

Watola, G. 2011. The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds. (3rd Edition in prep.)  
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Page numbers follow Watola, G. 2009 (2nd Edition)  
Fairy tern: pp 159-160.

**New Zealand Fairy Tern** (Tara iti) *Sternula nereis davisae* Mathews & Iredale 1913, Endemic  
1867 Rakaia River, Canterbury

Ellman (1861) recorded "Little Tern (Tara paku) *Sterna parva* one half the size of the common tern, but exactly similar in plumage". This would appear to be a fair description of Fairy Tern. Potts (1869) noticed it on the Rakaia River, Canterbury about 1867 (by implication), where it was breeding. Two specimens found by Potts in the Canterbury Museum pre-dated this record.

"A very small Tern visits the Rakaia river-bed during the breeding season, not far below the gorge of that great river. There does not appear to exist any description of it, either in Mr. Buller's Essay, Dr. Finsch's Notes, or in Mr. Buller's Paper of August 25, 1868. It lays its eggs, two in number, on the bare ground; they are stone-colour, blotched over with grey markings, and measure through the axis 1 inch 4 lines, with a diameter of 11 lines. It is not at all a common bird in that locality, and was not observed there last year. In the Museum at Christchurch, are two specimens of a small Tern, obtained in the province; in all probability, the eggs noticed above, belong to individuals of this species. They are labelled *Sternula nereis*, ...colour above, silver or French-grey, forehead white, back of head and nape of neck black, black streak round the eye, bill and feet yellow: the eggs above noticed were discovered in November.

Since the above was written, through the zeal of a friend residing near the Rakaia, we have received two eggs of this interesting bird; they were found in November, hard set" (Potts 1869).

