



Wrybill Ngutu Pare

~5,000 ↗

Population
[Nationally increasing]

18*

Avg. No.
locally

Endemic

In Canterbury, wrybills are iconic braided-river birds. They're unique for their sideways turning beak (always to the right), which enables them to reach under rounded river stones for insect larvae. Wrybills are territorial; they tend to nest and feed at least 200m apart and often return to the same spot each year.

Over 90% of wrybills nest in Canterbury's braided riverbeds. Once hatched, the chicks stick close by their parents, learning to look after themselves, as they are never fed by the adults.

Around January they head north to spend the autumn and winter feeding on the rich mudflats and many small estuaries around the North Island. There they roost at high tide in big flocks which, when in flight, create great whirling, shape-changing, fast-moving bodies of birds or "a flung scarf of wrybills".

In 2004, six pairs nested on the Ashley-Rakahuri River, 20 years later there were 16 pairs. Serious threats remain, but volunteer groups like the Ashley Rakahuri Rivercare Group work hard to trap pests and clear riverbeds from introduced weeds for wrybills (and other birds) who like to nest on clear gravel, well away from vegetation.

What could you do to help?

Many things:

- Help with trapping pests.
- Come along to a weed removal day (lupins are hand pulled very easily).
- Come along to a bird viewing or counting day.
- Watch out for birds nesting when you're on the river in spring/summer.
- Don't drive on the river between 1 September and 1 February.
- Keep dogs on leads near birds.

Thank you for caring for the river.

Want to learn more?

- Visit the Ashley Rakahuri Rivercare Group's website arrg.org.nz, or facebook page [@ashleyrivercare](https://www.facebook.com/ashleyrivercare)
- If you live in Waikuku, contact pfwaikuku@gmail.com to get a Predator Free Waikuku trap and help protect the southern edge of the Estuary.
- If you live in Hurunui, contact Northern Pegasus Bay Coastcare hurunuibiodiversity.org/groups/northern-pegasus-bay-coastcare or Hurunui Biodiversity Trust hurunuibiodiversity.org to help protect the northern edge of the estuary.
- Other groups connected to the Ashley Rakahuri are: Te Kōhaka o Tūhaitara Trust, Pest Free Waimakariri, Waimakariri Biodiversity Trust, Department of Conservation, Sefton Saltwater Creek Catchment Group, Environment Canterbury, Waimakariri District Council.

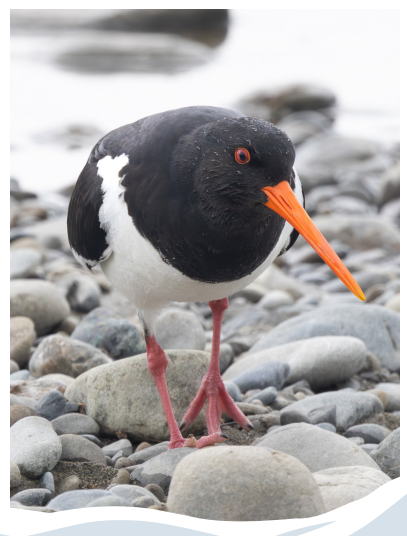
Photographs by Grant Davey.



**WELCOME
TO THE BIRDS**



Migratory Birds of the Waimakariri District



Banded Dotterel
Pohowera

~50,000 
Population
[Declining]

219*
Avg. No.
locally

Endemic

Usually, the most abundant braided river bird on the Ashley-Rakahuri. These solitary nesters only breed in Aotearoa New Zealand, but some do spend winter in Australia.

They nest on the coast and open riverbeds where other birds don't, meaning they're less likely to attract predators. Chicks leave the nest and feed themselves within a day or two.

Watch for their distinctive run and stop, run and stop movement as they feed — they're a very upright bird. A similar size to the wrybill (which can be confusing), dotterels have a brown back and some red-brown colouring on the chest. You'll see families in spring on the spit at the estuary and in the lower river.

Black-billed Gull
Tarāpuka

120,000+ 
Population
[At risk/declining]

Endemic

Tarāpuka are only found in Aotearoa New Zealand, unlike our two other common gull species, and are more "rivergull" than seagull.

Colonies establish in October–November on the Ashley-Rakahuri and stay from December to February. Before the gulls finally settle down to nest, they often have several "trial" attempts — hundreds of them gathering and making a few nests before moving on. Pairs lay two eggs, which will fledge seven weeks later. Nesting takes place in dense colonies with up to six nests per square metre to protect against predators.

Birds feed on the river, but you'll more likely see them in large numbers following ploughs on farms near the river (tarapiroe do this too).

Pied Stilt
Poaka

30,000+ 
Population
[Not threatened]

Native

The pied stilt is a native bird but also common in other countries.

Pied stilts can return to the river and start nesting any time from June — a very early start. Both adults care for the eggs and young for eight weeks until they fledge. After the breeding season, birds migrate towards more northerly coastal locations. The parents may continue to care for the young even during the end of season migration.

Breeding pied stilts can often be seen on the Ashley-Rakahuri River, but they tend to be wary of people and fly away, yapping, when approached. Its distinguishing feature is its long red legs like a flamingo.

Black-fronted Tern
Tarapiroe

5,000–10,000 
Population
[Low and declining]

Endemic

Tarapiroe numbers are low and declining thanks to introduced species, who eat them and their eggs, as do native southern black-backed gulls and swamp harriers. They feed in flight by dipping to take insects off the water surface or dive to take small fish.

Black-fronted terns breed only on the braided riverbeds of the South Island, often the same river each year from October to December/January. They nest in colonies and lay only two eggs. Chicks leave the nest within days and are fed by the adults for four to six weeks. Norway rats and feral cats are a particular problem for local tarapiroe. After breeding, most birds move to the coast.

South Island Pied
Oystercatcher Tōrea

~100,000 
Population
[Declining]

Endemic

This striking black and white bird has a red bill and legs. They breed largely in the South Island where they nest on farmland, riverbeds and around lakes. Only found in New Zealand, the population is declining making them hard to spot in Waimakariri. By December they are leaving again for the coast, where they spend most of their life, and many head for the warmer shores of the North Island over winter.

Endemic
Only found in New Zealand.

Native
Naturally found in New Zealand, arrived independently, also found elsewhere.

* Average number recorded in the region, derived from the annual Ashley-Rakahuri River bird survey.