



TAWHARANUI OPEN SANCTUARY SOCIETY INC.
Newsletter No. 46 September 2013



Australasian Shoveller, male and female, can be identified by the enormous shovel shaped bill and short yellow legs. The handsome male displays a glorious range of natural colours. Shoveller are visiting the safe sanctuary of Tawharanui lagoon, in increasing numbers, during duck hunting season. They arrive in May and leave by September.



Fantails have been observed feeding alongside whiteheads and saddleback at Tawharanui. Recently one was sighted feeding immediately under a saddleback waiting for titbits. Watch out for this behaviour when visiting Ecology bush.

Reminder

To those who have forgotten to pay their membership, please use the details from the back page, or pay on line 060483-0072390-00 Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Soc. Inc.

Coming Events Sunday in the Park

Sunday 6 October, Sunday 3 November, Sunday 1 December.

Range of jobs to choose from. Wear suitable clothing and bring a drink and snack.

Meet at the woolshed 9.15 am. BBQ lunch provided followed by lectures by researchers.

Open Sanctuary Coordinator Update



Spring again! Robins reintroduced to Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary in 2007 are one of the many heralds of spring on the park and also provide a salutary lesson in the ecological restoration of the site. We all get very excited about the reintroduction or release of a new missing species to the sanctuary, but they must then establish, multiply and persist to be considered truly successful. With just 9 pair established following translocation in 2007, 25 chicks were fledged. Many young dispersed as they are hard wired to do. Resident pair slowly crept upward and we now seem to be entering a period where a critical mass of robins resides on park which helps anchor dispersing young. With 17 pair on site last season and at least 25 pair on park this season and still some territory to survey we seem to be approaching a point where they seem settled in for the long term. Over this period at least 293 young have fledged, with the first of this years crop already hatched.

At each TOSSI AGM (this year on September 1st) I present a report covering achievements of the past year.

Some key highlights are shared below.

Park visitor experience has been enhanced through: pest proof pedestrian gate upgrade; completion of the Mangatawhiri track; construction of a bird viewing hide; interpretation material installed along the Ecology Trail; upgrade of the bush section of the Ecology Trail; and further displays installed in the Sanctuary Hut. Animal pests have been managed by maintaining the pest proof fence and regular pest surveillance work, including buffer control. Pest incursions have been pleasingly low.

Volunteer, staff and contractor weeding has seen significant gains with apple of sodom nearly absent in the dunes, periwinkle at Bluebell point reducing and other species such as moth plant, woolly nightshade and climbing asparagus being contained and reduced. Roped abseil contractors and helicopters have targeted otherwise inaccessible boneseed and pampas along the cliffs, supporting adjacent ground control efforts.

Native plant restoration efforts centre on the 20,000 top quality native plants grown and planted by volunteers. Rare native species such as milk tree and Kirks tree daisy are protected. Reintroduction of green mistletoe and kumerahou show encouraging success.

Native fauna continues to benefit with many of the resident species further consolidating. Not a flash year for NZ dotterel but we like to play the long game and average productivity remains positive. Reintroduced species such as robin, whitehead, kakariki, pateke and kiwi continue to establish with encouraging increases observed for all. Our newest reintroduction, tieke, have had a good first year with at east 45 adults resident and 35 young born on site last season. We're currently progressing several other reintroduction proposals, including invertebrates, fish and the whitehead brood parasite – long tailed cuckoo. Our self reintroduced seabirds continue to prosper with more occupied burrows observed and a first mainland breeding record for the common diving petrel.

Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary continues to attract research students who appreciate an accessible pest free environment. Research undertaken covers many fields including: sensory ecology of petrels; below ground soil processes affecting revegetation; bird dispersal of seeds; gecko habitat use and monitoring techniques; landscape movements of kaka and kereru; bird pathogen burdens; urban v non-urban tui and fantail ecology and vocalisation; introduced snail herbivory of native flora; skink colouration and predation impact; and social ecology of pukeko. Phew!

Underpinning this is a strong and positive relationship between TOSSI, Auckland Council, local iwi, Department of Conservation and of course TOSSI members and sanctuary supporters. Well done to all!

