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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Brown teal: pp 113-115.



BROWN TEAL

Family Anatidae

Species *Anas aucklandica*

Common name Brown Teal

Maori name Pateke

Status Endemic

Abundance Rare

Size 480 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Grey Teal 430 mm)

Habitat Remnant populations are generally confined to muddy tidal river estuaries. Previously populations were widespread in swampland and on lakes in most localities. Present river estuary localities usually contain overhanging grasses and mangroves under which the birds can hide during the day.

New Zealand range Great Barrier Island contains most birds. Isolated groups live in areas of Northland, on Tiri Tiri Island and on Little Barrier Island. Occasional reports of sightings come from Fiordland and Stewart Island. Predators, such as mustelids, cats and rats, plus a shrinking wetland habitat, are blamed for its decline.

Discussion The Brown Teal has been grouped at times with the Australian Chestnut Teal (*Anas castanea*) but the Brown Teal is a bigger bird. It also

possesses a cream coloured eye-ring and has less green iridescence on the head and neck. It is closely allied to the Auckland Island Teal, a flightless species, and to the Campbell Island Teal.

Description – male bird

Head Dark brown, with a cream eye-ring around a black eye. **Neck** Brown, with an indistinct white collar on front of bird. **Upperparts** Dark brown to brown.

Wings Brown, with buff edges to feathers and with a large black speculum with a greenish sheen and white edges. **Breast** Chestnut. **Underparts** Buff. **Flank spot** White. **Bill** Blue black.

Description – female bird Generally evenly dull brown all over.

Conspicuous features

- A small neat looking bird slightly larger than the Grey Teal.
- Cream eye-ring.
- Blackish speculum edged with white on in-flight birds.
- Lacks the triangle of white to the front of the speculum as on the Grey Teal. This also separates it from the uncommon Chestnut Teal
- The white flank marking on male birds is usually noticeable on both roosting and swimming birds.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Have a habit of loafing in large groups by day.
- Become active towards dusk.
- Mainland birds tend to be nocturnal feeders. Great Barrier Island birds feed throughout the day but are more active at dusk.

Call Male bird a high-pitched two-syllable “wheeze”. Female a dull rapidly repeated “quack”.

Nest A bowl of grass in dense rushes or grasses. Up to 4 cream eggs are laid.

Chestnut Teal in New Zealand Waterfowl breeders have this species within their flocks. Some are free flying and can disperse. Odd reports of “escaped” birds are heard of from time to time.

Where to find – North Island

Hauraki Gulf – Great Barrier Island has a good sized population. The beaches around the main town of Tryphena regularly have birds often swimming off the coastline. Most water holes and small rivers also have this bird as do the sheltered harbours of Port Fitzroy and Whangaparapara. Kaitoke and Medlands Beach also have populations. Day tours to Great Barrier in high-powered catamaran boats can be arranged from Auckland. P. 290.

Northland – Helena Bay to Mimiwhangata, which is north of Whangarei. Turn off Highway 1 past Hikurangi where the sign says to Russell. At Helena Bay turn right to Teal Bay and after Teal Bay stop at the Owae Stream and search from the road. If unsuccessful here travel on to the Mimiwhangata Farm Park. Once

in the park, take the walking track to Trig Point. The lakes near the end of the peninsula and have populations. P 284.

Hauraki Gulf – Little Barrier Island has a small population near the manager's house. P. 289.

North Auckland – Tiri Tiri Matangi Island has a small breeding population surviving on several of the man-made ponds on this island. Here, birds appear in mid-afternoon. P. 292.

North Auckland – Shakespear Park often has a bird on the lake to the left of the entrance. It possibly comes from Tiri Tiri Island. P. 294.

Wellington – Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. P. 340.

Where to find – South Island

Canterbury – Christchurch at Travis Wetlands. Birds have been released here as a trial. P. 350