

## **National Royal Spoonbill Population Census, and Breeding Colony and Nest Count.**

Royal spoonbill arrived naturally from Australia about 100 years ago, and now breed in New Zealand and are considered native. Birds New Zealand has the rare opportunity to accurately document the increase in the population of this new coloniser.

The last nation-wide population census was in 2012, with 2361 birds recorded. A colony and nest count was carried out in the 2013/2014 breeding season, with 20 colonies located.

Another systematic, coordinated, full population census is planned to take place in winter, 2024. Each region will survey all likely locations and count number of royal spoonbills.

During the 2024/2025 breeding season breeding colonies of royal spoonbill will be located and the number of adult birds in attendance and the number of active nests will be counted.

These new counts, together with those of previous surveys, will provide the information needed to determine the rate at which the royal spoonbill population is increasing in New Zealand. From the colony and nest counts we will find out whether they have extended their breeding range, and whether the sizes of the colonies have increased or declined since the last survey a decade ago.

Each Birds NZ Region will include these surveys in their programme, and oversee and coordinate the fieldwork for their region. Royal spoonbill colonies are often in remote, hard-to-get-to spots, and at least two regions are planning to use aerial flyovers to obtain images of birds and nests. For the national census to be successful, as many of the locations as possible, if not all, need to be surveyed and the PAF grant will help towards subsidising fuel costs for car transport, and for the hire of light aircraft.

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