



White heron. Adults in partial breeding plumage at nest. Okarito, November 2013.



White heron

Ardea modesta (J.E. Gray, 1831)

Length: 83-103 cm

Weight: 700-1200 g

New Zealand status: Native

Conservation status: Nationally Critical

Also known as kotuku or great egret, this is a large white heron with a long yellow bill (black when breeding), long dark legs and a very long neck. In flight, the white heron tucks its heads back into its shoulders so that the length of its neck is hidden, giving it a hunched appearance. When walking, the white heron has an elegant upright stance showing the extreme length of its neck. When resting it is more hunched with its head tucked in, making the birds appear more bulky. The white heron is the largest, longest-necked of the egrets, and the gape extends well behind the eye.

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