

3 May, 2026  
Puhoi

# 11<sup>th</sup> Auckland NZ Dotterel Forum

## SNIPPETS

### for Community Conservation



#### 2026 AUCKLAND NZ DOTTEREL HUI SUMMARY

The 11<sup>th</sup> Auckland NZ Dotterel Forum brought together Dotterel Minders, council conservationists and researchers to share Tūturiwhatu research, stories and ideas. Together they celebrated significant achievements in the conservation of both the Northern and Southern NZ Dotterel and discussed the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead. Here are some snippets from the day:



#### Avian botulism - Dr Rashi Parker, BirdCare Aotearoa

Avian botulism is caused by a very potent neurotoxin that is produced by a common soil bacteria. There is an increasing prevalence in Auckland's at-risk shorebirds, likely due to spread from urban populations. We need urban water quality improvements and sustainable bird hospital funding.



#### Northern NZ Dotterel Development - Becky Swan, Snells Beach Minder

The age of Northern NZ Dotterel chicks can be estimated by observing body size and shape, wing size, plumage, and behaviour.

General stages:

- 1-2 weeks: round bodies, tiny wing stubs, start out very small, grow to half the size of the adult, lots of brooding.
- 2-3 weeks: half the size of the adults, very scruffy.
- 3-4 weeks: body begins to elongate, clear wing growth, nearing  $\frac{3}{4}$  the size of the adults, lots of stretching, exercising & preening.
- 4-5 weeks: very similar to adults but the nape of the neck is downy and tails are scruffy.
- 6-8 weeks: fledging occurs.



Coming soon: full guide to dotterel chick development from Becky Swan.



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## West Coast Dotterels - Adrian Riegan, Karekare Minder

There is very little migration between west and east coasts. Chicks produced on Auckland's west coast are mostly observed on the west coast from Kaipara to Taranaki, but only four of the 66 flagged chicks have been recruited back to west coast breeding populations. Of the 124 birds flagged on the east coast, only one has been recorded on the west coast. Please send any flagged dotterel observations to Adrian: [riegen@xtra.co.nz](mailto:riegen@xtra.co.nz).



## Unusual Nesting at Ardmore - Becky Trigg, Auckland Council

Dotterels have been nesting in a small depression in coconut fibre matting at a construction site near Ardmore Airport - with two chicks successfully fledged. Construction crews have thankfully been taking care around them. The birds seem adaptable despite many threats. This situation highlights the opportunity for conservation gains in development areas if long term protection of native species is put in place.

## The Rooftop Family - Virginia Nicol, Urban Minder

Auckland dotterels are diversifying their nest location choices. The latest unusual case saw a pair nesting on the roof of a stand-alone warehouse. There may be benefits of nesting on a roof but also significant challenges for fledging chicks. In this case, DOC Senior Rangers relocated the family, but how often is this happening and how should we respond?



## Good Data, Better Decisions - Jacinda Woolly, Auckland Council

Data help Auckland Council and communities make informed decisions. Dotterel data submitted from 62 sites shows ongoing population recovery and is very helpful for conservation planning, regional pest and park management plans, dog access rules, permit decisions, resource consenting and assessing conservation status. If you're interested in recording breeding data for Variable Oystercatchers, please contact: [jacinda.woolly@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:jacinda.woolly@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

## Protective Nest Covers

### - Philip Moll, Shoal & Ngataringa Bays Minder

Nest and chick shelters hold promise for protecting dotterels from threats like aerial predation. Having shelters low to the ground excludes kahu while allowing dotterel access. Designs will continue to be refined while also considering the ongoing threat from human visits to shell banks.



## A Special Request from Gwenda Pulham

Please submit your dotterel observations.

The more data we have, the better:

- Flagged birds - report to [riegen@xtra.co.nz](mailto:riegen@xtra.co.nz)
- Banded birds - report to [bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz](mailto:bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz)

# SNIPPETS



## Southern NZ Dotterel Update - John Dowding, DM Consultants

Our nationally critical Southern NZ Dotterels live on mountain tops of Rakiura Stewart Island. The species has only 32 breeding pairs and has been heavily predated by feral cats. A recent large 1080 operation resulted in the greatest percentage increase in the Southern NZ Dotterels since data was first collected in the 1950s. This is a breakthrough for this critically endangered population. Protection from cats in between 1080 operations will be critical going forward, especially for new breeding pairs that establish in the next two years.



## Monitoring Northern NZ Dotterels - John Dowding, DM Consultants

In the past, dotterels were the subject of four large censuses, surveying the whole North Island. This approach is no longer feasible due to resourcing constraints. Possible alternatives include smaller scale surveys in select areas or specific post-breeding flock counts.

## DATA, CONNECTION AND COLLABORATION

Ngā mihi - thank you to the Dotterel Minders community for your dedication and service. Your commitment to conservation is making a difference for our amazing Tūturiwhatu.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Auckland Dotterel Forum highlighted the importance of sharing data and ideas. If we stay connected and share more often, we can achieve even greater outcomes for these precious birds. If the 2026 Dotterel Forum sparked your curiosity or an idea, reach out to others, share your thoughts and grow our collective knowledge together.

Here are some good places to share info and connect with others:

- Share observations or insights for the dotterel newsletter: [biodiversity@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:biodiversity@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)
- Scan these QR code to connect via local facebook groups:



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Tūturiwhatu/dotterels](#)



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