resighting programme has begun on the Port Hills to help determine seasonal movements and range of bellbirds.

Birds are marked with bands on both legs. On the left leg are two colour bands. On the right is a colour band with a metal band below.



If you see any colour-banded birds please take care to record the colours (from top to bottom) for the bird's left leg and right leg separately. Please send details to:

H. North  
Landcare Research  
PO Box 69  
Lincoln 8152

Alternatively a bellbird observation web site is available where you can submit observations of bellbirds with or without colour bands. The address is:  
<http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biodiversity/bellbird>