

Caspian Tern Survey 2011-2013 Instructions.

Background

During 1971-75 and 1991-95 surveys of Caspian tern colonies were conducted by OSNZ members to count the number of breeding pairs. The results of these surveys were recently published (Bell and Bell, *Notornis* 55: 84-88, 2008) and showed that between this period Caspian tern numbers have been relatively stable (1300-1400 breeding pairs) but there was some movement in colony location. Attached is a table showing the locations of known colonies during the 1971-75 and 1991-95 surveys.

Since 1991-95 there has been considerable change in coastal New Zealand. There is accelerated coastal development, increased access to isolated beaches through more widespread ownership of four wheel drive vehicles, and increased leisure time. These factors are likely to be impacting on coastal breeding birds and a survey of breeding Caspian terns after another twenty year period would provide an excellent case study to monitor these effects.

The study will be carried out in a similar way to the previous surveys, which will be co-ordinated through Regional Representatives with guidance and assistance from the Caspian Tern Survey Co-ordinator. Results will be collected on standardised survey forms (see form attached). Survey forms will be available on the OSNZ website and from RR's.

Methods

Mike Bell will co-ordinate the survey (email skua44@yahoo.co.nz Home Phone 03 5779818)

Caspian tern chicks are at threat from predation if disturbed at the colonies. With this in mind the nest counts from within colonies will only occur prior to hatching. Once hatching commences, all counts should be made from beyond colonies using binoculars and telescopes to count birds.

Caspian terns lay from late September to early December (with late nests usually being replacement clutches). Eggs take 26-28 days to hatch. Chicks are brooded for 5-10 days and fledge when 33-38 days old, but are continued to be feed by adults for several months.

Ideally colonies should be located early in the breeding season (late September) and initial counts made of nests, and the number of adults present. From these results the next visit should be timed to occur just before hatching starts. Incubation is 26-28 days so if the first count just has a few nests with eggs the next visit would be three weeks, if most birds have eggs only a week apart.

Observers should not enter colonies once chicks start to hatch. If chicks are present in a colony, counts should be made from outside the colony. The number of Apparently Incubating should be counted to indicate the number of nests, and the number of free roaming chicks counted. The following season visits should occur earlier in the year to enable nest counts.

Results should be entered onto the survey form and sent to **Caspian Tern Survey, PO Box 45, Spring Creek, Marlborough 7244** or email skua44@yahoo.co.nz

Thanks for your input.