



TAWHARANUI OPEN SANCTUARY SOCIETY INC.
Newsletter No. 55 December 2015



A little blue penguin snuggled up in one of the grey-faced petrel nesting boxes at Ngaio Bay



Coming Events

Sun. 3 January: holiday. No Sunday volunteer work. Enjoy a walk in the park.

Sun. 7 February: 9.15am. Sunday in the Park. A range of tasks followed by BBQ.

Sat. 5 March: Auckland Council Great Camp Weekend. Check Council website for more details.

Sun. 6 March: 9.15am. Sunday in the Park. A range of tasks followed by a BBQ.

Volunteer Days

Tuesdays 9am The nursery team meets at the Tawharanui nursery. If you would like to join this dedicated team:
Contact: Ray Blackburn 425 4995 magsandray@gmail.com

Thursdays 9am A small group of volunteers meet at the Vol Hole for interesting track and maintenance work:
Contact: Roger Williams 425 9127 port.williams@clear.net.nz

Volunteer checking (to be done in your own time)

Pest Proof Fence Checking. Contact: Jenni McGlashan 422 3733 jim.jenni@xtra.co.nz

Trap lines. Contact: James Ross 422 6760 jamesross@paradise.net.nz

Chair's Report TOSSI Top Ten-ish



One of the things that I detest is the compilation and advertising of the "top" books/films/cars/house prices – whatever – as the year draws to a close. As early as November the Listener had published the list of top 100 books for 2015. Is this to make us feel guilty that we have neither heard of, nor read, any of them?

The problem is, of course, how to round off a year in a few words. So despite my antipathy to such lists, here is my list of Top TOSSI events for 2015.

Laying the final piece of paving grid inside the koru – we started it months ago; not difficult, but time consuming. Literally square pegs in round holes. With sterling help from Ron, Roger Williams oversaw much of the work – the rest of us just rank amateurs. How satisfying then,

to reach the inside of the koru and have the grid match up within a few millimetres. Job well done. There is more planting to come and in a few years it will be glorious.

Grey-faced Petrel banding – after a day's labour inside the koru, the invitation to go out to Tokatu point with the petrel banding gang was more tempting than scurrying home to a hot bath. It was windy and cold, with sweeping showers of rain in the afternoon – quite a sight over Omaha Bay. Smouldering fires at Omaha Heights added to the drama. At nightfall Alison and I retreated for dinner and picked up the Gaskins. By the time we returned to Marine Triangle the air was thick with GFP's, and it stayed that way for the next two hours. In all, 53 were banded – the biggest number in one night. We newbies got to release the birds and occasionally add a stripe of white twink to their faces. It was without doubt the most exciting bird encounter ever.

Takahe release number 3 – the boys. The arrival of an adult male takahe with his 2 sons, one very much a juvenile, felt like a step up for our breeding programme following the earlier death of an adult male. Just a handful of spectators made it a very personal event. It hasn't worked out perfectly; Mohio, the baby, will probably end up at Burwood, the breeding station near Te Anau, where he will be matched up with a female. His story has proved a valuable lesson for the recovery of this endearing and endangered species, (and mucked up James' GFP banding for the second time – he missed the Big Night Out due to illness).

I was lucky enough to visit Burwood earlier this year and help with feeding out. They had chicks about the same size as Mohio striding about with their parents. This isn't strictly speaking a TOSSI event, but then if I wasn't part of TOSSI I wouldn't have been at Burwood, so it counts.

My birthday this year coincided with a TOSSI committee meeting, and it turned out to be the nearest I have ever been to a stripper, albeit an accidental exposure of flesh. It was truly, harmlessly, and genuinely funny when someone said "Look, we've got you a stripper for your birthday." Such good humour and sense of camaraderie is surely what keeps us together as an organisation. The nursery team have it in spades, and look what they have achieved. It is testament to the commitment and skills of the committee members that we get the necessary business done, including disagreeing from time to time, but can still enjoy the process.

The bait-line that I share with Sue is time I have come to treasure. Our catch over what must be six years or so is dreadful – a few mice, one rabbit and two saddlebacks. But what better way to spend an afternoon with a good friend in a beautiful place. It doesn't have to be spectacular to be good.

That's my list. What's on yours? Best wishes for the great summer. Ngaire Wallen

Open Sanctuary Open Sanctuary Coordinator update



*He aha te mea nui o te ao?
He tangata! He tangata!, He tangata!*

"What is the greatest thing in this world? I answer
'The people! The people! The people!'"

