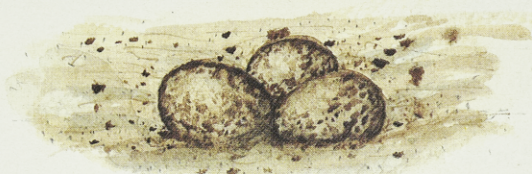




Banded dotterel



New Zealand dotterel eggs



New Zealand dotterel



*A two-week-old New Zealand dotterel taking its first shaky steps into the world. Thanks to our warden project the future of this and other dotterels is looking up. Photo: Brian Chudleigh*



Godwit

Probably more important than the achievement of a small number of fledglings has been the education and response of the community. Our volunteer "minders" have no powers to order people to respect the flimsily fenced sanctuary. We relied solely on public goodwill, and scarcely ever met opposition, nor was the sanctuary abused. Although the Ohope Spit has long been a Wildlife Reserve where dogs are forbidden, it used to be a popular place to walk the dog. In the early days of the project our requests not to take dogs along the spit surprised many people and annoyed a few. Now people seem to accept the restriction. Similarly the only occasion when the sanctuary was breached by a dune buggy happened within a day of the fence being erected. Since then no dune buggies, dogs or people have deliberately strayed into the protected area.

Instead hundreds of people have taken our leaflet and peered over the fence to see birds of whose existence most people were previously unaware. Their enthusiasm markedly increased after they had walked around the fence.

This public goodwill has to be fostered by communication and this is where newspaper publicity, our information sheet, signposts and personal contact were so important.

It is not all plain sailing yet. Many natural and man-made hazards still threaten the breeding birds.

Stoats infest the Ohope Spit and must be killing many chicks, so constant trapping is required.

Even the best "minded" project cannot always be on duty, and at Wharekawa Spit six dotterel chicks were killed by marauding dogs on a single night. The Wharekawa Reserve



White-fronted tern