

Significant Ecological Estuarine Area Assessment Sheet for Wading and Aquatic Birds

Name/Area: Whangarei Harbour

Summary:

Whangarei Harbour is a moderately large harbour with extensive intertidal flats, multiple creeks and channels and highly variable levels of buffering vegetation. This ranges from quality saltmarsh and mangroves near Takahiwai and little-modified rocky and sandy islands, to recovering and degraded edge habitats and subdivision elsewhere. Seagrass flats are recovering in quality on the south side of the harbour. The tidal flats provide important habitat for migrant waders, including international and national species, many of them threatened (refer Table below). Key migrants with significant numbers visiting are wrybill, banded dotterel, NZ pied oystercatcher, pied stilt, bar-tailed godwit and lesser knot, while local (Northland) breeders include northern NZ dotterel and variable oystercatcher. The harbour is an important breeding and feeding site for Caspian tern, while some other threatened terns visit regularly and could potentially breed. The many forested headlands, islets and bays, provide nesting opportunities for reef herons, shags and little blue penguin, while saltmarshes and mangroves support localised numbers of fernbird, banded rail and Australasian bittern. The large size and wide habitat diversity and diversity and abundance of bird species makes this a harbour of High ecological significance.

Table 'Threatened' and 'At Risk' shorebird species present at Whangarei Harbour

<i>Species Name</i>	<i>Scientific Name</i>	<i>Species Common Name</i>	<i>NZ threat classification</i>		<i>Significance for species</i>
<i>Ardea modesta</i>		White heron	Threatened	Nationally critical	Rare visitor
<i>Sternula davisae</i>	<i>neréis</i>	NZ fairy tern	Threatened	Nationally critical	Rare visitor
<i>Botaurus poiciloptilus</i>		Australasian bittern	Threatened	Nationally endangered	Locally important breeding and feeding
<i>Phalacrocorax varius</i>		Pied shag	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Locally important breeding and feeding
<i>Egretta sacra sacra</i>		Reef heron	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Nationally important breeding and feeding
<i>Anarhynchus frontalis</i>		Wrybill	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Nationally important feeding
<i>Charadrius aquilonius</i>	<i>obscurus</i>	Northern NZ dotterel	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Nationally important breeding and feeding
<i>Charadrius bicinctus bicinctus</i>		Banded dotterel	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Nationally important feeding
<i>Calidris canutus</i>		Lesser knot	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Nationally important feeding
<i>Larus novaehollandiae scopulinus</i>		Red-billed gull	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Locally important breeding and feeding
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>		Caspian tern	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Nationally important breeding and feeding
<i>Eudyptula minor</i>		Little blue penguin	At Risk	Declining	Locally important breeding and feeding
<i>Haematopus finschi</i>		NZ pied oystercatcher	At Risk	Declining	Locally important feeding
<i>Himantopus</i>		Pied stilt	At Risk	Declining	Locally important

<i>himantopus leucocephalus</i>				feeding
<i>Sterna striata</i>	White-fronted tern	At Risk	Declining	Locally important feeding
<i>Bowdleria punctata</i>	Fernbird	At Risk	Declining	Locally important saltmarsh populations
<i>Gallirallus philippensis</i>	Banded rail	At Risk	Declining	Locally important populations
<i>Limosa lapponica baueri</i>	Eastern bar-tailed godwit	At Risk	Declining	Nationally important feeding and roosting
<i>Haematopus unicolor</i>	Variable oystercatcher	At Risk	Recovering	Locally important feeding
<i>Puffinus gavia</i>	Fluttering shearwater	At Risk	Relict	Locally important feeding
<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix urinatrix</i>	Common diving petrel	At Risk	Relict	Rare visitor
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo novaehollandiae</i>	Black shag	At Risk	Naturally uncommon	Locally important feeding
<i>Phalacrocorax melanoleucos brevirostris</i>	Little shag	At Risk	Naturally uncommon	Locally important breeding and feeding
<i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostris</i>	Little black shag	At Risk	Naturally uncommon	Locally important breeding and feeding
<i>Platalea regia</i>	Royal spoonbill	At Risk	Naturally uncommon	Locally important feeding

Key references:

OWR 2014. Whangarei Harbour. Northland Regional Council.

