

# Black Stilt

(Not presently held at the Otorohanga Kiwi House)



COMMON NAME: **BLACK STILT** – Gould, 1764

LATIN NAME: *Himantopus novaezealandiae*

LATIN MEANING: *Himantopus* Gr. *himantopous*, a wading bird, now usually identified as the Stilt. *Novaeseelandiae* L. *novus*, new; Mod. L. *Zeelandia*, Zeeland, Netherlands; after New Zealand, which received its name from the explorer Abel Tasman who explored the west coast in 1642, naming it *Nova Zeelandia* after his Dutch home.

MAORI NAME: Kaki

CLASS: Aves

ORDER: Charadriiformes

FAMILY: Recurvirostridae

GENUS: *Himantopus*

SPECIES/SUB SPECIES: *Novaezealandiae*

## DESCRIPTION:

Both sexes are similar. Upper parts are black with a green gloss on the wings. Under parts are a brownish, brown/black. The iris is crimson, the mandible black and the feet bright pink.

## HABITAT / DISTRIBUTION:

Wetland areas of inland Otago and South Canterbury while a few birds winter in the northern harbours.

## BREEDING:

Pairs start breeding at 2–3 years of age. Usually they nest in isolation from other stilts and will defend their territories from others. The breeding season is from September–October with 3–6 eggs laid in a depression in the shingle, lined with grasses, twigs or riverbed debris. Both parents share incubation, changing every hour for 25 days. Chicks fledge at 6–8 weeks of age.

## SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:

Kaki (Black Stilts) are very territorial with pairs defending their feeding grounds throughout the year. Some birds do migrate to northern harbours like Kawhia and the Firth of Thames during the winter months.

## DIET:

Black Stilts forage in shallow water on shingle riverbeds, streams, swamps and tarns for various species of bottom-dwelling insects like mayfly and caddis fly larvae. Waterboatmen, backswimmers and damselflies, as well as various species of gastropods, are also taken.

## PRINCIPAL THREATS:

- Predators (eg. feral cats and ferrets)
- Habitat loss and modification such as hydroelectric and agricultural development and weed invasion.
- Human disturbance – recreational users of riverbeds and wetlands can crush eggs or chicks and scare adult Kaki away from their nests.

## CONSERVATION STATUS:

Critically endangered.



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