Kind regards, Matt Maitland I can be contacted at matt.maitland@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Chair's Report September 2013



Another successful planting season at Tawharanui has been completed and we can look back at the season with some satisfaction. Over 20 000, TOSSI grown, plants have been planted. The first 2 ha of the M 16 area was planted over the four public planting days with additional infill planting at Anchor Bay and the South Coast and riparian planting in Hay paddock and at the lagoon being completed by smaller groups. For a relatively small group we can be well pleased with this achievement. Next year we will continue with the M 16 planting which will require a further three years planting to complete. We were fortunate to have had such good weather on the public planting days but the completion of the planting still required significant effort from a number of individuals and groups. The cooperation of these groups is one of the most pleasing aspect of the endeavors.

Approximately 500 volunteers attended the four public planting days which is evidence of widespread public support for the project at

Tawharanui. It seems that our public planting days have become ingrained in the community's events calendar. Most attending these plantings appear to enjoy the day and appreciate that the plantings are well organized and of course are followed by a generous lunch.

The planting days themselves however are only the end of a process involving seed collection, weeks of nursery work followed by the placement of the plants produced. The nursery group is central to our planting and provides around 2500 hours of volunteer time. Some of this group also help with the transport and lay out of plants. In this task we are helped by ranger staff and, this year, Conservation NZ Volunteers. TOSSI would not be able to complete this task without the help that these two groups provide.

Again I would like to thank all members and others who have helped with this year's planting programme. Special thanks also needs to go to the Ministry of Environment whose grant is covering the cost of our planting programme for a period of three years. Earlier this year they surveyed our efforts and were impressed by the scope and success of our plantings.

The nursery group has already begun the work of producing another 20 000 plants for next year's planting. There is always a warm welcome for new members and anyone wishing to join can enquire through our website, www.tossi.org.nz or by email secretary@tossi.org.nz or by ringing Paul Williams, 09 425 9877.

A big thank you to retiring committee members, Sue Crawshay and Steve Harrison for your time and energy. Welcome to a new committee member Doreen Guest. Steve Palmer

New Committee Member



I was born and raised in Berlin, Germany. In Germany I studied Master of Science in Horticultural Science while working in a phytomedicine research institute and an environmental analytic laboratory. In 2005 I came to New Zealand for 5 Months to do an internship on an organic blueberry orchard. I went back to Germany to complete my study with an A. In January 2006 I moved to New Zealand and live in Omaha. I have now two awesome children (Danielle 6 years old and Louis 5 years old) and a lovely Kiwi husband. I have always been passionate about Nature and I love the New Zealand landscape very much. In May this year I finished my Environmental management study with an A+. I learned a lot about New Zealand's nature and conservation. In 2012 I found out about the yearly planting at Tawharanui and I took my kids along with me. We had lots of fun digging and planting and my kids had also had lots of fun collecting all the planter bags. Every time we hear about planting days we are very keen on joining the activity. We are really enjoying it and of course the yummy lunch afterwards. So far we always had great weather and spend the rest of the day on the beach. Apart from playing with my kids on the beach I also love hiking and other outdoor activities and always enjoy walking around the Tawharanui Park.

Now I am really keen on enriching the TOSSI committee team with my knowledge, experience in environmental science and my enthusiasm and ideas. I am very much looking forward to helping to protect and improve the Tawharanui environment to secure a suitable habitat for indigenous species and to broaden my experience and skills. Doreen Guest

Nursery volunteers go visiting

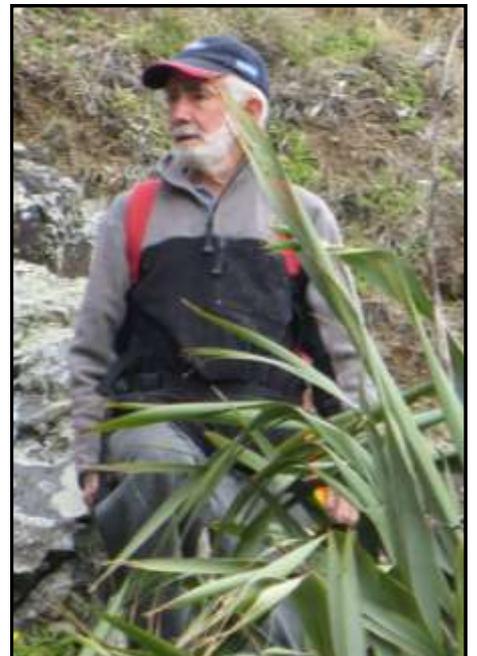


Tawharanui nursery volunteers went to a plant propagation training day run by the NZ Conservation Network at the Auckland Council Botanical Gardens at Manukau. They have also had a splendid visit to Penny and Steve Palmers to share native seed germinating information.