Pierce R.J. 2005. General patterns of bird use of Whangarei Harbour. Wildland Consultants Report No. 1047 for Northland regional Council.

Robertson, C.J.R., Hyvönen, P., Fraser, M.J., Pickard, C.R. 2007. *Atlas of bird distribution in New Zealand 1999-2004*. OSNZ, Wellington.

Estuaries Reliability Notes and Key References

Site	Assessor	Date	Key references (see below)	Data reliability
North Kaipara	RP	Oct 2015	3, 4, 6, 14, 15	High
Mangawhai	RP	Oct 2015	1, 2, 4, 6, 13, 14	High
Waipu	RP	Oct 2015	1, 2, 6, 13,14	High
Ruakaka	RP	Oct 2015	6, 13	High
Whangarei	RP	Oct 2015	3, 6, 9, 14, 15	High
Taiharuru	RP	Oct 2015	10, 14	High
Pataua	RP	Oct 2015	10, 14	Moderate – High
Horahora	RP	Oct 2015	14, 15	Moderate – High
Ngunguru	RP	Oct 2015	6, 10, 14	High
Matapouri	RP	Oct 2015	10, 15	High
Whananaki	RP	Oct 2015	5, 14, 15	High

Whangaruru	RP	Oct 2015	5, 6, 14, 15	High
Bay of Islands	RP	Oct 2015	5, 6, 14, 15	High
Whangaroa	RP	Oct 2015	14, 15	Moderate – High
Mangonui-Taipa	RP	Oct 2015	14, 15	Moderate –High
Rangaunu	RP	Oct 2015	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 14, 15	High
Houhora	RP	Oct 2015	3, 6, 11, 14	High
Parengarenga	RP	Oct 2015	1, 3, 6, 7, 14, 15	High
Whangape-Herekino	RP	Oct 2015	14, 15	Moderate – High
Hokianga	RP	Oct 2015	6, 8, 15	High

Key references:

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4. Ismar, S.M.H. et al 2013. Foraging ecology and choice of feeding habitat in the New Zealand Fairy Tern *Sternula nereis davisae*. *Bird Conservation International* 24: 72 – 87.
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8. Pierce R.J. 2002. Assessment of ecological effects of proposed bridges and associated roadworks at Hokianga Harbour, Northland. Wildland Consultants Contract Report No. 575.
9. Pierce R.J. 2005. General patterns of bird use of Whangarei Harbour. Wildland Consultants Report No. 1047 for Northland regional Council.
10. Pierce R.J. 2007. Options for ecological restoration of the Tutakaka Landcare Coalition (TLC) area and neighbouring areas. *Eco Oceania Ltd* report for Tutukaka Landcare Coalition.
11. Pierce, R.J., Kerr, V.C, 2004. Effects of oyster farms on estuarine avifauna at Houhora Harbour, Northland. Contract Report No. 899, Report prepared for: Department of Conservation Private Bag 841 Whangarei.
12. Pierce, R.J., Kerr, V.C., 2007. Ecological Restoration of the Taiharuru Catchment. Report prepared for the Taiharuru Catchment Group. Eco Oceania Ltd.
13. Pulham, G., Wilson, D. 2013 [updated 2015]. Fairy tern. *In* Miskelly, C.M. (ed.) *New Zealand Birds Online* www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz
14. Robertson, C.J.R., Hyvönen, P., Fraser, M.J., Pickard, C.R. 2007. *Atlas of bird distribution in New Zealand 1999-2004*. OSNZ, Wellington.
15. SSBI. Sites of Special Biological Significance. Department of Conservation Series, Northland.