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Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

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Royal spoonbill: pp 97-99.



ROYAL SPOONBILL

Family Plataleidae

Species *Platalea regia*

Common name Royal Spoonbill

Status Native

Abundance Common in selected areas

Size 770 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, White Heron 910 mm)

Habitat Feeds in estuaries and harbours usually near the water line.

Worldwide range Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Australia.

New Zealand range Throughout New Zealand in a variety of coastal habitats. Population obviously arrived from Australia and is growing and now breeding in many places including with the White Herons on the Waitangi Taona River near Okarito Lagoon in Westland. Largest roost is in the Far North at Unahi near

Awanui.

Description

Face Black skin to behind eye with a yellow patch above each eye and a red spot in centre of forehead. **Upperparts and underparts** White. **Bill** Black and spoon-shaped. **Legs** Black.

Conspicuous features

- A large white heron-like bird.
- Black spoon-shaped bill.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Flies with neck and legs outstretched.
- Bill shape is conspicuous when in flight.
- Legs extend beyond body when in flight
- A gregarious feeder.
- When feeding constantly on the move.
- Has a waddling gait when feeding caused by swinging the bill from side to side through water and soft mud.
- Often perches on prominent treetops or poles.

Call Soft guttural grunts near the nest; otherwise usually silent. Sometimes soft bill chattering is heard.

Nest Colonial nesters in tall trees making a platform nest of twigs. Up to 4 white lightly-blotched brown eggs are laid. Breeding colonies are now established at such places as Parengarenga, Kapiti Island, Wairau Lagoon near Blenheim, Maukiekie Island near Moeraki, south of Oamaru and Green Island Nature Reserve, Dunedin.

Nest desertion Royal Spoonbills are of a nervous temperament and easily desert their nests if disturbed. Hence they nest in isolated places.

Where to find – North Island

Wintering localities Wintering birds can be found in many places throughout New Zealand and any estuary or harbour can expect to have birds. Likely places include Parengarenga Harbour, Whangarei Harbour, Manukau Harbour, Puketutu Island causeway Mangere, Miranda, Coromandel Harbour, Maketu Estuary, Matata Lagoon, Wairoa Lagoon, Ahuriri, Foxton Estuary, Waikanae Estuary, Farewell Spit, Wairau Lagoon, Avon Heathcote Estuary, Lake Ellesmere, Hawkesbury Lagoon, Brighton Estuary, Kaikorai Estuary and Invercargill.

Auckland – Puketutu Island causeway Mangere. P. 298.

South Auckland – Miranda often in paddock trees near Stilt ponds. P. 302.

Bay of Plenty – Matata Lagoon. P. 320.

Hawkes Bay – Ahuriri and Westshore Lagoon. P. 330, 331.

Manawatu – Manawatu Estuary near Foxton. P. 336.

Wellington – Waikanae Estuary. P. 339.

Where to find – South Island

Marlborough – Wairau Lagoon from Redwood Pass Road near Blenheim. P. 345.

Marlborough – Motueka river-mouth past the golf course. P. 344.

Christchurch – Avon-Heathcote Estuary. P. 350.

North Otago – All Day Bay near Oamaru. P. 357.

North Otago – Moeraki Point south of Oamaru. P. 357.

Dunedin – Kaikorai Estuary P. 362.