

Submission to Proposed East Coast Beach Vehicle Bylaw

Minute 4: Ted Howard Additional Information:

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Ted Howard

Banded Dotterel Group Kaikoura

Our Banded Dotterel research has made us aware of the tendency of young chicks to seek low-lying dips when disturbed, and we were aware that quadbike tracks could be potentially problematic for chick survival. We expected that tracks would reduce the cryptic visibility of chicks even further and also naturally attract them into an area where being run over would be greatly more likely, particularly quadbikes were confined to a single track. This is of course challenging information because for nests to be safest from quadbike destruction, one track is greatly preferable.

Up until recently when collecting data we had not included a description of the terrain where chicks were found (for example recorded whether chicks were observed on a beach surface without depression, in a natural depression, a footprint or within a quadbike track).

Since the November Hearing, we have looked at terrain in greater detail, recording whether chicks were huddled in tracks or not. We have quite a small sample as we only had a small number of chicks. What we saw confirmed that chicks often hunkered down till around 3 weeks of age and the quad tracks were a preference. If chicks are run-over at this stage it still represents a very significant loss for the parents who have already expended enormous energy to get them hatched and raised to here.

We trapped and removed 3 feral cats to the South of our area, and this enabled us to finally hatch chicks and get some to fledgling stage. Between early and mid-December 2021, our site hatched 12 chicks, (9 from Pohowera to the Caves) and of these 4 survived to fledge. Because establishing the cause of chick mortality would require round the clock surveillance and we did intermittent site visits only, we saw no direct deaths. This means we are guessing at the causes. Past observations have established our known causes of mortality – dogs and quadbikes, which cause the greatest number of deaths when cats are not present in the area. We are clear that both pose great threat to breeding success.

It is not usual for us to miss finding chicks during an observation because they are hidden so well. However when we did find them, chicks were frequently huddled into tracks as a preference and this often meant that all chicks were huddled together so all chicks were vulnerable at once.

Banded dotterels need space to breed – that is undisturbed space. Because the chick rearing phase for dotterels is nomadic, this makes managing chick protection very difficult as it is unlikely we can predict exactly where they will be. Foraging often takes place over a wide area. We often use a thermal camera to locate chicks when surface heating of the ground is low. As the breeding season advances, some pairs complete breeding earlier than others and leave the area. This enables those pairs who are still attempting to rear chicks to increase their territory size, often by several times so chicks can be found over an area as great as a km. Hence the concept of setting up safety zones for chicks to counteract quadbike traffic would be unworkable, and hence quadbikes need to be prohibited.

(Ted acknowledges the very real risks to the birds from vehicles and people and acknowledges that something needs to be done. His preference is for awareness and responsibility over any sort of bans, but in the absence of appropriate awareness and responsibility some sorts of restrictions are required if we are to retain our native biodiversity).

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Ted Howard.

