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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Spur-winged plover: pp 164-165.



SPUR-WINGED PLOVER

Family Charadriidae

Species *Vanellus miles*

Common names Spur-winged Plover, Masked Plover, (Australia)

Status Native

Abundance Common

Size 380 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Variable Oystercatcher 280 mm)

Habitat A bird of the coast, estuaries and pastureland.

New Zealand range Found throughout all New Zealand except Fiordland.

Discussion It arrived from Australia to establish breeding populations in Southland in the 1950s. Birds then moved north and covered all of the North Island by the late 1980s. In Australia, two races of Spur-winged Plover are

recognised. The nominate race (*V. m. miles*) occupies northern Australia, with the race *V. m. novaehollandiae* occupying south-western Australia and south-eastern Australia. The New Zealand population is from the race *novaehollandiae*. This race is distinctive in having a black crown with black markings extending down the neck to the mantle and to the shoulder. The nominate race has black “scull cap” only.

Description

Head Black crown and neck to mantle and shoulders. **Face** Yellow facial wattle to behind eye. **Wings** Brown with black primaries. **Rump** White. **Tail** White with a black tip. **Underparts** White. **Bill** Yellow. **Legs** Reddish.

Conspicuous features

- Bony wing spur on carpal flexure joint of each wing noticeable when birds are showing aggression.
- Yellow mask.
- In-flight birds show black wing primary feathers.
- In-flight birds show a black tail-band with a white rump and white tail-tip.

Conspicuous characteristics

- When resting it often stands with head held high and back sloping.
- Runs and pauses when feeding.
- Wings look short and rounded when in flight.
- Has slow wing-beats when in flight with a faster down-beat.
- Its high-pitched call gives it away.

Call A high-pitched agitated “kitter kitter kitter”. Calls day and night.

Nest A scrape on pebbles or pasture with minimal nesting material. Up to 5 khaki, blotched dark-brown eggs are laid. Nests in the autumn in the North Island. Main nesting season is from August through until April.

Where to find – North Island

South Auckland – Miranda, but common everywhere.

Where to find – South Island

Southland – Very common along the roads from Invercargill to Te Anau but common everywhere.