

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.
Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.
Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.
Reef heron: pp 91-92.



REEF HERON

Family Ardeidae

Species *Egretta sacra*

Common names Reef Heron, Blue Heron, Matuku

Size 660 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, White-faced Heron 670 mm)

Abundance Uncommon

Status Native

Habitat Generally a coastal bird but sometimes found inland on the edges of lakes and wetlands which are not too distant from the head-waters of estuaries or harbours.

Worldwide range Ranges from India to Australia and New Zealand and through the Pacific Islands to Tahiti. The Reef Heron (*E. sacra*) is similar in colouring and character to the Reef Heron of Africa (*E. gularis*) which comes in both a white and grey phase as does the Pacific Islands and the Australian bird.

New Zealand range Found around the North and South Islands and on Stewart Island. Often seen along the east coast of Northland than anywhere else.

Description

Upperparts and underparts Charcoal-grey. **Bill** Yellowish-brown. The Pacific and Australian white phase has a yellow bill. **Legs** Yellowish-green. **Eye** Iris is yellow.

Conspicuous feature

- Birds are a darker grey than the more common White-faced Heron.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Has a hunched gait.
- Smaller but heavier looking than the White-faced Heron.
- Often feeds with raised wings to shade the water to enhance vision.

Call A guttural croaking.

Nest Solitary nesters making a nest of twigs and dried seaweed in caves or rock crevices on the ground. Up to 4 pale blue-green eggs are laid.

Where to find – North Island

Northland – Bay of Islands at Waitangi Estuary and Aroha Island near Kerikeri. P. 282.

North Auckland – Weiti River (Wade River), Orewa Estuary and Wenderholm Park. P. 292, 294.

South Auckland – Miranda coastline just to the south of Matingarahi. P. 302.

Waikato – Raglan Harbour near the town by the foot bridge. P. 311.

Bay of Plenty – Kaituna Lagoon and Maketu Estuary. P. 320.

Bay of Plenty – Tarawera River-mouth near Matata. P. 322.

Where to find – South Island

Marlborough – Pelorus Sound to Golden Bay. P. 342.

Marlborough – Motueka Estuary close to town. P. 344.

Southland – Jacks Bay to Curio Bay coastline where the road nears the sea. P. 364.

Where to find – Stewart Island

Paterson Inlet – Near launch harbour. P. 367.