Mid week volunteers

Mid week volunteers are proving to be very popular. Teams have been out working on the Ecology Track upgrade and weed removal. Naturally the pleasures of the park are enjoyed by the volunteers. The track workers said saddlebacks cheered them on as they worked. A team of volunteers removing bone seed stopped work to watch a playful pod of ten common dolphins and later seven fur seals that seem to be establishing themselves on a rock at Tokatu Point. The work days are random and no commitment is made until you phone the leader for the day to say you are coming. Bring picnic lunch and drinks to have at the work site. If you would like to have your name on the mid week volunteer email list please contact Ray Blackburn Phone 09 425 4995 or email magsandray@gmail.com



Keith Edwards, Sharon Kast and Roger Williams taking time out at mid week volunteer work days.

Seabirds at Tawharanui - Grey-faced Petrels and Diving Petrels

There have been three confirmed grey-faced petrel nests with eggs at Ngaio Bay; one has been abandoned but the other two eggs will be close to hatching. A further grey-faced petrel (GFP) nest looks to be active at Ngaio Bay. There is one natural GFP burrow at Marine Triangle Tokatu Point but it is on a steep cliff and difficult to check.

Last year's diving petrel pair are again in residence at the Marine Triangle and it appears that there may be other nests further down the slope. Diving petrels (DP) have also been seen landing at Elephant Point and it is likely that there is at least one pair nesting there.

Fluttering Shearwaters have also been heard flying past at both the Marine Triangle and Elephant Point.

Good numbers of GFPs have been banded over the winter. Remote cameras have been recording excellent numbers of GFP at the Ngaio Bay speaker site and also some GFP at the Marine Triangle.

GFPs have been found in nest boxes at both the Ngaio Bay speaker site and Ngaio Bay. Two pairs are showing strong interest in these well-made nest box and hopefully will be back next year to lay an egg and raise a chick. (Yeah!) The photo here shows two birds in one of the nest boxes. Very snug! A further 15 nest boxes have been constructed for fluttering shearwater and diving petrel. These will soon be installed at Tokatu Point. James Ross



Two grey faced petrel in a nesting box at Tokatu Point. Photographed by Megan Friesen.

Seals at Tokatu Point.

I had never seen an NZ seal there. This September at the Point, just below the prostrate manuka, we saw three seals. Two were in the water, and disappeared before I was able to take photos. Bryan Halliwell

Thank you Bryan for drawing attention to the seals. As a result we have been watching and I was among the mid week volunteers who observed seven at the same site below the prostrate manuka on Tokatu Point. If any members see interesting activity on the park please feel free to drop me a note and photos to alison.purple@xtra.co.nz. Alison Stanes Editor

Queens Birthday weekend planting



Two days prior to the weekend plants leave the nursery and are delivered to the planting site known as M16.



The tractor, quads, mules and trailers all swing into action for two days of shifting nearly 10,000 plants.



Oops this was not in the plan!



The clean up clean up afterwards.



Volunteer planters in action.



Long term TOSSI volunteers Rhys and Shelia Thompson out planting trees at M16.



Nursery volunteers Jenny and Jim McGlasham with family celebrate Jenny's birthday by planting trees.



Ranger Hamish Blampied on site with his family.



Sanctuary coordinator Matt Maitland and family help.



More volunteers in action.

Anthropomorphism?

Bird researchers and monitors are informed not to get emotionally attached to their subjects or give them names. One must not practise anthropomorphism. That is treating them as though they have human feelings. This is a very big ask when monitoring NZ dotterels as they have characters and personalities of their own and a life span of up to twenty two years. Even Dr. John Dowding, who has researched NZ dotterels since 1987, after the demise of a bird was heard to say, "I know we are not to get attached to the dotterels, but I quite liked Ym-YK." John Dowding can remember the very day he finally caught this devious bird and put colour bands Yellow, metal – Yellow Black, on its legs. (The metal band have an individual ID number on it.)

