
Bird survey of part of the Ashley River
undertaken on 15 October 2008
in relation to resource consent CRC000842



Survey carried out for:

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Survey carried out by:

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1 Introduction

Taggart Earthmoving Ltd holds a resource consent (CRC000842) to extract gravel and sand from part of the Ashley River, North Canterbury. The consent applies to the section of riverbed near Smarts Road, at or about grid reference NZMS 260 M35: 7855 6935.

Taggart Earthmoving Ltd wishes to extract gravel from part of this area, starting on or about 17 October 2008.

Condition 14 (a) of the consent requires that where excavation is proposed between 01 August and 01 March of the following year, a qualified independent person inspects the proposed area of works no earlier than five working days before the works are carried out, and locates any breeding or nesting sites of birds listed in Appendix A of the consent. These “listed birds” are as follows:

Cormorant/shag colonies	Black stilt
Australasian bittern	Banded dotterel
Paradise shelduck	Black-fronted dotterel
Grey duck	Wrybill
Grey teal	Spur-winged plover
New Zealand shoveler	Red-billed gull
New Zealand scaup	Black-billed gull
Spotless crane	White-winged black tern
Marsh crane	Black-fronted tern
South Island pied oystercatcher	Caspian tern
Pied stilt	White-fronted tern

Condition 14 (b) requires that the person inspecting the proposed area of works prepares a written report identifying locations of breeding or nesting birds of these species, and provides copies to the consent holder and the Canterbury Regional Council. This report is produced to satisfy that requirement.

Condition 15 of the consent requires that excavation shall not occur within 100 m of birds that are nesting or rearing young in the bed of the river.

2 Methods

At the request of Gary Johnson of Taggart Earthmoving Ltd, I surveyed part of the Smarts Road consent area on 15 October 2008 in fine, warm conditions with a light nor'west wind.

The proposed extraction site occupies about 285 m of riverbed between NZMS 260 M35: 7846 6928 and 7874 6923 (see Appendix 1, Figure 1). Access to this area is currently from the north bank, via Lower Sefton Road. Upstream and downstream limits of the extraction area were identified from GPS readings, and the site (plus buffer zones of 100 m at each end) was searched thoroughly on foot.

All bird species detected in the extraction and buffer zones were recorded. The locations of listed species were recorded by GPS. All listed birds encountered were watched from a distant concealed position to determine whether they were nesting or had chicks.

The survey was carried out by JE Dowding. In fulfilment of condition 14 (c) of the consent, the surveyor's qualifications and experience are outlined in Appendix 2.

3 Results

The 16 bird species recorded within the proposed extraction site and buffer zones are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Bird species recorded in the proposed extraction site in the Ashley River on 15 October 2008. + indicates a species listed in Appendix A of the consent

Species	Listed?
Little shag (<i>Phalacrocorax melanoleucos</i>)	+
White-faced heron (<i>Ardea novaehollandiae</i>)	
Paradise shelduck (<i>Tadorna variegata</i>)	+
Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	
Australasian harrier (<i>Circus approximans</i>)	
Pied stilt (<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>)	+
Banded dotterel (<i>Charadrius bicinctus</i>)	+
Southern black-backed gull (<i>Larus dominicanus</i>)	
Black-fronted tern (<i>Sterna albobriata</i>)	+
Rock pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>)	
Skylark (<i>Alauda arvensis</i>)	
Welcome swallow (<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>)	
Blackbird (<i>Turdus merula</i>)	
Song thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos</i>)	
Yellowhammer (<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>)	
Chaffinch (<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>)	

Observations of the five listed bird species recorded were as follows:

Little shag

A single bird was seen flying downstream over the main channel along the south bank. It did not land, and there was no evidence it was breeding nearby.

Paradise shelduck

A single female flew downstream over 7855 6929. It did not land and continued downstream out of sight.

A group of 3 birds later flew upstream to about 7872 6930, then flew out of the riverbed to the south and did not return.

Pied stilt

A single bird flew downstream over 7855 6926. It did not land within the proposed extraction area and there was no evidence of breeding.

Banded dotterel

A single male bird flew in from upstream and landed at 7854 6919. He was watched, but showed no sign of having a nest or chicks nearby, and eventually flew upstream out of the area and did not return.

A pair of birds had a single small chick near the main channel at 7877 6922 in the downstream buffer zone. A 100 m exclusion zone around this area was marked with orange dazzle (see Appendix 1, Figure 1).

Black-fronted tern

Two birds flew upstream over 7851 6932, traversed the whole extraction site and continued upstream. They did not land, and did not return during the remainder of the survey.

