

have provided the tools to increase Black Stilt numbers in the wild in the next few years. However, all areas where black stilts breed have high densities of predators and continued habitat degradation, and none of these areas of land have Department of Conservation protection. Braided rivers remain the most neglected habitat type in New Zealand, and we call for an increased awareness of the importance of braided rivers for a range of bird species, and other fauna and flora.

Breeding success of birds and intensive research and management at Ruataniwha Wetlands

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We report results of the first two years of a six year management experiment. We compared waterbird nest numbers and success, and mammalian predator presence/absence in the Upper and Lower Ruataniwha Wetlands (URW and LRW) near Twizel. We also piloted techniques for monitoring lizard abundance and chick survival. URW comprises 11 ha of ponds surrounded by an electric fence, and is trapped during Spring. In the first two years of the experiment, LRW had no ponds, no fence, and no trapping. Cats, weasels, rats, mice, and possibly stoats and ferrets, occurred at low densities within the fence at URW, and were rapidly trapped. Hedgehogs, a major egg predator, were absent from URW. URW contained 54 nests in 1997 and 34 in 1998, approximately 30 times more than LRW in both years. Mean nest success in URW was 92 % (70/76), significantly higher than that in LRW (25%; 1/4). Nest success of Banded Dotterels (*Charadrius bicinctus*) in URW was greater than that reported for 13 previous studies of Banded Dotterels in riverbeds in Canterbury (range: 32 – 87%; mean: 59%). The pilot studies showed that measuring lizard abundance was not feasible with our resources, but measuring chick survivorship is feasible, and will be done at both sites in future.