I liked Ym-YK too. Ym-YK is referred to as Yum Yuk and m-WKY is referred to as Wacky. Is using the first letter of the colour band combinations classified as giving the birds a name?

John Dowding tells the story of Ym-YK and m-WKY. "Ym-YK was banded as a juvenile at Phoenix Reef on 22 March 1999. His parents were a long-standing Tawharanui pair (m-OGO and m-BOR) who nested at Anchor Bay that season. The whole family was feeding together on Phoenix Reef when Ym-YK was caught and banded. Ym-YK spent most of his first year at Omaha Spit, then during the winter of 2000 he began to look for a territory. He was seen in early August at Waiwera, and later in the month at Jones Bay, Tawharanui. In Dec 2000, at 2 years old he was found paired with m-WRO and defending a nest at the west end of Ocean Beach. They were a pair again in Nov 2001, but then divorced, with m-WRO moving to Omaha. By Nov 2002, he was paired with m-WGO, an adult female from Beehive Island. They too divorced after one year together, with m-WGO returning to Beehive, and Ym-YK remaining at West End.

By Nov 2003, he had a new un banded mate, who was caught and banded m-WKY. Ym-YK and m-WKY were excellent parents and fledged numerous chicks. They worked well as a team deviously hiding nests and chicks. They happily used West End at Tawharanui as their nest territory for four years until, one dark night in mid-November 2007 when they nested just outside the Pest Proof Fence..."

Ym-YK disappeared from the nest most likely taken by a feral cat.

Dotterel monitors expecting to see chicks that day were devastated. It was the first time they experienced a nest loss. Not only overnight had m-WKY lost her partner, but she had to abandon her three egg nest, as she could not manage it on her own. For the rest of the season NZ dotterel monitors saw her wander aimlessly, lost, shocked, and most likely grieving. Now how could we describe that behaviour without using human emotions? m-WKY ended the season by attaching herself to another younger pair with two chicks. m-WKY protected those chicks as though they were her own. Maybe she became a Great Aunt, whatever, it was an excellent way of healing while mourning the sudden loss of a close partnership.

m-WKY now lives mainly at Omaha but occasionally she revisits her old haunts at Tawharanui. She returned for a brief visit in December 2012. Talking to the birds lets them know you are not predators who sneak up silently, so the one way conversation goes a bit like this. "Hello Wacky, how nice to see you?" She is not just any old bird but instead a personality I have known. Memories flood back of seeing her happily rearing chicks on Ocean Beach with Ym-YK. I continue, "how's life with you? Yes I know we humans brought those dam cats to New Zealand. I am sorry. Marie one of the monitors at Omaha said she had seen you lately and she thought you had a new partner, how is that working out? Happy New Year," and she trots off up the beach still alone after five years, randomly pecking at things I can't see. How can I not be emotionally attached? I have seen this bird in all stages of family life, I have known her since 2006.

In April this year I visited Omaha to check out the new pest proof fence offering protection to the many birds that visit the sand spit. Naturally I walked on to see the birds. Surprise..the very first bird to appear in my binoculars was m-WKY. So I chatted to her. "Hello Wacky. How are you? What a surprise? You look well even though you still appear to be on your own." Sadly I still feel that tinge of bitter disappointment that she and I once shared when Ym-Yk disappeared in 1997. It's like seeing an old friend. How can I not be a little emotionally attached?

Six adult NZ dotterel have disappeared off nests at night from an area just outside the pest proof fence but inside the Tawharanui Park boundary. One disappeared off a nest inside the Pest Proof Fence, all most likely to feral cats. Colour bands on the NZ dotterels enable us to understand the issues at the West End of the pest proof fence.

James Audubon was the first naturalist to recognise the value of identifying and recognising individual birds. In the early 19th Century he tied silver threads to fly-catchers. Scientists now use a range of bands, tags, clips and radio transmitters to track individuals in order to study their behaviour, diets and territories, collecting data about various a species. For volunteer monitors colour bands give an opportunity to recognise the characters and see the dramas, threats, relationships, battles and courting that go on in individual lives. It is a big ask not to practice anthropomorphism. Alison Stanes



Photo John Dowding



Photos Alison Stanes

June 2007 m-WKY (for metal) known as Wacky and Ym-YK known as Yum-Yak before Ym-YK disappeared from a nest, just outside the Pest Proof Fence at Tawharanui, most likely to a feral cat.

