

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Pied oystercatcher: pp 144-146.



PIED OYSTERCATCHER.

Family Haematopodidae

Species *Haematopus ostralegus finschi*

Common names Pied Oystercatcher, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, S.I.P.O., Redbill

Status Endemic

Abundance Common. Has increased in numbers with agricultural development in New Zealand to become the most common wading bird. The Firth of Thames has up to 30,000 during most winters.

Size 460 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Habitat – wintering From January to July found in North Island coastal estuaries and harbours.

Habitat – breeding From July to January birds are found in inland areas of Otago

and Southland in the South Island. Here they take up nesting territories along riverbeds, on pastureland and among arable crops. A few, probably immature birds, always summer over on the traditional wintering grounds.

New Zealand range North Island in winter, from the Bay of Plenty northwards, especially in the Kaipara and Manukau Harbours and the Firth of Thames. Inland in the South Island over summer months. Also on Stewart Island.

Discussion The Pied Oystercatcher (*H. o. finschi*), is closely related to the European Oystercatcher (*H. ostralegus*) with which it shares many similar characteristics such as size, colouration, nesting habits, chick rearing and chick feeding behaviour, and the migration habit to warmer coastal areas in winter.

Call Noisy “kleep keelp keelp” calls.

Nest A scrape on the ground. 2 brown, blotched dark-brown eggs are laid.

Description

Upperparts Black. **Underparts** White. **Bill, eyes and legs** Red.

Feature differences between the Pied Oystercatcher (*H. ostralegus*) and the pied form of the Variable Oystercatcher (*H. unicolor*)

- The Pied Oystercatcher has a clean cut line between the white underparts and the black upperparts – lacking on the Variable.
- The Pied Oystercatcher has two clean cut white shoulder tabs which reach up into the black upperparts – lacking on the Variable.
- The Pied Oystercatcher appears a neater and smaller bird.
- The Pied Oystercatcher has a slimmer bill.

Characteristic differences between Pied Oystercatcher and the pied form of the Variable Oystercatchers

- The Pied Oystercatcher is an inland nester and does not nest along the coast. The Variable nests along the coast.
- The Pied Oystercatcher has a different starting time for its nesting season, laying its eggs in August, while the Variable starts nesting in mid-October with a second brood in December or early January.
- The Pied Oystercatcher migrates north from the breeding grounds. The Variable tends to form up into small coastal flocks not far from breeding areas. Some remain resident on their breeding territories from one year to the next.

Similar characteristics of each species

- Both birds have similar, “keeleep keeleep” type calls.
- Both species defend nesting territories with broken wing type displays.
- Both species feed their young until the fledgling stage, being the only wader to actually feed its chicks.
- Both species have similar pale, buffish-brown eggs, marked with black dots and splotches. Clutch size in both species is usually three eggs for

the first brood and two eggs for the second or replacement broods.

Where to find – North Island

Auckland – Puketutu Island causeway Mangere. P. 298.

Auckland – Most Auckland beaches where human interference is not too great.

South Auckland – Miranda. P. 302.

Where to find – South Island:

Southland – Very common along the road from Invercargill to Te Anau in spring.