



THE ISAAC CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE TRUST

A study in conservation

Issue #22 Summer 2020

CONSERVATION

NEWS

Prodigious Shore Plover.

Beginning the season with just 2 established breeding pairs, hopes weren't high for a productive breeding season for this critically endangered shorebird here at the ICWT. Traditionally after flock-mating and forming new pairs, Shore Plover can take some time to get into the swing of things and will quite often only produce 1 or 2 clutches in their first season together.

However, after quickly establishing 2 new pairs in the spring, staff were pleasantly surprised that both new pairs, named Jamie and Jacky and Malcolm and Sally, began nesting earlier than expected. Both pairs went on to produce 3 clutches of eggs

over the course of the season. These clutches combined with those produced by our 2 proven and reliable pairs, led to a record number of chicks hatched over a season here at our facility.

As a bonus, 2 'leftover' birds from flock mating were force paired together and late in the season have hatched a single chick that they are currently raising.

As an extra bonus, our most reliable pair Henry and Emie, have laid a very late 4th clutch of eggs which have just hatched recently. This is quite unusual as Shore Plover typically begin their post-breeding moult after

producing a 3rd clutch in captivity.

From 41 eggs produced this season, 37 chicks successfully hatched which is a great outcome for everyone involved. The first cohort of 18 birds was recently released onto Mana Island off the Kapiti Coast with a second release to follow in late March. This is the first year of releasing onto Mana Island since 2013, with the aim to establish a self-sustaining 'insurance' population to help secure the future of this species, alongside the previous release site on Waikawa Island together with the remaining wild population located on the Chatham Islands.



Juvenile NZ Shore Plover

Adult Female NZ Shore Plover



Wildlife



Landscape



Heritage Village



Isaac Walkways



Maintenance



News in brief

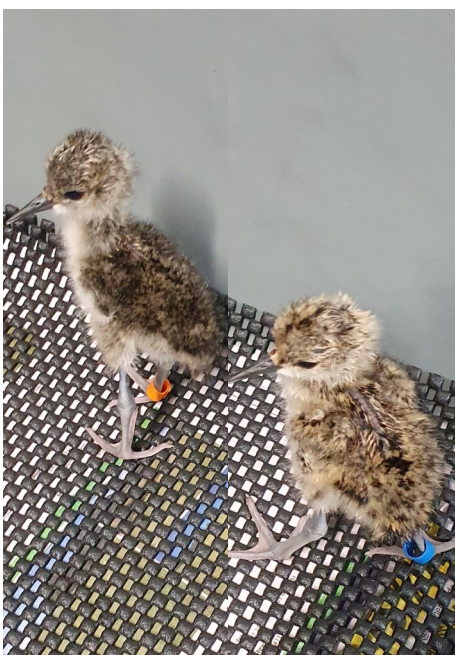


Black Stilt—Kākī

Our 2 pairs of Black Stilt did extremely well this season producing 4 clutches of eggs each. 1 of the pairs, Tekapo and Tasman, re-laid their clutches in a record of 6-7 days (usually 9-10 at best!) between each clutch. This pair laid nothing last year, so they are now redeeming themselves, although their choice of nest location for their first clutch was a bit dodgy, right behind the aviary door!

Generally though, it was a pretty slow start to the breeding season and the wild eggs collected were down in numbers compared to last season. Twizel are still hoping to raise 120 to 130 chicks and although survival rate is not great, releasing this many birds is still significantly increasing the wild population.

We have received 30 juveniles from Twizel that we will hold over the winter.



Wildlife News

Orange Fronted Parakeet—Kākāriki

We have had an unusual and distressing season with the Orange Fronted Parakeets this year. The season started very late plus a number of pairs inexplicably abandoned their nests part way through incubation which has not happened before, at a loss of 4 nests.