November 2008 m-WKY spends time at Omaha in search of a new partner.



December 2012 m-WKY visits her old territory at Tawharanui alone.



April 2013 m-WKY alone at Omaha where she now lives.



April 2013 m-WKY resting at Omaha



Photo Marie Ward

June 2013 m-WKY in breeding plumage at Omaha.

Bird news

Spring is well underway and the birds at Tawharanui are busy into their nesting season.

Most NZ dotterel pairs are back on site and one nest is due to hatch early in October while another nest is started and has two eggs. We look forward to a good season for the dotterel as the sand dune cliff on Ocean Beach has at last regained a natural gentle slope. This will provide less updraft for black backed gulls to soar over nest sites as well as giving access for the chicks back into the safety of the dune grass cover.

Pateke are well into their breeding season with three broods observed making a total of twelve ducklings so far this season. Alison Stanes

South Coast Trap Line.

I've checked the tides and the weather looks perfect. I drop the kids at the school bus, grab some bait and I'm out there. As I head to my first spot Kawau Bay is a sheet of steel-grey in the early morning light.

For the next three hours I methodically work my way along the coast. I've been doing this about once a month for eight years and the routine is fairly fixed and the pace steady. Occasionally I will approach a spot with some anticipation, 'I got one here a little while ago'.

There is always plenty of time to look around and see what else is moving. The Hauraki Gulf still has the ability to amaze me with its treasures. I've seen New Zealand Fur-seals, kingfish ripping through bait in the shallows, dolphins, billiard-table sized stingray and, twice now, Orca. Birdsong rings from the forest edge. Each year it becomes louder and more diverse. Now I hear Saddleback as they raucously proclaim their territory.

I finish my sweep and, satisfied with my efforts, head back. Moe the Ranger greets me cheerfully, "How'd you go?" "Nothing in the traps. Another good day." James Ross

Drain line B Trap Line

Drain line B starts at the troll bridge takes me through Ecology Bush and out to Maori Bay. I have been checking this line once a month for around for years. I do the trap line with Ngaire Wallen and the two of us have a great time chatting, righting the ills of the world and catching up on the exploits of our children. The walk takes about three hours depending on whether we are changing all the eggs or not. We have 33 stations, either traps or bait stations to service. We change the eggs monthly over the warmer months and two monthly over the cooler months and the bait is replenished every month. We are fortunate that our walk takes us all through ecology bush and we have robins hopping around on tree branches and occasionally hopping down to the ground we have disturbed for potential food. We pass the pateke and can ooh and aah over the new ducklings and we now have the joy of the rowdy saddlebacks' making their presence known. We stop off at the ecology bush bridge and peer in the water for eels and kura .

Our trap line is unremarkable in that we usually catch nothing apart from two exceptions in all those years, - two rabbits, so those two occasions caused great excitement. Our reward is that our traps and bait stations are maintained and ready for any potential invading species because ecology bush area is such an important area for our introduced birds.

One of our traps is in a grove of nikau and one day nikau berries were raining down to the extent that I thought someone was throwing them at me, I looked up and a kaka was busy ripping the berries off above me. Usually they are raucously flying overhead so I was fortunate to get a close up view of this bird.

At the end of the trap line at Maori Bay we sit down have lunch and admire the wonderful view out to Kawau Island and listen to the tui and bellbird singing and darting about in the pohutakawa and flax on the cliff. We start our trek back and if we are lucky we will hear the chattering of the kakariki

At the end of our trap line we have had a good long walk seen some beautiful scenery, seen and heard some exceptional birds and have the satisfaction of contributing to the open sanctuary. Sue Crawshay

If you are interested in taking on a trap line contact -James Ross 09 4226760 jamesross@paradise.net.nz or Maurice Pucket 09 4227711 Maurice.Pucket@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Getting it right.

