

IN WHAT WAYS IS THE RED-BILLED GULL (*Larus novaehollandiae*) POPULATION IN NEW ZEALAND CHANGING?

In the mid-1960s, about 40,000 breeding pairs of red-billed gull were present at 166 colonies in New Zealand (excluding the Chatham and sub-Antarctic Is).

Over the past 20 years or more, numbers at the largest colonies have declined markedly, whereas in other areas, notably Otago, the numbers of both breeding birds and colonies have increased. What is the overall trend in numbers?

Is the population declining, despite some local increases, or is it stable, but with the main population centres shifting, perhaps tracking changes in food supply? Are a few large breeding colonies being replaced by many smaller, more dispersed ones?

This survey is aimed at answering these questions. The first part, being carried out this breeding season (October 2014–January 2015), is designed to check the present status of those colonies reported in 1965 (see right), and to locate new ones, assumed to have established since 1965.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Check the status of colonies known to be active up to 1965. Are breeding birds present or not? You can get a list of these colonies and their locations from Peter Frost (birds.wanganui@osnz.org.nz).

We do not need counts of the number of breeding pairs at this stage, but some indication of size would be useful, along the following lines: < 10; 10 < 100; 100 < 1000; 1000 < 10,000; and > 10,000 pairs.

Note any obvious features that might account for any change in status (e.g. disturbance; land development).

- Look for and record details of any new colonies (e.g. location; estimated size).

Report what you find to Peter Frost, Graeme Taylor (gtaylor@doc.govt.nz), or the appropriate Birds NZ regional representative (see <http://osnz.org.nz/contact-us/regional-representatives> for contact details).

THANK YOU

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**NATIONAL RED-BILLED GULL SURVEY,
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