These are the closing lines of the late Hirini Melbourne modified waiata '*Hutia te rito*', words I first learned in the late 90's. At the time I thought it was a very anthropocentric world view as my focus was on nature and the conservation and restoration of our unique NZ biodiversity. As many of us know, human induced changes to Aotearoa have largely been detrimental to our wildlife and I was loath to put humans front and centre, aren't they the problem or at least the cause of it?

But with time my attitude to these waiata words has changed. Now more than ever I realise that like it or not humans are one of the primary agents of environmental change, both positively and negatively. Luckily for me I get to work with people who work passionately and tirelessly in the 'positive change' realm. Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary is a partnership between the Auckland Council and TOSSI, but that is the rather bland institutional description. What makes the partnership so successful is the people, the people, the people.

Ten or more years down the track of creating an open sanctuary it can sometimes become a bit 'normal' and we forget to pause and consider just how audacious and successful we have been. Hundreds of thousands of people can freely access public land where they can play, whilst wildlife missing from mainland Auckland New Zealand for decades or a century or more roam and prosper.

Sometimes the responsibility of what we have created weighs heavily. Wildlife mishaps and pest incursions are the usual triggers to remember what is at stake, and the stakes are indeed high. This could be overwhelming if it weren't for the support we receive from a passionate and committed Ranger team and a diverse array of volunteers and researchers. I've lost track of the number of times that we've been fortunate to have someone, any of the above, on the spot to notice things that require attention and in many cases to act to remedy these events. These many helpful eyes, ears and hands are mindful of what is important and what is at risk.

People come from diverse backgrounds to assist TOSSI and the open sanctuary, usually united by a passion for the place. It is a joy to watch people reveal skills that were previously unknown. Many an unassuming volunteer has wowed me with their expertise in some field or other and are then able to translate these across to tasks on the park. It is also a great pleasure to see people develop skills they never thought they'd acquire, whether this be radio telemetry, trapping or operating four-wheel drive vehicles and tractors.

I'm also aware that behind the scenes there are many equally passionate and giving volunteers who make the machine that is TOSSI tick along; managing membership databases, editing newsletters and keeping members informed and engaged, acquiring and administering grant funds that allow us to develop and improve the open sanctuary, and the list goes on.

I hope you all get the chance to visit the park this summer to simply enjoy it and show it off to family and friends; to shut your eyes to jobs you see that need doing (they'll still be there later) and just revel in the park in the sunshine and birdsong. Because you have helped make it so, and you should reap and share the spoils. Thank you all for another fantastic year making Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary all that it is and all that it can be.

With kind regards, Matt Maitland

I can be contacted at matt.maitland@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz or 09 426 1200

From the Editor

By default I ended up editing TOSSI Newsletter 22 in September 2007 and I have edited it ever since. Back then, with no knowledge of editing, I attempted using the programme 'Word' for the job. It reduced me to tears! Naturally I wondered what rhinoceros I had taken on? Soon I changed to using 'publisher which I found easier. With a new skill in hand I then wondered if there was going to be enough news each quarter. How wrong was I? Tawharanui has so many exciting diverse activities that there has always been plenty of news. So thank you for all those articles and reports and a special thank you to a long term proof reader who chooses to remain anonymous and a new assistant. It is all those people involved at Tawharanui that make it work. Merry Christmas. Alison Stanes

Recent Sanctuary Visitors



Red-legged partridge. This bird paid a quick visit to Tawharanui for a few hours during November. Sharon Kast photographed it in a paddock near the lagoon. Red-legged partridge natural range is in Europe.

Despite failed introductions into New Zealand in the late 1800's an attempt to establish them has been on going since 1984. Birds have been released between the Kaipara Harbour and Taumarunui. Most releases have been unsuccessful. This was a rare visit.



Canada Goose. This pair visited the lagoon recently. They can group up into large flocks and cause considerable damage to vegetation. They can be discouraged from visiting with lots of hissing, shooping and arm flapping!



Bar-tailed godwit. This bird visited Ocean Beach on its way from Alaska to NZ mudflats, most likely Omaha or Miranda. Alison Stanes photographed the confrontation with the NZ dotterel who was not very welcoming when the godwit came into its nesting territory.



Leopard seal. This large seal 3 metres long from the Antarctic Regions was lounging on Jones Bay after a visit to Matheson's Bay and the wider area. Watch out penguins! It is in moult and growing new fur for the next season. Brown spots under the chin help identify it. It moves on land by wriggling on its belly compared with sea lions that walk on their flippers. Give it plenty of space if you see it.

