

Significant Ecological Estuarine Area Assessment Sheet for Wading and Aquatic Birds

Name/Area: Houhora Harbour

Summary:

Houhora Harbour is a moderate sized harbour flanked by a mix of mangrove, saltmarsh, shrubland, farmland and residential area (Houhora). There are extensive tidal flats and some oyster farming occurs here. There are some little-disturbed beaches (notably Kowhai Beach) east of the harbour, which provide high-tide roosts for waders. The harbour supports several thousands of waders – these include local breeding residents (northern NZ dotterel, variable oystercatcher) and migratory waders from within New Zealand (particularly wrybill, banded dotterel and pied stilt) and northern hemisphere migrants (particularly bar-tailed godwit, lesser knot, ruddy turnstone and Pacific golden plover). Other local breeders include reef heron, pied shag and little blue penguin, while many species also feed in the harbour, notably tern species. There are important populations of Australasian bittern, banded rail, spotless crane and fernbird in the local saltmarsh and other wetlands. The ecological significance of Houhora is High given the importance of the harbour to so many species populations.

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

<i>Species 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>Botaurus poiciloptilus</i>	Australasian bittern	Threatened	Nationally endangered	Nationally 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	Locally important breeding and feeding
<i>Anarhynchus frontalis</i>	Wrybill	Threatened	Nationally vulnerable	Nationally important feeding
<i>Charadrius obscurus aquilonius</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	Locally 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	Locally important feeding
<i>Eudyptula minor</i>	Little blue penguin	At Risk	Declining	Local breeding and feeding
<i>Haematopus</i>	NZ pied	At Risk	Declining	Local feeding

<i>finschi</i>	oystercatcher			
<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
<i>Bowdleria punctata</i>	Fernbird	At Risk	Declining	Locally important breeding and feeding
<i>Gallirallus philippensis</i>	Banded rail	At Risk	Declining	Locally important breeding and feeding
<i>Limosa lapponica baueri</i>	Eastern bar-tailed godwit	At Risk	Declining	Nationally important feeding
<i>Haematopus unicolor</i>	Variable oystercatcher	At Risk	Recovering	Locally important breeding and feeding
<i>Porzana tabuensis tabuensis</i>	Spotless crane	At Risk	Relict	Local 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 breeding and feeding
<i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostris</i>	Little black shag	At Risk	Naturally uncommon	Locally important feeding
<i>Platalea regia</i>	Royal spoonbill	At Risk	Naturally uncommon	Occasional visitor

Key references:

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.

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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6. OWR 2014. Oiled wildlife response (harbour specific series). Northland Regional Council.
7. Pierce R.J. 1999. Regional patterns of migration in the banded dotterel *Charadrius bicinctus*. *Notornis* 46: 101-122.
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.
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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.