

Text extracted from Gill B.J.; Bell, B.D.; Chambers, G.K.; Medway, D.G.; Palma, R.L.; Scofield, R.P.; Tennyson, A.J.D.; Worthy, T.H. 2010. *Checklist of the birds of New Zealand, Norfolk and Macquarie Islands, and the Ross Dependency, Antarctica*. 4th edition. Wellington, Te Papa Press and Ornithological Society of New Zealand. Pages 275, 279 & 312-313.

Order PASSERIFORMES: Passerine (Perching) Birds

See Christidis & Boles (2008) for a review of recent studies relevant to the higher-level systematics of the passerine birds.

Suborder PASSERES (or POLYMYODI): Oscines (Songbirds)

The arrangement of songbirds in the 1970 Checklist (Checklist Committee 1970) was based on the premise that the species endemic to the Australasian region were derived directly from Eurasian groups and belonged in Old World families (e.g. *Gerygone* and *Petroica* in Muscicapidae). The 1990 Checklist (Checklist Committee 1990) followed the Australian lead in allocating various native songbirds to their own Australasian families (e.g. *Gerygone* to Acanthizidae, and *Petroica* to Eopsaltriidae), but the sequence was still based largely on the old Peters-Mayr arrangement. Since the late 1980s, when the 1990 Checklist was finalised, evidence from molecular biology, especially DNA studies, has shown that most of the Australian and New Zealand endemic songbirds are the product of a major Australasian radiation parallel to the radiation of songbirds in Eurasia and elsewhere. Many superficial morphological and ecological similarities between Australasian and Eurasian songbirds are the result of convergent evolution.

Sibley & Ahlquist (1985, 1990) and Sibley *et al.* (1988) recognised a division of the songbirds into two groups which were called Corvida and Passerida (Sibley & Ahlquist 1990). The Parvorder Corvida contained songbirds with Australasian affinities—nearly all the endemic New Zealand songbirds plus the introduced Australian magpie. The Parvorder Passerida contained songbirds with Old World affinities—nearly all the songbirds introduced to New Zealand, plus one endemic genus (*Bowdleria*) and a few native songbirds (e.g. *Hirundo*, *Zosterops*).

Recent studies (e.g. Barker *et al.* 2004, Cracraft *et al.* 2004) partly supported the distinction between Corvida and Passerida, but questioned the monophyly of the Corvida. Passerida is now thought not to be the sister group to Corvida but to be embedded within it (see detailed discussion by Christidis & Boles 2008) with *Petroica* added to the list of native Australasian passeridans. The following arrangement of New Zealand songbirds is based largely (and where relevant) on the sequence justified by Christidis & Boles (2008). It is an interim scheme which is likely to change in future checklists with further research on songbird phylogeny.

Recent improvements in techniques to eliminate or control mammalian predators on islands, or in defined mainland areas, mean that some of the New Zealand endemic songbirds are being translocated (re-introduced) to growing lists of localities at which predators are controlled. This is extending the ranges of the species concerned—ranges that were shrinking. Many of the more recent transfers are not mentioned in the species accounts because several years must pass before the viability of a given transfer can be assured.

“PASSERIDA”: Eurasian and New World Songbirds

The families recognised within Passerida, and their sequence, follow Christidis & Boles (2008) except for the Prunellidae, which they did not cover. *Petroica* is now seen as a passeridan genus rather than a corvidan one, for the reasons discussed by Christidis & Boles (2008). Niethammer (1971) attempted to assign subspecific attributions to all the populations of European songbirds established in New Zealand. However, in some cases this is problematical for a list of reasons discussed by Checklist Committee (1990: xii), and until more work is done on these taxa some are best named at just the binomial level.

Family TURDIDAE Rafinesque: Thrushes and Allies

Turdinia Rafinesque, 1815: *Analyse de la Nature*: 67 – Type genus *Turdus* Linnaeus, 1758.

We follow Christidis & Boles (2008) in the use of Turdidae. Order of species follows Schodde & Mason (1999).

Genus *Turdus* Linnaeus

Turdus Linnaeus, 1758: *Syst. Nat., 10th edition 1*: 168 – Type species (by subsequent designation) *Turdus viscivorus* Linnaeus.

Merula Leach, 1816: *Syst. Cat. Specimens Mamm. Birds Brit. Museum*: 20 – Type species (by monotypy) *Merula nigra* Leach = *Turdus merula* Linnaeus.

Planesticus Bonaparte, 1854: *Compt. Rend. Séa. Acad. Sci., Paris 38*: 3 – Type species (by subsequent designation) *Turdus lereboulleti* Bonaparte = *Turdus jamaicensis* Gmelin.

**Turdus merula* Linnaeus

Eurasian Blackbird

Europe, North Africa, western and southern Asia, Indian subcontinent (except south-west), Sri Lanka, southern China. Migratory in northern part of its range and in the Far East.

**Turdus merula merula* Linnaeus

Eurasian Blackbird

Turdus Merula Linnaeus, 1758: *Syst. Nat., 10th edition 1*: 170 – Europe, restricted to Sweden (*vide* Hartert 1910, *Vögel Pal. Fauna 1*: 665).

Merula merula (Linnaeus); Hamilton 1909, *Hand-list Birds New Zealand*: 18.

Turdus merula Linnaeus; Checklist Committee 1953, *Checklist N.Z. Birds*: 63.

Turdus merula merula Linnaeus; Checklist Committee 1970, *Annot. Checklist Birds N.Z.*: 69.

New Zealand: introduced to both North and South Islands several times during 1860s and 1870s. Now widespread from Manawatāwhi / Three Kings Islands to Stewart Island / Rakiura. Has successfully colonised the Kermadec, Chatham, Snares / Tini Heke, Auckland and Campbell / Motu Ihupuku Islands, and strays have reached Antipodes Island. Common in suburban gardens, hedgerows, orchards, plantations and scrub, and widespread in native forest, reaching at least 1500 m a.s.l. By far the most widespread species reported during the 1969–79 and 1999–2004 surveys for the New Zealand bird distribution atlases (Bull *et al.* 1985; Robertson, C. *et al.* 2007). Introduced to Norfolk Island in the first half of the 20th Century, where now very common and widespread (Schodde *et al.* 1983). Assigned to nominate subspecies by Checklist Committee (1970) and Niethammer (1971), with agreement by Schodde & Mason (1999).