

### Breeding age of Royal Spoonbills in New Zealand

The Royal Spoonbill (*Platalea regia*) has been a regular breeder in New Zealand now for a number of years. Since 1987, a colour banding programme has been developed mainly to ascertain dispersal of this species within New Zealand.

On 25 January 1998, I inspected the latest colony of spoonbills, reported on Taieri Island. Although rather late in the breeding season, two banded birds were observed breeding. One bird stood on its nest with three one-week-old chicks, the other bird stood on its nest with a juvenile. Both birds had been banded as chicks on the adjacent Green Island Nature Reserve, about 18 km north-east of Taieri Island, off the coast at Dunedin. One was banded on 24 December 1994, the second on 29 December 1994. Hence, it seems that in New Zealand at least, the Royal Spoonbill can breed at the age of three years. I have not been able to find a comparable figure for overseas populations (Hancock et al. 1992; Marchant & Higgins 1990), although the Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) can also breed at the age of three years (De Le Court & Aguilera 1997).

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