

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Dabchick: pp 13-15.



DABCHICK

Family Podicipedidae

Species *Podiceps rufopectus*

Common name Dabchick

Status Endemic

Abundance Common in selected area

Size 280 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Habitat The Dabchick is generally a bird of deep and clean lakes although sometimes found on shallower farm ponds and sand dune lakes.

Range North Island only although unconfirmed sightings have come from the South Island. Grebes seen on South Island lakes are the Southern Crested Grebe (*P. cristatus*), or Australian Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*). Hoary-headed Grebe (*P. poliocephalus*) has also been recorded.

Discussion The Dabchick belongs to the worldwide family of Podicipedidae of which there are 19 species. The closest relation of the New Zealand species is the Australian Hoary-headed Grebe (*P. poliocephalus*) but this species differs around the head.

Description

Head and neck Blackish, finely streaked with silver. **Upperparts** Blackish-brown.

Upper breast and foreneck Dark chestnut. **Lower breast** Brown. **Wing** Greyish-

brown with white secondary feathers. **Abdomen and undertail** Silvery with brownish flanks. **Bill** Black. **Eye** Pale yellow iris with black pupil. **Legs and toes** Blackish with flat lobed toes.

Description – chicks

Upperparts “Zebra” striped horizontally in black and white. **Underparts** White.

Conspicuous features

- The button-like eye, when viewed through the telescope, appears as a ring of pale yellow around a black pupil.
- Dark chestnut breast.
- White of wings on upper secondary feathers on birds in flight.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Often viewed alongside Scaup. Note they sit lower in the water than Scaup and have longer and more slender necks. They also lack the longer tail of the Scaup.
- Constantly diving often surfacing some distance away.
- Bring up food and feed their young above the water.

Call Usually silent, except during the breeding season.

Nest A pile of rushes floating on water but anchored. Up to 3 white eggs.

How to locate Dabchicks spend much time underwater. This means they can be missed so patience is needed.

Where to find – North Island

Northland – Awanui. P. 280.

Northland – Bay of Islands; Lake Owhareiti. P. 283.

Northland – Lake Waro. P. 285.

North Auckland – Waiwera at Strakas Refuge. This is one of the easiest places to see this bird. P. 291.

North Auckland – Lake Kereta. P. 295.

Auckland – Western Springs Lakes. P. 297.

Auckland – Mangere Sewage and Puketutu Island lake. P. 298.

South Auckland – Wattle Farm Reserve. P. 299.

Bay of Plenty – Matata Lagoon. P. 320.

Bay of Plenty – the Rotorua lakes. Lake Rotorua on the waterfront is a very easy place to see this bird. P. 324.

Bay of Plenty – Lake Okareka. P. 325.

Bay of Plenty – Lake Taupo. P. 316, 326.

Central Plateau – Lake Kario, Ohakune. P. 318.

Wellington – Waikanae. P. 339.