

White-fronted tern *Sterna striata*

42 cm

NEW ZEALAND NATIVE, GRADUAL DECLINE



White-fronted tern on nest,
Rangatira, November 1975.
Photo: Rod Morris (DOC).

The white-fronted tern or tara is a medium-sized tern with a long black bill. Plumage is pale pearly grey above and white below, with a black cap separated from the bill by a white forehead (the “front”). There are estimated to be several hundred pairs in the Chatham Islands, breeding on steep cliffs and rocky islets off Chatham Island, around Te Whanga Lagoon, and on Rangatira, Mangere, Star Keys, The Sisters, The Forty Fours, The Pyramid, the Murumurus, and Houruakopara. Most of the Chatham population disappears in autumn, and the birds are thought to migrate to New Zealand, or to southeastern Australia



(where there has been one recovery of a tern banded on the Chatham Islands), along with many from the New Zealand population. White-fronted terns are gregarious, breeding in colonies and feeding in flocks, often with other species; they hover and dive on shoaling fish.

White-fronted tern colony, The Pyramid,
September 1974.

Photo: Christopher Robertson (DOC).