

Meet six Taranaki shore birds

These birds are all threatened because they depend for survival on the narrow band of beach that we increasingly use for development and recreation.

They are vulnerable to dogs, cats, vehicles and predators, especially while both parents incubate and guard their eggs during summer.

Most of these birds remain in, or return to, the same area for their lifetimes.

Variable Oystercatcher 48cm

Haematopus unicolor

- Slightly bigger than the South Island Pied Oystercatcher
- Usually all black, but sometimes white underparts
- Unlike their cousins they are not migratory and are never found away from the coastline
- A pair of Variable Oystercatchers will often be present on a coastal territory all year round



South Island Pied Oystercatcher 46cm

Haematopus ostralegus finschi

- They use their long bills to probe deep into mud, sand or under pebbles
- Eat worms and insects in riverbeds, pasture and ploughed land
- They have a distinctive black and white pattern on the wings when flying
- Roosting and feeding birds may form large flocks
- Breed mainly in the South Island



Little Blue Penguin 40cm

Status: Nationally Vulnerable

Eudyptula minor

- The world's smallest penguin
- They only come ashore under cover of darkness and live underground in burrows, or under houses
- Look for their footprints straight across the sand from the land to the sea
- Blue penguins feed on a range of inshore, surface schooling fish species.
- Penguins make many dives (up to 1,500 a day) to find and catch fish.
- They can live to be 25 years old.



New Zealand Dotterel 27cm Status: Nationally Critical

Charadrius obscurus

- Chicks must find their own food
- When danger threatens the chicks run to the nearest cover and freeze, crouching low and keeping still until the parents sound the all-clear
- If you see a New Zealand Dotterel pretending to be hurt it probably has a nest or chicks nearby



Pied Stilt 38cm

Himantopus himantopus leucocephalus

- Pied Stilts hang out together even during the nesting season
- They nest near each other if the locality offers a sufficient food supply
- Then birds wade to obtain insects, insect larvae, worms and small shellfish
- The call of the stilt is a sharp yapping like a puppy

Banded Dotterel 18cm

Status: Gradual Decline

Charadrius bicinctus bicinctus

- Banded Dotterels feed on invertebrates
- While feeding, they show a distinctive run-stop-peck-run movement
- Each Banded Dotterel pair defends a territory and nests apart from others
- Chicks leave the nest soon after hatching to follow parents as they look for food
- Dotterels may migrate during winter, even going to Australia or Fiji



Supported by:

The George Mason Charitable Trust
Ornithological Society N.Z., Taranaki Region
Forest and Bird, North Taranaki
Ngā Motu Marine Reserve Society



Shorebirds can be helped

- Keep dogs under control
- Keep clear of eggs. Birds will not return to incubate until you have gone, and eggs can quickly overheat or become chilled while parents are away
- Heed signs on beaches
- Stay on pathways through the dunes
- Help your local penguins by making nesting boxes, especially when building seawalls or modifying the shore
- Keep vehicles off the shore
- Record any dead birds or take a photo
- Help monitor penguin numbers: record your sightings directly to the map www.tinyurl.com/penguin2011



Can you spot the Pied Stilt's nest?
Parents share the nest duties for more than three weeks