

NEW ZEALAND GULL GUIDE – Rāpunga O Aotearoa

Black-billed gull / tarāpuka

Chroicocephalus bulleri Length: 36cm Weight: 230g

Unique to New Zealand, this species breeds mainly on braided rivers, staying inland during the summer and moving to the coast for winter.



Adults are pearly white with light grey wings that are lightly tipped black. Their long slender bill, eye ring and legs are usually black, but can turn crimson during the nesting season.



Youngsters of both the Red-billed and Black-billed gulls have brownish bills, dark eyes, and dark smudges on the upperwings. They can be very difficult to tell apart, however will often be around adults of the same species.

Red-billed gull / tarāpunga

Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae L: 37cm W: 280g

A widespread, mostly coastal species that is no stranger to fish and chip shops all year-round.



Adults are white with grey wings tipped black and white. Their stout bill, eye ring and legs are vivid red in colour, and their eyes white. Very similar to their Black-billed cousins, but stockier, darker winged and shorter billed.



Southern black-backed gull / karoro

Larus dominicanus L: 60cm W: 1000g

The biggest of the gulls, this opportunistic species can be found almost anywhere.



Adults are white with black upperwings, a heavy yellow bill with a red spot near the tip, an orange eye ring, grey-green eye, and dull yellow legs.



Black-backed youngsters have mottled brown plumage, dark eye and bill, and grey legs. They don't look like the adults until about 3yrs old.