Seabirds of the Hauraki Gulf



During the past few months I have made several boat trips to the outer Hauraki Gulf searching for the elusive New Zealand Storm Petrel with Chris Gaskin and a team of others. This small, energetic, black and white bird was thought extinct until its dramatic re-discovery in 2003.

Our occasional sightings of the 'target species' have been interspersed with whales, dolphins, sharks, sunfish and seals. Although these 'mega fauna' are exciting, the most striking feature of the trips has been the countless thousands of seabirds: albatross, terns, skuas, shearwaters, gannets, prions, petrels, gulls, diving petrels, penguins, storm petrels, shags and giant petrels. As individuals, small groups, great rafts of birds resting on the surface, whirling, scrabbling feeding masses and as thick streams of travelling birds. It was astonishing to be in the midst of this, less than 100kms from New Zealand's biggest city and, for the most part, within sight of Tawharanui.

The vast majority of these seabirds in the Hauraki Gulf now only breed on islands, having been eliminated from the New Zealand mainland by humans, pest predators and habitat clearing. So witnessing this great wealth reinforced for me the importance of restoring seabird colonies to Tawharanui.

Since 2012 Jo Simm and her detector dogs have been helping us find signs of returning seabirds at the Open Sanctuary. It is taxing work for both dogs and handler: searching through thick scrub and flax, on steep (very steep!) coastal cliffs and rugged shorelines. Each time they visit they push our knowledge of seabirds further, with new discoveries in areas that would be impossible to survey without the dogs and their exquisitely accurate noses.

This season the results so far are encouraging: the number of grey-faced petrel burrows and chicks are up, there are two fluttering shearwater chicks and two eggs being incubated, several diving petrel burrows, a growing red-bill gull breeding colony and little penguins producing chicks. We even had a White-faced Storm Petrel land at Tokatu Point! While the numbers of seabirds breeding at Tawharanui is small, we are making clear progress towards restoring this crucial link between land and sea. James Ross



Jo Simm, Brook, and sea bird nest tracking dogs that are trained for kiwi too, Rua and Maddi.



A little blue penguin with a chick peeping out, nestled in a nesting box.



A fluttering shearwater with a fluffy chick.



5 A fluttering shear water chick making good progress.

Thank you to all volunteers

Volunteers are always helping council staff with a vast range of activities making Tawharanui a special place. Here are a some that have been caught on camera.



Volunteer Ron Dyer installs the foundation flooring for the koru planting and interpretation display as this project nears completion.



Volunteers On Other Parks 'VOOPS' are from Shakespear. Jenny Browne, Ingrid Aspell and Mindy Thompson at Tawharanui using Tordon granules dealing to thistles.



Volunteers Kim Grove and two new volunteers remove some of the last lupins for the season.



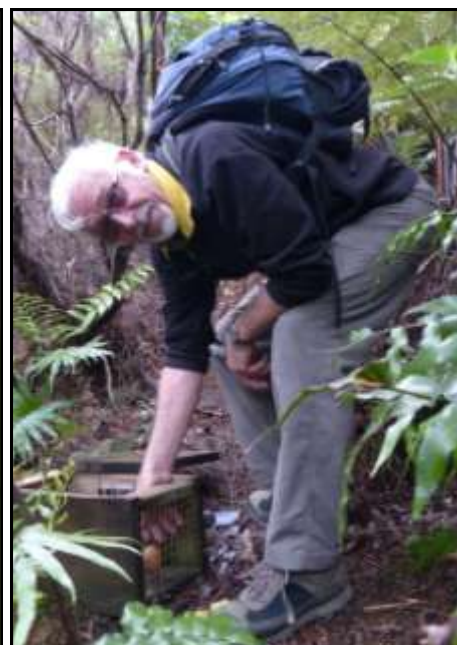
Volunteers Roger Williams and Karen Hoksbergen build shelves for the new chemical shed.



Roger Grove displays the box he built to cover the new irrigation manifold system at the nursery.



Roger Williams, with helpers Patricia and Sharon attach steel strips to the fence to strengthen the joins.



Brain Tuck checks this trap line in Ecology bush once a month and takes photos of birds on the way.

