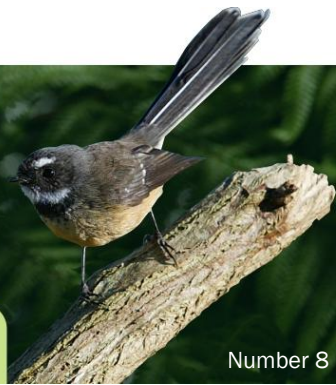


# Biodiversity



## Northern New Zealand dotterel (*Charadrius obscurus aquilonius*)

Number 8

### DESCRIPTION

The New Zealand dotterel is an endangered, endemic species in New Zealand. They are shore birds, found on sandy beaches, sandpits or feeding on tidal estuaries. Dotterels are well camouflaged in their habitat, up to around 270mm tall and are largely grey with an off-white belly that becomes flushed with a rusty-orange colour in the breeding season.

### DISTRIBUTION, BREEDING AND FEEDING

The New Zealand dotterel is now only present in the North Island and in one small population on Stewart Island. Breeding begins in August-January with normally three to four eggs per clutch. Nests are merely a bare depression above the high tide zone and can be easily destroyed, but the female can lay again up to four more times per season if this happens. These birds are strongly territorial and will charge an intruder, be it human, dog or other birds, if they come too close to their nests. If the intruder is persistent the bird will fake an injured wing or leg and will try to lead them away from their nesting site.

The New Zealand dotterel breeding on the South Taranaki coast is the most southern breeding population of the North Island sub-species of dotterel. They disperse widely to find food and usually feed on molluscs, small crustaceans, crickets and other insects present on the beach.



BARRY HARTLEY

### NEW ZEALAND DOTTEREL IN TARANAKI

In Taranaki Northern New Zealand Dotterel can occasionally be seen and heard on sandy beaches, usually around and above the high tide areas among driftwood and stones. Dotterel can be difficult to see in this habitat due to their ability to stand still and blend in.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Do not ride cars, bikes or motorbikes above the high tide mark on beaches where dotterel live.
- During the breeding season keep your dogs on a leash or away from the beaches.
- Obey signs regarding dotterel nesting and do not go inside fenced-off areas.
- Report sightings to the Taranaki Regional Council or the Ornithological Society NZ Regional Representative Barry Hartley (barry\_hartley@extra.co.nz).



ROB SUISTED

### CONSERVATION

The New Zealand dotterel is a threatened species listed as 'nationally vulnerable'. Once widespread, there is now an estimated population of only 1400 birds left in the whole of New Zealand.

### THREATS

Nesting dotterels are very easily disturbed. There has been a serious decline in suitable habitats for dotterels to breed and live as dotterel populations have been driven away from busy beaches.

Nests in the high tide zone can be easily washed away, run over by motorbikes or trodden on by people. Predation by hedgehogs, rats, cats, stoats and dogs is also very common.

### QUICK FACTS

- Eggs take 28 to 32 days to incubate and during this time the female does not leave the nest to feed.
- NZ dotterel are a protected species.



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