

Red billed or black billed gull?

How to tell them apart

By Phil Crutchley of Birds Canterbury/West Coast



Red-billed Gull | Tarāpunga. Adult. Waiheke Island, January 2019. Image © Oscar Thomas by Oscar Thomas.



Black-billed gull | Tarāpuka. Adult standing on grass. Lake Taupo, July 2009. Image © John Flux by John Flux.

But what about juveniles or non-breeding birds?



Both Red Billed



Immature Black Billed
Grey wing feathers



Immature red billed
Heavier beak, brown wing feathers



Black-billed gull | Tarāpuka. Immature (first summer). Golden Bay, December 2011. Image © Alan Tennyson by Alan Tennyson.



Black-billed gull | Tarāpuka. Immature (second summer). Waikanae River estuary, April 2010. Image © Alan Tennyson by Alan Tennyson.



Red-billed Gull | Tarāpunga. Juvenile. Muriwai, January 2009. Image © Peter Reese by Peter Reese.

Immature Black Billed
Black tipped wing feathers





Immature red billed with white 'windows' on wing tip feathers





White morph red billed gull. Long beak.



Black-billed gull | Tarāpuka. Mixed breeding colony of black-billed gulls and red-billed gulls. Lake Rotorua, December 2001. Image © Tamas Zeke by Tamas Zeke. ed flock of