When preparing the information for the Bird Hide it was decided that photos should be used to help New Zealanders and overseas visitors identify the birds. A list of fifteen wetland, wader and sea birds was drawn up. Today I stopped by the hide. As I approached two goldfinch were resting on the roof edge, while a fantail shot right through going in one viewing window and out another and three welcome swallows swooped around nearby. Were these birds on the list to be viewed from the hide? NO! Alison Stanes



A family of pateke with six good sized ducklings seen behind the pump shed on 15 September. Pateke breed from June to November. They nest in a bowl of grass under dense vegetation. The male guards the territory while the female incubates for thirty days. The fledging period is fifty to fifty five days. These ducklings are lucky to have the protection of Tawharanui although eels and pukeko can be a threat.

Wanted – Camp hosts

Camp hosting – what is it? You become the eyes and ears of the ranger, while you stay in the campground. You meet and greet incoming campers and you keep in close touch with rangers so that any issues are reported promptly and dealt with by staff. In exchange, you camp for free. We have some long-standing camp hosts who help us over the peak summer months – but we need **more help over our “shoulder seasons”** – end of October until Christmas, then February until Easter. Can you help? Call Sue Hill for more information. 09 426 1200

TOSSI Committee

Chair	Steve Palmer	09 422 6441
Vice Chair	James Ross	09 422 6760
Secretary	David Stone	09 528 5712
Treasurer	Ngairé Wallen	09 627 1526
Editor	Alison Stanes	09 524 0291
	Doreen Guest	09 422 7974
	Patte Williams	09 425 9127
	Ray Blackburn	09 425 4995

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

Email secretary@tossi.org.nz
Website: www.TOSSI.org.nz

Application form for NEW MEMBERS Tawharanui Open Sanctuary

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone No. _____

E-Mail _____

Occupation _____

How did you hear about TOSSI?

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"/> Art in the Woolshed | |
| <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

Thank you to our sponsors

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From the new bird watching hide on the edge of the lagoon.

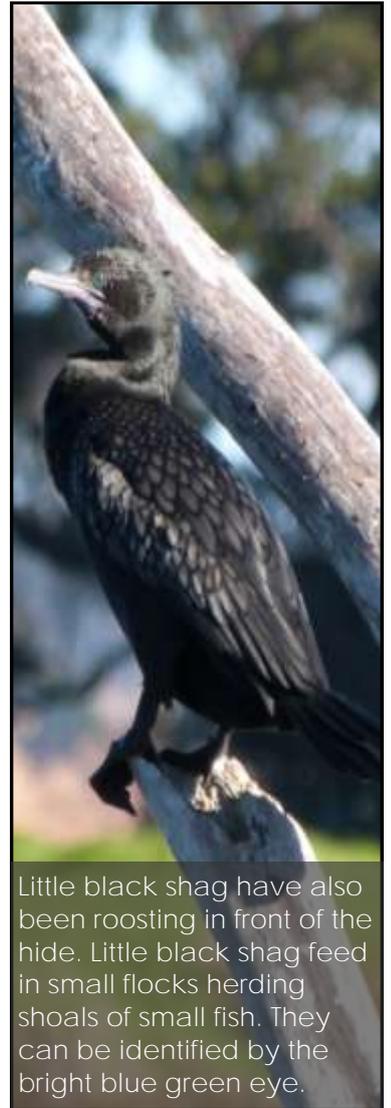
From the 1870's until 1967, shingle was extracted from Jones Bay and the Mangatawhiri Stream mouth. Most of the shingle was barged to Auckland. In the late 50's some of it was used to construct the piles for the Auckland Harbour Bridge. A deep water lagoon was formed by the quarrying. The lagoon is open to the sea although the entrance sometimes closes and the water level rises attracting more birds. Some birds are resident here, while others visit seasonally to feed and roost. The new bird watching hide enables close encounters with these birds.



A pied shag beside pateke viewed from the hide.



A little shag roosting in front of bird watching hide. Little shag generally feed and roost alone. Little shag are considerably smaller than the pied shag and have a short yellow bill.



Little black shag have also been roosting in front of the hide. Little black shag feed in small flocks herding shoals of small fish. They can be identified by the bright blue green eye.



Nine pateke, one mallard (middle back) and one shoveller (front right) resting close to the bird watching hide.



Colourful male Australasian shoveller roost with the more neutral coloured female plus one caspian tern.