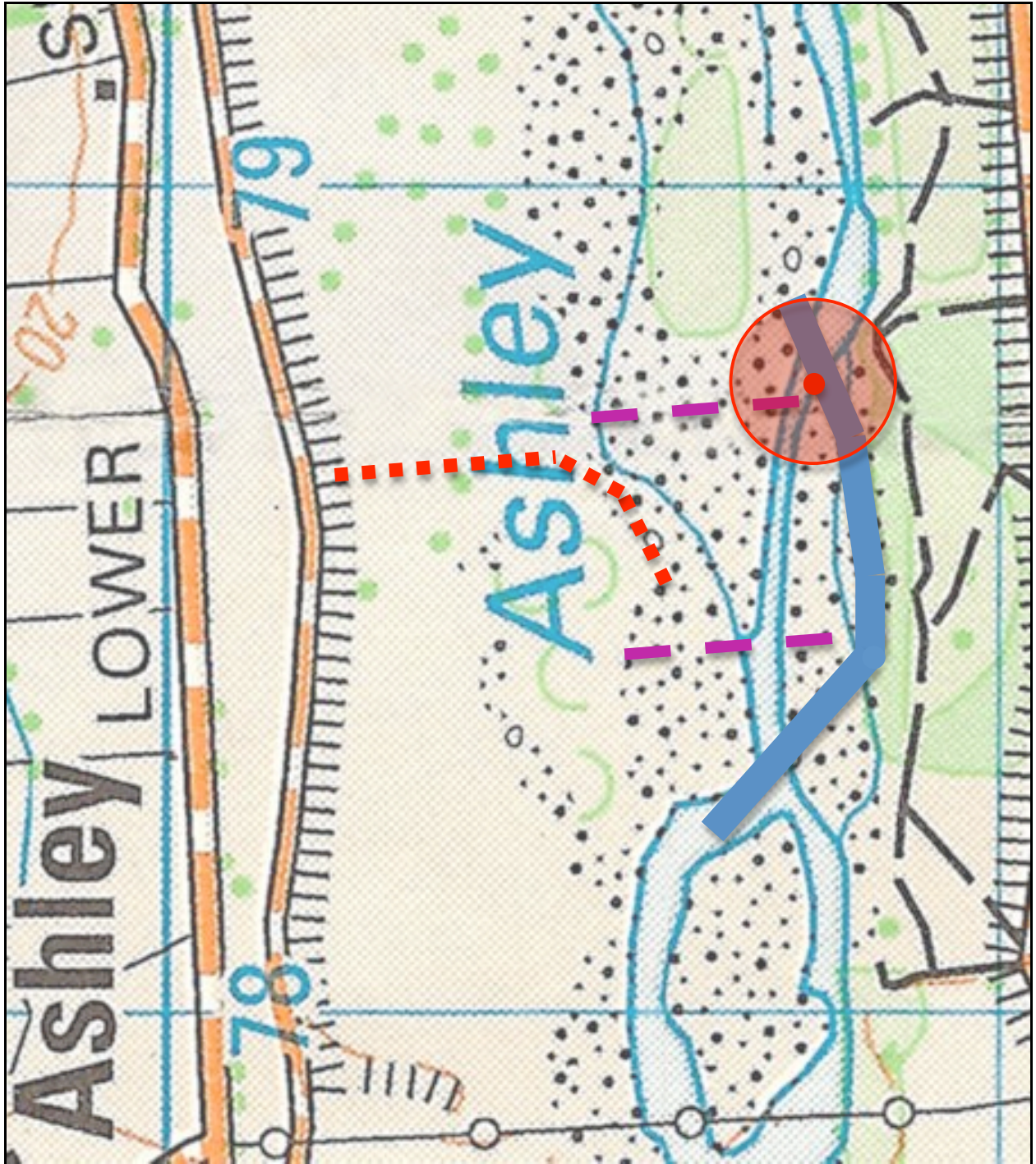
4 Conclusions

On 15 October 2008, 16 bird species were recorded in the proposed extraction site in the Ashley River. Five listed species were present and one of these was breeding.

A banded dotterel chick was present in the downstream buffer zone of the proposed extraction site. A 100 m exclusion zone has been marked around the area, and in accordance with condition 14 (d) of the consent, the consent holder has been notified of its presence. With respect to conditions 14 and 15 of the consent, extraction can proceed outside the exclusion zone identified in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1

Figure 1 Map of the proposed extraction site in the Ashley River, showing the exclusion zone (red circle) resulting from the presence of a banded dotterel chick. The upstream and downstream limits of the extraction site are shown by purple dashed lines. The approximate line of the current channel in this area is shown by a heavy blue line, and the access road is shown by a dotted red line.



Appendix 2

Surveyor's qualifications and experience

The survey reported here was undertaken by John Edward Dowding BSc (Hons), MSc, PhD.

I have 23 years experience surveying and monitoring New Zealand birds, particularly riverbed and coastal species.

I have undertaken detailed research on a number of New Zealand shorebirds, including wrybills, New Zealand dotterels, shore plovers and oystercatchers. Much of this research has included locating nests and chicks and monitoring of breeding success. The results of this research have been published in about 20 papers in scientific journals and in more than 130 reports, popular articles, statements of evidence, and conference proceedings.

I have provided evidence to planning hearings and Environment Court hearings, dealing primarily with potential impacts of a variety of activities and developments on threatened coastal and riverbed birds. I have undertaken about 35 bird surveys in Canterbury riverbeds in relation to gravel-extraction consents during the past five years.

I have carried out a wide range of research, management and consultancy contracts, mainly for the Department of Conservation and regional councils around the country. I am science adviser to two of DOC's species recovery groups and a member of the Department's expert panel that assesses the threat classifications of New Zealand birds.

I am a member of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, the New Zealand Ecological Society, the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, and the Australasian Wader Study Group.