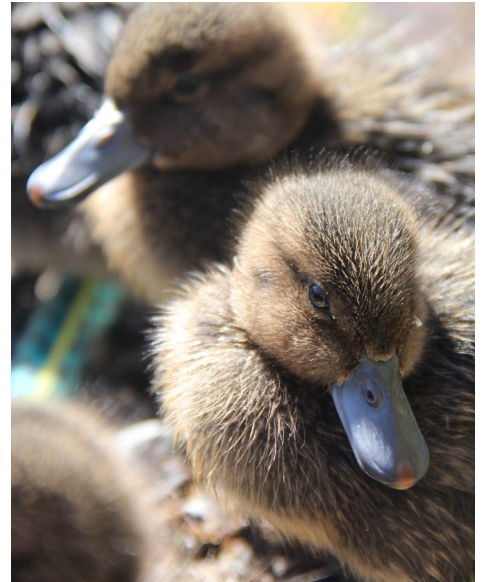
Although we had wild birds available for pairing this season, only 1 of the 3 new pairs, Pollen and Blossom, produced chicks and they are currently laying their 2nd clutch now.



We do have 15 juveniles ready for release later in March and more chicks on the way in 2nd clutches now.

Tom & Minnie, who have not bred since 2018, were swapped with a barren pair at Orana Wildlife Park and yes, both pairs have now bred in their respective new homes and now have chicks.

Amazing what a little bit of manipulation can do for some birds!



Brown Teal—Pāteke

Once again, our Brown Teal have had a very productive breeding season.

Last December, 50 birds were released into Abel Tasman National Park, and in early February 47 birds were released into the Arthur Valley in Fiordland.

Unfortunately, due to excessive flooding at the time, the release was delayed for a week until water levels had dropped back to acceptable levels for the helicopter to land at the release site. We have a number of juvenile birds that will be released in May.

Our pairs are currently going through their end of season moult with a well earned break before the next season starts which is usually June or July. This is much earlier than most other species.

During this period, all breeding pairs will be given a health check up to ensure they are fit and well heading into the new season.

“The sustainable conservation of our environment for perpetuity.”



Heritage News

Built in 1878 and originally located in Milton Street, Sydenham, this cottage is an authentic example of an 1870's working class family home.

We have just finished a repaint of the exterior, which serves not only to beautify the cottage, but to place a protective coating over the weather-boards to preserve for the future.

Originally all the timber weatherboards would be cut/processed by steam powered circular saws and the circular cuts can still be seen on many boards at the back of the house.

This cottage was originally constructed with no insulation, electricity or running water - life was certainly much tougher then than now!

A previous resident can recall that a hot water tap was installed in the wash house at the bottom of the garden in 1956, easily enabling the family to bath once a week.

Families were much bigger in size in these smaller homes, so often the living room would be converted to a bedroom to cope with the large number of children being raised.

This left only the kitchen, with space just for a table, as the communal area. Soft furnishings were a luxury denied by lack of space and money.

Vegetables and fruit were grown with any excess sold locally to supplement the family income. Hens and ducks were kept to supply daily eggs which was an important source of protein.



“To fulfil the legacy of Sir Neil and Diana, Lady Isaac.”



Isaac Walkways

ICWT hosted the members of the Styx Mill Men's Breakfast Club, who certainly enjoyed walking off their hearty breakfast on the Isaac Loop Track, along the banks of the Ōtukaikino Waterway, accessed from Clearwater Resort.

Some shoring up of the ramp up to the bridge providing access to the Isaac Loop Track was made recently, plus this bridge has just been re-stained, so do enjoy a stroll in the natural environment. Parking can be located within the gravel carpark at Clearwater Resort, then follow the adjacent waterway westwards upstream.



Landscape News

Sudden bough break is a phenomenon that typically occurs during the summer and affects completely healthy trees. Hence we undertake regular inspections and maintenance by qualified arborists to mitigate against this risk.

Willows are more susceptible, so we have a policy of replacing willows with native plants, slowly over time.

Summer bough break is essentially when trees suddenly lose their branches during the warmer months of the year. Here are some facts to know about this problem:

Wind and storms have nothing to do with the branches falling – it happens on calm days - making this a serious safety issue.

No exact cause for this syndrome has been determined by professionals at this point. Some experts believe it's caused by moisture, others believe it may be from bacteria.

Avoid close proximity to trees during high winds and always be on guard even on still days, particularly around willows.

Reducing the fire risk has been our focus over the hot summer, plus irrigating the new native plantings as younger plants are more susceptible to drought.

The Isaac Family Day on March 22nd 2020 is a way for the Trust to showcase the beautiful grounds known as Peacock Springs, which are in large, rehabilitated quarry. Due to the sensitivity of the birds within captive breeding programme, access to the Peacock Springs is a rare treat for visitors. Watch out for photos in our following newsletter, as not yet available at the time of print. Our landscaping and wildlife staff take great pride in their work and are the unsung heroes of the Trust, as unlike our maintenance team, their work continues mostly unseen.

