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The existence in New Zealand of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society is, along with that of many other similar organisations elsewhere around the world, a tribute to the importance of birds, both as conservation catalysts and as objects of interest and concern in their own right. The International Council for Bird Preservation recognises this, and uses birds as flagships for conservation programmes which often have implications much wider than just for the particular species involved.

### Why the attraction?

Birds are easy to see. Is it any wonder that harpacticoid copepods, slime moulds or nematode worms have few devotees, despite the fact that there are far more species of them than there are of birds? Because they are easy to see, birds are easy to appreciate, and as a result can also tell us a lot about the state of the world around us.

*The shore plover, one of those special New Zealand species, now only found on Rangitira Island in the Chathams.*

