

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

White-fronted tern: pp 195-196.



### WHITE-FRONTED TERN

**Family** Sternidae

**Species** *Sterna striata*

**Common names** White-fronted Tern, Kahawai Bird

**Status** Native

**Abundance** Common

**Size** 400 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Little Tern 250 mm)

**Habitat** A bird of coastal waters preferring indented and rocky coastlines which are suitable for nesting. Will fish well up rivers.

**Worldwide range** Juvenile White-fronted Terns migrate across the Tasman and winter around the south-east Australian coast and the northern coast of Tasmania where they are known to have bred.

**New Zealand range** Especially common around northern coasts in the North Island and the northern coast of the South Island but generally well spread right around New Zealand and to the offshore islands.

**Tern migrants** Some identification confusion arises with the irregular identification of the Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) and the northern hemisphere Common

Tern (*Sterna hirundo*), in some harbours. Also the Antarctic Tern (*Sterna vittata*), which breeds to the south of Stewart Island, is sometimes seen in northern waters.

### **Description – breeding**

**Forehead** White above bill. This distinguishes it from the Black-fronted Tern of the South Island and the Antarctic Tern. **Crown** Black. **Upperparts** Soft grey, sometimes with a pink breast-tinge. **Underparts** White. **Bill** Black. **Legs** Dull red.

### **Description – non-breeding**

**Crown** Receded black cap at back of a white head.

### **Description – immature**

**Crown** Receded black caps at back of white head. **Upperparts** Dark grey wing markings on light grey.

### **Conspicuous features**

- White forehead.
- Forked “swallow-like” tail.

**Call** A high-pitched “kee-eet kee-eet” or a soft “zeet zeet”. It has other more rasping notes used at times of communal feeding.

**Nest** Nests in colonies on rock ledges, offshore islands and rock stacks. A colonial nester making a scrape in the sand or shell or using a rock crevice. Up to 2 green, lightly-spotted brown eggs are laid.

### **Where to find**

**Auckland** – Muriwai Birds nest on the cliffs near to the gannet colony. P. 296.

**South Auckland** – At Miranda birds nest on the shell banks. P. 302.

**Coastal areas** – Expect it along any beach.