Predator Control for Spring and Summer; Feral cats 5, Stoat 3, Hedgehog 7, Rabbits 192, Hares 114, Pidgeon 62

“A Study In Conservation”



Wildlife Cont.



Maintenance

Blue Duck—Whio

Previously at Peacock Springs we held only North Island Blue Duck for captive breeding and received the wild South Island eggs for hand rearing and release. However, due to the South Island Blue Duck not flourishing like their counterparts in the North, all North Island pairs were relocated to North Island institutions and we flock mated South Island ducks from the wild eggs and now hold the pairs year round for captive breeding.

We have noticed the difference in the 2 sub species, not only are the South Island birds larger thus heavier in weight and lighter in colour than the North Island birds, but also they take a longer time before they will breed. We have had North Island Blue Ducks breeding in their 1st season at only 9 months old, compared to South Island birds who wait until their 2nd season. Environmental/habitat conditions are significantly harsher in the south, so we surmise the difference in nesting age and bird size is a consequence.

Therefore, we had only 2 older Motueka pairs breed this season and will have to wait until October this year to see if our young Karamea pairs start to lay eggs.



Our maintenance department remains focused on the Wildlife Division with two important projects that will help to expand and improve our existing aviary facilities for Orange Fronted Kākāriki and Black Stilt.

Additional divisional walls have been installed within the existing Black Stilt aviary to allow for holding more juvenile birds. This aviary is 6 meters high allowing the birds to fly, so when released into the wild, their wing muscles are developed enough to enable them to fly away from predators plus search for food.

However, working at height does present its own challenges and with no access for a scissor lift or cherry picker, Hamish spent much of his time working from scaffolding, which also had the benefit of noise reduction when working in such close proximity to birds.

The “skinkery” that until quite recently has housed Grand Skinks and Otago Skinks, has now been converted into another aviary that has been earmarked for the critically endangered Orange Fronted Kākāriki. Internal partitions and doors have been installed to create separate areas for breeding pairs. The converted skink aviary will soon be used to flock mate the Orange Fronted Kākāriki and once 2 pairs have been formed, they can then be separated by a solid wall between each pair to provide separate breeding territories, which has been designed and is all set up ready to go.

The concrete floor needed to be cut away and removed so that soil could be brought in to form the base for native plantings. Planter boxes have also been installed to cover where the concrete foundations need to remain, in an attempt to emulate the natural environment as much as possible.

The skinks have been relocated to a sanctuary in Otago and are contained within a predator proof fence to protect them from cats, stoats, ferrets, weasels and hedgehogs. This sanctuary has been very successful and has managed to double skink numbers in the first 4 years.

Aspiration, Realisation, Conservation.



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News in brief



*A copy of the book **Native by Design** was presented to HRH Prince Charles as a parting gift after his visit to Lincoln University.*

The acting Vice Chancellor signed the book and included a brief message regarding the late Diana, Lady Isaac.

A reprint of this popular book has since been sponsored by the Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust.

Who's who?

ICWT Administration

Rob Clarke—Executive Trustee

Bill Luff—Trustee

Alister McDonald—Trustee

Bruce Rule—Operations Manager

Catherine Ott—Administration Manager

Building/Maintenance Division

Hamish Milne—Builder

Bill Waterman—Apprentice Builder

Peter Jones—Painter/Handyman

Wildlife Division

Anne Richardson—Wildlife Manager

Leigh Percasky—Assistant Wildlife Manager

Olly Gooday—Wildlife Keeper

Emma Cournane—Wildlife Keeper

Fran Johnson—Wildlife Keeper

Katie Loyd—Wildlife Keeper

Chloe Jackson—Wildlife Keeper

Landscape Division

Lee Cheneler—Landscape Gardener

Ian Gebbie—Landscape Gardener

Rob Smit—Landscape Gardener

Pryderi Hughes—Landscape Gardener

Po Box 20 440, Bishopdale Christchurch 8543 ph 03 359 8962 Email; enquiries@isaacconservation.org.nz

www.isaacconservation.org.nz and follow us on facebook.