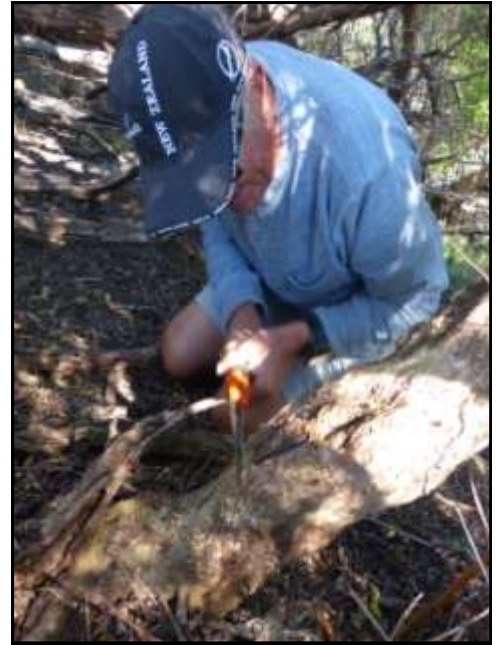
More volunteers help out at Tawharanui



Volunteers from Pricewaterhouse Cooper delicately paint wild gladioli leaves with Cut and Paste to stop this weed from infiltrating wetland rushes.



Volunteer, intern Jonas Kotlarz, from Germany removes a bone seed from one of the South Coast gullies. Jonas's skills are really appreciated.



Volunteer Brian Aldous from Canada was surprised that he could take out the large bone seed with a small pruning saw. He wanted a chain saw!



Mark Paterson helps volunteers from Pricewaterhouse Cooper load buckets of metal for dispersal along the PP Fence.



Volunteers from Pricewaterhouse Cooper strengthen the base of the Pest Proof fence with metal.



Volunteers Keith Edwards, in the photo, and Ray Blackburn have been putting rabbits to sleep in their burrows.



Volunteers Jane Blackbourne and Jane Managh are members of the Pest Proof Fence checking team.

Reintroduction of native mistletoe *Ileostylis micranthus*

This mistletoe is relatively rare in the Auckland region and the largest known population is concentrated on a relatively small number of Totara tree between Warkworth and Puhoi. A decision was taken to increase the number of sites and to improve biodiversity by building populations at Tawharanui and Shakespeare Regional Parks.

The plant itself is hemi-parasitic getting part of its food from photosynthesis and all of its water and minerals by tapping into a host tree. This mistletoe can grow to the size of a small shrub and produces copious quantities of yellow fruit in late March and April.

The seeds themselves can only be germinated on a suitable host tree and are only successful if they remain in place until the spring and manage to break through the bark and tap into the host tree. The seeds themselves are very sticky and, over time, this hardens to glue the seed to a host tree and to form a waterproof shield to protect the seed until germination conditions are right six months later.

Penny and Steve Palmer did the first introductions and many of you will have seen plants from those plantings. Overall success rates are low with little plants failing to tap into the host or the host tree shedding branches. We do have at least eight plants growing in two sites. Our experience to date suggests a 10% survival rate to well established plants.



I collected more seed in April 2015 and Ray Blackburn and I transferred them onto suitable Totara that we had identified earlier. We have added seed to the two original sites and started several new sites along the Ecology Bush access road and Fisherman's Track plus on an easy to monitor tree in the Vol Hole garden. Ray and I checked out all of the sites during September and found four germinated seeds and quite a few that were ready to go. We will do another check closer to Christmas to see how well they have done.

The plan from here is to collect seed next April and plant it where it is needed. This mistletoe grows on a wide range of hosts and I would like to try to get them on at least one different type of host tree, possibly Karo to spread the risk of something affecting Totara. *Ileostylis* is very common in Dunedin gardens where it lives on a wide range of native and exotic trees. Mark Paterson

Nursery Report



The nursery continues to tick along much as it should with the first big day of bagging completed last Tuesday of November. It's so good to be back in Summer mode and really great to see so many familiar faces reappearing with the sun. The last month has been spent with spring cleaning, tidying up the last few odds and ends of plantings and raising our seedlings which for whatever reasons haven't been maturing quite as quickly as we would like.

This year we plan to have a slight change in direction with only three public planting days, one in June, one in July and one in August needing just 15,000 trees. This will give us more time and space to nurture extra second and third growth trees for infill planting. Also we now grow plants for several special park projects. Another task of interest involves attempting to increase the numbers of locally rare trees and plants. So we'll still end up growing close to 20,000 trees, just with a different configuration. It is probably a move we are ready for and is a reflection of the success of all those nursery teams and planting crews past.

Keep in mind, the more help we have the more we can achieve. There's always room for one or two more helpers around the table. Have a great Christmas. Ray Blackburn.

