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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Black-backed gull: pp 186-187.



### BLACK-BACKED GULL

**Family** Laridae

**Species** *Larus dominicanus*

**Common names** Black-backed Gull, Dominican Gull (after the black and white colours of the Dominican friars). Colloquially known as Mollyhawk.

**Status** Native

**Abundance** Common

**Size** 600 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Pomarine Skua 480 mm)

**Habitat** Found around the coast and over pastureland.

**Worldwide range** A non-equatorial species found around New Zealand, the south-eastern shores of Australia, South America and southern Africa. It is also a non-migratory species unlike the Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) of the Northern Hemisphere. In Australia, it overlaps with the Pacific Gull (*Larus pacificus*) which is not found in New Zealand.

**New Zealand range** Found throughout New Zealand and its offshore islands.

### **Description**

**Head, neck and underparts** Pure white. **Wings and back** Black with primaries edged with white. **Bill, legs and feet** Yellow.

### **Description – immature birds until year three (below)**

**Upper and underparts** Dull brown streaked with dark brown. **Bill and leg** Brown.

### **Conspicuous features**

- Overall brown of juveniles.
- The only big bird on most beaches.

**Call** A clear yodel of some volume.

**Nest** Nests in loose colonies on open pastureland or around the coast. Nest is a mound of grass and sticks. Up to 4 greenish, brown-blotched eggs are laid.

### **From P 184.**

### **Differences between the Brown Skua and the immature Black-backed Gull**

- The Skua is heavier looking.
- The Skua has wider wings.
- The Skua has very conspicuous white on the wings.
- The Skua has a thicker neck.
- The Skua has a much heavier bill with a hook on the end.

### **Where to find – North Island and South Island**

**South Auckland** – Miranda Nests at the mangrove verge among rough pasture. This colony tends to move its location from time to time.

**Bay of Plenty** – Mount Tarawera has a nesting colony near the summit.

