

Conclusions

The season appeared to be somewhat ahead of 2012/13, with the gulls starting nesting significantly earlier. RBGs were present in numbers on September 1st, whereas in 2012 they arrived in early November. BBIGs were a little behind the RBGs, but well ahead of last year and WFTs were about a month ahead of 2012.

New Zealand Dotterel,

Numbers were up on last year with an average of 27 birds seen on each visit, this is well ahead of 21.5 for 2012/13 and indicates that the population is back to pre-Rena levels. Interestingly, of the banded individuals, only three of last season's regulars (observed twice or more), were observed this year which implies that at least some of the new banded regulars moved in from elsewhere. This is in distinct contrast to Pukehina. Maketu lost two birds to Pukehina, while one bird moved west from Pukehina to Maketu,

Variable Oystercatcher Had a another good season with 10 or more chicks fledged, very much in line with 2012/13.

Red-billed Gulls were present again with some 500 pairs nesting at the distal end, close to the area used in 2012/13. As with last year they were accompanied by some 43 pairs of **Black-billed Gull**. Unlike last year when they all disappeared around Christmas, this year there was still one bird sitting on eggs on January 9th. Some 125 pairs of **White-fronted Terns** nested alongside the gulls, there were still a few large chicks on February 2nd, put in an appearance in November, but for whatever reason decided not to nest there. The only other seabird to breed on the spit this year was the **Black-backed Gull**, 2 pairs attempted to nest but as in 2012/13 failed to rear any chicks, The large colony on the Brain land near Ford Road was not in evidence, though there may have been a few pairs there.

We had some trouble with an unrestrained dog, that visited the spit unaccompanied on several occasions and had some impact on the colony, but not a material one. The dog control officer at WBOPDC is aware of the problem.

Abbreviations:

NZD = Dotterel. **VOC** = Variable Oystercatcher; **BD** Banded dotterel; **RBG** = Red-billed Gull, **BBIG** Black-billed Gull; **WFT** = White-fronted Tern, **BBKG** = Black-backed Gull, **SWP** = Spur-winged Plover, **PS** = Pied Shag, **LPS** = Little Pied Shag, **SIPO** = SI Pied Oystercatcher, **BTG** = Bar-tailed Godwit, **SBIL** = Royal Spoonbill; **ED** = eggs destroyed