

Black-billed Gull Study

The black-billed gull (*Larus bulleri*) is regarded as the world's most threatened gull species, and is endemic to New Zealand. It is listed as "Endangered" on the IUCN Red List and as "Threatened, Nationally Critical" by the New Zealand Threat Classification System. National population declines are estimated to be 78% over the past 30 years. However, very little is known about these gulls, thereby making conservation difficult.

This project will assess the breeding success, population dynamics, and movements of birds during the breeding and non-breeding season. It will focus on breeding colonies located in the Nelson and Marlborough regions, and will build on previous annual banding efforts completed in these regions since 2009. Helicopter surveys will be carried out for aerial population counts. Intensive searches for previously banded birds will be undertaken for understanding movements between rivers, population dynamics such as juvenile survival, as well as identifying key wintering areas. All information gathered is key for national conservation of this endangered species.

Everyone is encouraged to get involved as much as possible - food and fuel vouchers are available to support those with an interest in searching for and resighting previously banded birds year-round anywhere in the country. Volunteers will be needed to assist with chick banding, allowing the opportunity to see and experience the birds in their natural habitat.

This project is in partnership with Save the Wairau River Inc, and funding has been generously provided by the Department of Conservation, Pub Charity, Lotteries Grant Board, and Wildlife Management International Ltd. With the additional support of the Birds NZ Research Fund, a full year of monitoring efforts during both the breeding and non-breeding season has been made possible.

For additional information, please contact Claudia Mischler, claudia "at" wnil.co.nz



Banded black-billed gulls – sightings should include colour and number of the band (Photo: Bill Cash)



Adult black-billed gull
(Photo: Dave Boyle)