

Significant Ecological Estuarine Area Assessment Sheet for Wading and Aquatic Birds

Name/Area: Ruakaka Estuary

Summary:

Ruakaka Estuary is a very small estuary near Whangarei Harbour. It has very limited saltmarsh and mangrove fringes and suffers disturbance from human visitors and roaming pets from intensive subdivision nearby. The intertidal flats and tidal channels do however provide some feeding opportunities for low numbers of some threatened bird species including reef heron, pied shag and northern NZ dotterel, the last of which attempts to nest at the estuary along with variable oystercatcher. The adjacent sandy beach and dunes are sometimes used by flocks of terns and waders, some of the latter visiting from Whangarei Harbour during the high tide period (refer Table below). With lower disturbance levels, the estuary could potentially become a nesting area for NZ fairy tern, but currently it is ranked as Moderate ecological significance.

Table 'Threatened' and 'At Risk' shorebird species present at Ruakaka Estuary

<i>Species Scientific Name</i>	<i>Species Common Name</i>	<i>NZ threat classification</i>		<i>Significance for species</i>
<i>Sternula nereis davisae</i>	NZ fairy tern	Threatened	Nationally critical	Potential nationally important site
<i>Botaurus poiciloptilus</i>	Australasian bittern	Threatened	Nationally endangered	Local feeding area
<i>Phalacrocorax varius</i>	Pied shag	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Locally important feeding area
<i>Egretta sacra sacra</i>	Reef heron	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Locally important feeding area
<i>Charadrius obscurus aquilonius</i>	Northern NZ dotterel	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Locally important breeding and feeding
<i>Charadrius bicinctus bicinctus</i>	Banded dotterel	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Local feeding site
<i>Calidris canutus</i>	Lesser knot	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Locally important feeding, roosting
<i>Larus novaehollandiae scopulinus</i>	Red-billed gull	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Locally important feeding
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Caspian tern	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Locally important feeding, roosting
<i>Haematopus finschi</i>	NZ pied oystercatcher	At Risk	Declining	Locally important feeding, roosting
<i>Himantopus himantopus leucocephalus</i>	Pied stilt	At Risk	Declining	Locally important feeding
<i>Sterna striata</i>	White-fronted tern	At Risk	Declining	Locally important feeding, roosting
<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Eastern bar-	At Risk	Declining	Locally important

<i>baueri</i>	tailed godwit			feeding, roosting
<i>Haematopus unicolor</i>	Variable oystercatcher	At Risk	Recovering	Locally important breeding and feeding
<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 feeding
<i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostris</i>	Little black shag	At Risk	Naturally uncommon	Locally important feeding

Key references:

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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6. OWR 2014. Oiled wildlife response (harbour specific series). Northland Regional Council.
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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.