Thank you.

After years of dedicated volunteer work at Tawharanui Gill and Colin Sargent have decided to retire. They have both given hours of work over the years in a wide range of tasks and we say a very big thank you. Already their company is missed in the nursery. We wish them all the best. Retiring means we will welcome them back for the odd nursery day whenever they like or hopefully they might just come and have picnic lunch with us. Ray Blackburn

On the Park



Three kereru find an alternative use for the bollards outside the office at Tawharanui. Kereru also make good use of a Norfolk Island hibiscus that grows near the office.



Matt Maitland knows that somewhere out under a large cluster of carex grasses a takahe is hiding and it has been there for over a week. Have they got a nest or are they just practising? After two weeks it turned out they were just practising.

The Christmas Party



After Santa tripped over his bag of goodies his helper supervised the recovery. Matt Maitland holds the drip bottle of French Brandy, Sally Richardson has a hammer to stimulate the heart beat and Jim McGlashan uses a stirrup pump to assist breathing.



The TOSSI Committee. From left James Ross Secretary, Sally Richardson, Ngaire Wallen, Chairperson giving a thank you speech, Ray Blackburn, Karyn Hoksbergen. Absent Alison Stanes who was assisting Santa at the time of the photo and David Stone was in the Sth Island.



Maggie Cornish presents Matt Maitland with a copy of her book TOSSI The First Ten Years. See page 11 if you would like a copy.



Santa's helper welcomes Jo Ritchie, to the Christmas party. Jo was Tawharanui Project Manager from 2002 to 2006. It was great to see her.



Santa makes a hasty retreat overheating in a bursting Santa costume! He waves farewell and wishes everyone a Merry Christmas.

Bird News

Kiwi. Jonas, our volunteer intern from Germany, sometimes goes out to Jones Bay at night to get a good cell-phone signal to ring home. Often he hears a kiwi calling from the south coast bush nearby while he makes the call, he asks, "To prove I am in New Zealand can you hear the kiwi calling?" Most say, "No". But recently, to his delight, a birding friend in Germany said, "Yes loud and clear!"

Bellbird. A bellbird seeking a dry nesting spot has nested in the fourth trap box in a stack of six, in the lean to area beside the pest shed. It has approached through a tiny hole on the back wall of the shed. When I visited three tiny chicks opened their mouths thinking a parent was returning with food.

Spotless crane. These small shy native birds spend most of their lives hidden in the undergrowth and are generally heard and not seen. A count of their number is taking place at Tawharanui this season as they respond well to their call being played. They have a very secretive nature and like dense vegetation about a metre high. Some of the carex grasses we have planted are among their favoured habitat. Surprisingly three hang out under the prostrate manuka at Tokatu Point.

Red-billed gulls. The numbers of nesting pairs on Phoenix rock has increased from 80 pairs last year to 180 this year. They have spread out over the second rock stack and promise a great season of fledglings.

New Zealand dotterel. These birds are off to a great start this season. There should be nine chicks on the park at the moment. As the parents keep tiny chicks well hidden we have to wait and see how many juveniles suddenly appear ready to fledge to do the final count.

Pateke. Sighted on 29 Oct. two adults and ten juveniles just 75 meters from where last season on 26 Nov. 2014 two adult with nine juveniles were photographed. The adults centre and back right with very erect tail feathers. Possibly the same adult pair as last season have learnt to keep their ducklings fed at night and under cover until they are ready to fledge. Alison Stanes

Pigsties at Tawharanui

Have you ever wondered about those posts out behind the workshop on the way to Mangatawhiri Wetland?

Well, Colin Wards, the farm operator at Tawharanui for 30 years can tell you.

They were pigsties. For many years the rangers kept pigs. They fattened the pigs up with scraps and then they butchered them and there was good country tucker on the dining table. Colin says "the campers loved coming up with their scraps and feeding the pigs. It was part of the farm experience."

Alison Stanes



Fence Team

Thank you to all fence team members for your dedication in checking the fence every week. Please remember to let all the team know when you checked the fence and pass on anything of note. Also make a note of your volunteer hours in the park on the clipboard in the vole hole.

On behalf of the Fence Team a big thank you to the Workday in the Park volunteers who have carried out maintenance on the fence. Jenni McGlashan

Camp Ground hosts wanted

This is a great way to give back to the park. Motor home parking or tent camping is provided in the camp ground for people who host in return for welcoming campers and being eyes and ears in the Camp Ground. Rangers can be contacted if there are any issues.

