

Caspian Tern census

This spring will be the second year of the National Caspian Tern Census. Counts from last season are trickling in, but unfortunately coverage has not been complete so it is difficult to compare with previous counts. A total of 542 breeding pairs were recorded from 20 colonies (See table 1), even correcting for regions which recorded colonies, but didn't count these, it would appear that Caspian tern numbers are in decline. As such it is vital that we get full coverage during the last two years of this survey.

This will be the third survey of breeding numbers and distribution of Caspian terns, with counts occurring at twenty year periods (1971-75, 1991-1995 and now 2011-2013). This latest period has had huge change in New Zealand, with increased coastal development, increased four wheel drive ownership and greater access to many beaches. As a result Caspian terns may provide a great indicator of how such changes are impacting on shorebird species.

Thanks everybody, and those regions which have taken the time to survey colonies. With several regions undertaking repeated counts at their colonies. If you are interested to get involved, or know of breeding Caspian terns in your birding patch please contact your RR. This survey is being co-ordinated in each region by the RR, and they have the methodology and recording forms available.

I look forward to receiving your returns over the summer.

Mike Bell

Caspian Tern Survey Co-ordinator

Table 1. Breeding pairs and number of colonies of Caspian Tern in surveys

	1971-75		1991-95		2011		Notes
	Pairs	Colonies	Pairs	Colonies	Pairs	Colonies	
Far North	258	3	121	2			
Northland	49	2	85	3	6	2	Colonies known, but not counted
Auckland	337	2	315	3	57	2	
South Auckland	164	2	105	3	241	3	
Waikato	0	0	22	1	?	1	Colonies known, but not counted
Bay of Plenty	73	2	151	1	50	4	
Volcanic Plateau	7	0	6	0			
Wanganui	1	0	2	0			
Hawkes Bay	0	0	12	1			
Wairarapa	48	1	38	1	11	1	
Marlborough	53	1	40	1	23	2	
Nelson	212	2	172	2	123	3	
Canterbury	9	0	43	1	3	1	Colonies known, but not counted
West Coast	6	0	6	0			
Otago	1	0	1	0			
Southland	48	1	80	1	28	1	
TOTAL	1266	16	1199	20	542	20	