**Date:** Tuesday 19 February 2019  
**Time:** 1.00pm  
**Meeting Room:** Claris Conference Centre  
**Venue:** 19 Whangaparapara Road  
Claris  
Great Barrier Island

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**Great Barrier Local Board**  
**OPEN MINUTE ITEM ATTACHMENTS**

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**Note:** The attachments contained within this document are for consideration and should not be construed as Council policy unless and until adopted. Should Councillors require further information relating to any reports, please contact the relevant manager, Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson.
ITEM 1. Letter to Barrier Bulletin c. 10 years ago, from John Ogden on behalf of Awana Beachcare.

Dogs, people and New Zealand dotterels

Most of us who live on Great Barrier are aware that New Zealand dotterels nest on the eastern beaches (Medlands, Kaitoke, Palmers, Awana, and Whangapoua/Okivi Spit). They try to nest at Okupu also. The species is found only in New Zealand and is in the ‘nationally vulnerable’ category. Great Barrier Island is one of the North Island’s strongholds for the species. Annual counts since 2000 show that the Great Barrier New Zealand dotterel population fluctuates around 48 birds. Leg banding has shown that the Island has some exchanges with birds from the Coromandel peninsula, but overall the number has remained consistent for many years. However, the research also shows that our current population is only just hanging on – it wouldn’t take a big increase in chick or adult mortality to tip the population into decline. This is where you, your dog, and your summer visitors, come into the picture, because the birds nest on the beaches just where you and they want to spend the summer. So what can you do? The key thing is to keep disturbance of the birds to a minimum — the longer the birds are off the eggs the more likely are the latter to get ‘fried’ in the hot sun. The more disturbance to the chicks, the more time they spend running about wasting energy and the less time they have for feeding and growing. These are just two of the many risks in the precarious business of breeding on beaches. Figure 1 clearly shows that people walking near the nest, and especially people with dogs, drive the adults off the eggs at a greater distance (‘flush distance’) and for a longer time (‘time off nest’) — thus increasing the probable death of the eggs before hatching. On busy beaches, such as Medlands and Awana from Christmas to after New Year, the situation is worse, although some birds do ‘adapt’ to people they still leave the nest as soon as a dog appears within 100 metres (see vertical scale on Fig1(a)). So this article is a plea to all readers: please keep away from dotterel nesting areas (often marked off with orange tape by DOC rangers or beachcare groups), and more importantly please keep dogs away from October to February. If you really do want to take your dog to the beach, then please stay within the dog exercise areas, which are clearly marked on Medlands (south of Memory Rock) and Awana (area to right of access up to first rocks only). Dogs are banned on Whangapoua beach and most of Kaitoke, so please respect that — these are key dotterel nesting sites. Thanks — after all these birds have been using these beaches for a lot longer than we have!
ITEM 2. Intended for Environmental News but not published.

Dogs on beaches – an American experience

Although I have made the point before (2012: Environmental News # 29) – with the new by-laws about dogs on beaches now out, it seems worthwhile to make it again. Great Barrier's eastern beaches are nesting sites for endangered New Zealand dotterels. People on beaches with all their paraphernalia and pets will drive the birds away (towards extinction) unless those people behave with responsibility and awareness.

![Graphs showing distance and time of dotterel reaction](image)


Figure 1 is based on New Zealand research. The principles, if not the exact measurements, apply elsewhere. It shows (a) the distance at which people will cause a dotterel to leave its eggs, and (b) the time it leaves those eggs, exposed to predation by gulls or simply frying in the hot sun. People walking are less of a problem than people running, while people with dogs cause the greatest effect: the birds will leave their eggs while the dog is still nearly 100m away, and will leave them for up to 5 minutes, or longer of course if the dog stays around. While it is clearly better if the dog is on a leash, the dotterel doesn't quite understand that. Even very tame dogs cause alarm and fear in the birds.

New Zealand dotterels have two main communication calls between mates or chicks, one telling when the danger is approaching, the other telling them that it has stopped moving, or
gone away. The strength of the call indicates both the distance and direction of the danger. When a bird is calling as you approach, try stopping and note how the call changes.

Different species of dotterels nesting on favourite summer beaches also pose problems in Australia and North America. Dotterels are often called plovers elsewhere, but there is no real difference, New Zealand dotterel, Australian hooded plover and American piping plover are all in the genus Charadrius, all lay their eggs in tiny scrapes on sandy beaches and have similar life-styles. And all are threatened. We recently saw how the problem is being dealt with for the rare piping plover on Cape Cod and Rhode Island in the USA.

