

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Black-tailed godwit: pp 177-178.



**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT.**

(Including comments about Hudsonian Godwit, *L. haemastica*)

**Family** Scolopacidae

**Species** *Limosa limosa*

**Common name** Black-tailed Godwit

**Status** Migrant

**Abundance** Rare

**Size** 390 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Bar-tailed Godwit 390 mm)

**Habitat** Found in estuaries and harbours.

**Worldwide range** Birds which come to New Zealand breed in Siberia and migrate southward around the western Pacific rim to Australia where they occur in large numbers. New Zealand also records a few Hudsonian Godwit (*L. haemastica*), a similar looking bird, but one which breeds in central Canada and migrates to South America with a few reaching the western Pacific islands and

New Zealand.

**New Zealand range** Regular sightings come from the Manukau Harbour, the Firth of Thames and Southland.

### **Description – non-breeding plumage**

**Upperparts** Smooth grey. **Upperwings** Grey with black edges to the secondary feathers under which is a white band which passes through the black primaries.

**Underwings** White edged with black. **Underparts** Whitish. **Rump** White, the white extending down the tail to a broad black tip. **Bill** Greyish with a black tip.

### **Description – breeding plumage**

**Head, neck and breast** Chestnut. **Eyebrow** Whitish. **Upperparts** Brownish with individual feathers having buff edges. **Abdomen** White with some side barring with brown. **Legs** Lead grey.

### **Conspicuous features**

- Similar in size to a Bar-tailed Godwit.
- Smoother grey than a Bar-tailed Godwit.
- In flight white upperwing marking.
- White tail and black tail-tip band.
- Has an almost straight bill not up-curved like the Bar-tailed Godwit.

### **Conspicuous characteristics**

- In flight legs trail behind the bird in a conspicuous manner.
- Legs are longer than the Bar-tailed Godwit.
- Is scary and quickly takes to the air when disturbed.

### **Differences between the Black-tailed Godwit and the Hudsonian Godwit**

- Black-tailed Godwit has a straight bill.
- Hudsonian Godwit has a slightly up-curved bill.
- Underwing of the Black-tailed Godwit is white, edged with black.
- Underwing of the Hudsonian Godwit is dark brown on the “armpits”, tips of primaries and secondaries, but has a whitish band in the centre of the underwing.
- Black-tailed Godwit has lead-grey coloured legs.
- Hudsonian Godwit has bluish-grey legs.
- Black-tailed Godwit has less abdominal chestnut colouring in the breeding season with the chestnut not extending to undertail feathering.

**Call** When put to flight a loud “wicka wicka wicka” call is made.

### **Quick observation points when watching godwits**

- Look for white on wings of flying birds (Black-tailed or Hudsonian).
- Look for dark “armpits” on flying birds or on raised wing birds (Hudsonian).
- Look for straight bill (Black-tailed) or slightly curved (Hudsonian).

**Where to find – North Island**

**North Auckland** – Kaipara Harbour at Manukapua Island. P. 287.

**South Auckland** – Miranda at the “Stilt Ponds”. P. 302.

**Where to find – South Island**

**South Canterbury** – Lake Wainono. P. 356.

**Otago** – Hoopers Inlet. P. 360.

**Southland** – Waituna Lagoon. P. 364.