



Photo courtesy of Darren Markin/darrenmarkin.co.nz

IT'S NOT JUST BREACHING LOW-FLYING RULES

There were 16 complaints to CAA during November and December 2021 about low flying over the breeding habitats of the critically endangered fairy tern.

Probably New Zealand's most endangered indigenous breeding bird, the tara iti (New Zealand fairy tern) is being threatened by regular low flying over its habitats, and in breach of low-flying rules.

There are fewer than 40 of this species of fairy tern left in the world. That includes 12 breeding pairs.

This is, believe it or not, an increase on 1983, when the entire known population of tara iti – at Mangawhai, and at Papakanui Spit in Kaipara Harbour – was made up of three breeding pairs.

At that point, the Department of Conservation stepped in. Among measures to try to prevent the bird's extinction, it successfully lobbied for restricted airspace above their breeding grounds.

Low flying disturbs the tara iti, including forcing the birds out of nests, leaving eggs vulnerable to predators.

Restricted airspace is at Waipu (NZR 105), Mangawhai (NZR 106) and Te Arai (NZR 107). This is all indicated on the relevant visual navigation charts.

DOC asks that pilots consider not flying at all over these areas, but if you must, fly no lower than 1000 ft AMSL.

If you do, you won't be just breaking civil aviation rules, you could also potentially breach the Wildlife Act 1953.

Consider brushing up your knowledge of other DOC land, because some restricted airspace can extend to 3500 ft AMSL. Check these areas in *AIP New Zealand ENR 5.1 – 1 Restricted Areas*. [👉](#)

Any questions regarding the tara iti, email whangarei@doc.govt.nz