

One more dotterel takes to the sky



"The chances of the eggs hatching and any chicks surviving were so remote that people were telling me that we had just as much chance of winning the lotto or going to the moon," said Native Bird Rescue founder Karen Saunders. Photo Vicki Jayne

A sighting on Sunday 13 January has confirmed a dotterel chick, which hatched on the Waiheke High School field, has taken to the sky.

"The chances of the eggs hatching and any chicks surviving were so remote that people were telling me that we had just as much chance of winning the lotto or going to the moon," says Karen Saunders.

Karen, who is a committee member of Forest and Bird and founder of Native Bird Rescue, was an instrumental force in the protection of a family of dotterel that took up residence at the high school field in October. The breeding pair was able to successfully hatch two of three eggs on the field, which came as a surprise to many. Unfortunately, one of the chicks was likely eaten by a predator. However, one survived, and the family made their way to the beach.

"It is an incredible success story for the species, the high school and all of the com-

munity members involved," says Karen.

"I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the work that went into the protection, education and awareness of the nesting process and site, as this gave these young dotterel parents the best chance possible."

Karen says it's likely dotterels will try to nest on the high school field in future and that another pair was observed courting in the same area. Because of this, she is hoping to instigate a community-led initiative working with high school students to teach ways of monitoring the birds and conservation skills.

"I am increasingly aware that many people like the concept of conservation, although not in their own backyard," says Karen.

"It would be great to teach and share with the youth, who are our future, that kaitiakitanga is all about our backyard and sharing our land with native and endemic

species."

New Zealand dotterels face extinction, and with less than 2000 left in New Zealand, they are protected under the law, making it illegal to disturb them. Because of this, many Auckland beaches have dog restrictions, and with stricter proposed new regulations likely to come into effect this year, birds such as dotterel should be guaranteed more protection.

"Now, we have one more dotterel to add to the meagre population, and I'm guessing the temporary dog ban can be removed," says Karen in reference to the ban at Surfdale Beach, which was closed to dogs to protect one of the country's rarest bird species.

The temporary ban, east of 92 the Esplanade and all of Hooks Lane Beach, was initially in place until the end of the nesting season in late February. However, it will be reviewed in the next couple of weeks. • *Sophie Boladeras*



MEET ALICE!!!

Isn't she the cutest!!! (I confess I have a thing for tabbys) Well, the good news is that ALICE has a home to go to on Friday!!! She will be very loved and well cared for, and I know in return she will bring many happy hours of love!



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