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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

White-faced heron: pp 86-87.



WHITE-FACED HERON

Family Ardeidae

Species *Ardea novaehollandiae*

Common name White-faced Heron

Status Native

Abundance Common

Size 670 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Habitat Along coastal estuaries, harbours and widely spread through inland swamps and over pasture. Note that Reef Herons seldom fly inland in New Zealand.

New Zealand range Widely spread over both the main islands and Stewart

Island and has reached many of the offshore islands. A relative newcomer to New Zealand from Australia confirmed breeding in 1941. Since the early 1960s it has colonised the whole country.

Description

Head Forehead, face and chin, white. **Upperparts** Bluish-grey. Long pale grey plumes on back can be seen in the breeding season. **Wings** Bluish-grey with dark grey primaries. **Underparts** Light grey. **Bill** Black. **Legs and feet** Greenish-yellow.

Description – juveniles

Face Bluish-grey with a white chin. Juveniles lack the white face but retain a small amount of white on the chin. **Wings** Bluish-grey, with almost black primaries both under and on top of the wings.

Conspicuous features

- Face and forehead are distinctly white.
- Plumage is more bluish than the Reef Heron.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Has a less hunched gait than the Reef Heron and appears slightly larger.
- Often seen sitting on the edges of farm water troughs.
- Often seen feeding on wet pastureland.
- Nests high in old conifers or eucalypt trees.
- Flight is slow and wafting. Head is usually tucked in, in a hunched position although sometimes extended.

Call Guttural croaking sound, especially when approaching the nest.

Nest A bundle of sticks high in a tree. Up to 4 pale blue-green eggs are laid.

Flocking habit In winter birds form loose feeding flocks of up to 150 birds.

Where to find

All New Zealand – Common throughout farmland and coastal localities.