Camp Ground hosts are required from now till Christmas and then from February till April. Unfortunately the main Christmas season is already occupied.

Contact Sue Hill 09 426 1200 or email sue.hill@arc.govt.nz

Keeping our threatened species safe

Fence Monitors Wanted

The fence monitoring team would love to hear from anyone interested in joining the fence checking team. We work in teams of two, one walking each side the length of the fence, a distance of approximately 6 kms. The purpose is to check the integrity of the fence for the safekeeping of our endangered introduced birds. Full training is offered and initially new volunteers will be on standby to fill in for teams unable to do their turn. Teams are on an 11 week roster and have a week, Wednesday to Wednesday to complete the fence check and to enjoy a walk in the park. For more information

Contact: Jenni McGlashan 09 422 3733

Trapline Volunteers Needed

Trapline volunteers help maintain the network of traps and bait stations throughout the park. They serve a crucial role in detecting and eliminating pest predators that have somehow managed to get into the sanctuary. Volunteers adopt a line which they usually service once a month. You can do this alone or with a friend to help share the load. The lines vary in length and difficulty: some are physically demanding, others are literally a walk in the park! If you are interested please contact:

James Ross jamesross@paradise.net.nz.
Full training and advice will be provided.

Stuck for Christmas gifts?
Consider giving
a TOSSI membership as a gift.

'TOSSI the first Ten Years'

is an excellent historical soft covered book recording the Tawharanui Story. Cost \$30. Another idea for a Christmas gift. Purchase from the author Maggie Cornish magsandray@gmail.com

Help TOSSI by making a gift

The gifting of funds to TOSSI in your will is something you might like to consider. In our family, we only get to charity in the, "What if we are all dead?" option. It is easy to be a bit less dramatic and include a cash bequest to TOSSI, because the Tawharanui Open Sanctuary is a place that has been very special to you or a loved one. If you would like some advice on how to effect such gifting, Contact: David Stone, TOSSI, 09 422 9415. Davidandjill@ihug.co.nz

TOSSI Committee

Chair	Ngaire Wallen	09 627 1526
Vice Chair	Alison Stanes	09 524 0291
Secretary	James Ross	09 422 6760
Treasurer	Karyn Hoksbergen	09 5851315

Committee	Ray Blackburn	09 425 4995
	David Stone	09 422 9415
	Sally Richardson	09 425 0161
	Roger Grove	09 422 3459

Newsletter Editor Alison Stanes 09 524 0291

Membership Secretary Janet Barruel

E letter Janet Barruel 09 425 9852

Email: secretary@tossi.org.nz

Website: www.TOSSI.org.nz

Correspondence: Chair or Membership Secretary
P.O Box 112 Matakana 0948

Application form for NEW MEMBERS Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Soc. Inc.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone No. _____

E-Mail _____

Occupation _____

Please tick how you would like to help:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planting/workdays | <input type="checkbox"/> Bird Counts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fund raising | <input type="checkbox"/> Administration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Pests | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Predator fence monitoring | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental educational | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity/promotion | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Membership fee:

\$20 single membership \$ _____

\$30 Family membership \$ _____

Additional contribution (optional) \$ _____

Donations over \$5 are tax deductible

Gift Membership:

Please send membership to

Name: _____

Address: _____

Amount of Gift membership(as above)\$ _____

Total amount enclosed \$ _____

Please make cheques payable to Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Society Inc. and return the completed form to:

TOSSI Membership Secretary
P.O.Box 112 Matakana 0948

New Zealand dotterel

New Zealand dotterel have evolved over millions of years keeping their eggs and chicks hidden from avian predators. They were unprepared for mammalian predators that sniff them out. Black-backed gulls are more of a problem than in ancient times as they have thrived on human garbage and are more abundant. Dotterel have to be vigilant, warning their chicks of danger and telling them to freeze. In the photos see how well camouflaged the nests and chicks have been this season.



A well hidden nest of three eggs at Bluebell Point.



Two chicks and an egg that did not hatch Jones Bay.



Three chicks in a nest in the dune at Ocean Beach.



A lone chick at the west end of Ocean Beach.



A chick amongst the stones at Jones Bay.



A chick amongst the vegetation on Jones Bay.

We acknowledge with grateful thanks Warkworth Printing Ltd. for their assistance with the printing of this newsletter.
Warkworth Printing Phone: 09 425 7188. Email: sales@warkworthprinting.co.nz