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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

New Zealand shoveler: pp 115-117.



### NEW ZEALAND SHOVELER.

**Family** Anatidae

**Species** *Anas rhynchos*

**Common names** Shoveler or Spoonbill

**Status** Endemic

**Abundance** Common

**Size** 490 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Mallard 580 mm)

**Habitat** Lives on ponds and lakes and especially those which have indented rush and raupo covered shorelines. They are also found on slow moving rivers, on estuaries and muddy coastal strips.

**Worldwide range** Also found in Australia and it is from there that New Zealand populations probably came from. It is regarded by some ornithologists as a distinct sub-species, mainly because some New Zealand birds show whiteness on the breast which the Australian birds lack. This whiteness tends to link the bird with the Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) of Europe, Asia and North

America. It should be noted that Northern Shovelers have turned up in New Zealand from time to time. Ancestry of the Shoveler is linked to the Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discor*) of North America.

**New Zealand range** Evenly spread through the North and South Islands. Reaches some of the higher altitude lakes.

### **Description – male bird in breeding plumage (above)**

**Head and neck** Bluish-grey, with black behind bill and a white crescent-shaped stripe in front of the golden eye. **Back** Brown. **Wings** Bluish-grey, with dark grey primaries and a green speculum edged on the leading edge with white. **Breast** Mottled brown and white. **Abdomen** Chestnut-brown with a white flank-spot.

**Bill** Grey. **Legs and feet** Orange.

### **Description – female bird in breeding plumage**

**Upperparts and underparts** Brownish. **Wings** As for male bird.

### **Description – eclipse birds**

**Upperparts and underparts** Drab brown, although male birds can retain some blue-grey tonings to the head. White flank-spot is absent.

### **Conspicuous features**

- White crescent band at base of bill on male birds.
- Heavy looking “spoon” bill.
- Brightly coloured plumage of breeding plumage male bird.
- White flank-spot.

### **Conspicuous characteristics**

- Sits lower in the water than Grey Ducks or Mallards.
- Appearance is of a short neck and big head.
- Swims in a hunched position.
- When in a group of waterfowl, Shovelers tend to stay together.
- Usually swims in pairs.
- A fast-flying bird similar in group flight to Grey Teal.
- In-flight birds show the white wing-markings.
- Birds prefer still water where water insects and larvae can safely breed.
- Seldom seen away from water unlike the Grey Duck and the Mallard. This is because the heavy pasture seeds and shoots which the Grey Duck and Mallard eat are not able to be handled by the fine-edged, sieve-like, spoonbills of the Shoveler.

**Call** A “cuck cuck cuck” similar to the Grey Teal. Male bird, a clonk sound.

**Nest** A bowl of grass lined with down usually in thick vegetation on the ground. Up to 11 bluish eggs are laid.

### **Where to find – North Island**

**North Auckland** – Waiwera at Strakas Refuge. P. 291.

**North Auckland** – Lake Kaipara has good numbers. P. 294.

**Auckland** – Puketutu Island causeway Mangere. P. 298.

**South Auckland** – Miranda at Pukorokoro River-mouth. P. 302.

**Bay of Plenty** – Matata Lagoon. P. 320.

**Wellington** – Waikanae at Waimeha Lagoon. P. 339.

**Where to find – South Island**

**Marlborough** – Lake Elterwater. P. 345.

**North Canterbury** – St Annes Lagoon, Cheviot. P. 347.

**Southland** – Lake Te Anau at the southern end. 369.

New Zealand Shoveler (female)