Piping plovers (Charadrius melodus) establish territories and form pairs in the Cape Cod National Seashore in April, and, extending into summer, lay their eggs in scrapes in the sand. These scrapes are little more than shallow depressions, situated above the high-tide line in front of the dunes. The female usually lays four eggs. Both sexes incubate for three or four weeks, when the eggs hatch. Within hours the tiny, downy, chicks begin to run about searching for food. Plovers feed mainly by running and darting to catch insects, amphipods and other invertebrates on the sand surface. Washed up seaweed is a rich source of these invertebrates and hence an important feature of natural beaches.

Piping plover nests, eggs and chicks, all blend into their surroundings to avoid detection by predators. When a predator, person, or dog, approaches too closely to the eggs or young, the adult will run down the beach dragging its wing, or flap about in the water as if injured. Although this behaviour may save the chicks or eggs from being eaten or crushed underfoot, it leaves eggs vulnerable to cold or overheating, and chicks running for cover burn calories needed for growth to maturity.

*Sharing the beach with dotterels/plovers is easy if you know how.* On the Cape Cod National Seashore, the National Parks Service surrounds most nests with ‘symbolic fencing’ of low temporary tape. You are asked to set up your beach blanket several metres from such posts and strings, or preferably in an area without them. The aim is to bring awareness to beachgoers and allow them to enjoy their day without harming the birds.

The Park Service’s first request is that visitors *pay attention to signs and follow instructions.* I thought of this when I saw the new Council dog exercise area sign at Awana defaced again this summer. Another Cape Cod National Seashore requirement is to keep your dog on a leash no more than 6 feet (two metres) long and comply with seasonal dog restrictions. You are asked to use pedestrian detours and move through such areas quickly to minimize disturbance. It is also suggested that you bring binoculars and a field guide or learn more about the plovers by visiting the web site.
In Rhode Island the dog policy is very stringent. Dogs are not permitted anywhere on Refuge lands\(^1\). The Wildlife Refuge Complex administration points out that before this total ban was imposed, numerous opportunities were given for public comment regarding dogs in refuges, including workshops, public hearings, surveys and feed-back documents, and that these were taken into account. They found that allowing dog walking on Refuge lands was not advisable because:

- Such use compromises public safety;
- Such use results in conflicts with other Refuge visitors;
- Such use poses a threat of harassment, disturbance, and harm to wildlife, which the Service is mandated by federal law to manage for - first and foremost.

A series of reasons are given as to why dogs are not compatible with the concept of refuges (or wildlife reserves). These include:

- *Dogs intimidate other refuge visitors, and deprive them of the peace the refuges provide: complaints about aggressive dogs harassing people are received frequently;*
- *Dog faeces on trails are an unhealthy and unsightly nuisance for refuge visitors – this is one of the commonest complaints;*
- *Dogs, whether leashed or not, conflict with other priority public uses, especially for bird watchers, photographers and school groups which visit refuges for projects in environmental education;*
- *Instinctively, dogs want to chase wildlife. Unleashed dogs commonly chase both adult and young birds – they may get away by flying, but this still compromises their safety.*
- *The resources of time and personnel required to manage dogs in refuges detract from the Service’s ability to provide high quality wildlife-dependent priority-use programs.*
This latter point is usually overlooked: it takes time and effort to manage dogs on public land, and such resources are usually in short supply, so other work suffers. The Department of Conservation, the Local Council (“Animal Control”) can’t effectively police the dog laws on Great Barrier, and local residents are generally reluctant to approach visitors with dogs or to ‘dob in’ people breaking the rules. But it is only by everyone taking some responsibility and showing a willingness to act, that we can live in harmony with our dotterels, oystercatchers, terns and other beach birds. As Sue Daly says: “It’s time for good dogs, good owners, great education, and protection and awareness of all our biodiversity”.

JO.

1 Finding information on-line is not easy; try AucklandCouncil.govt.nz, then Licences and regulations, Exercising your dog. Great Barrier dog exercise areas, then selected Rules for Beaches.

2 The Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex provides, as does Auckland Council, a list of places where dog walking is permitted, and offers more information on line.
DOGS ON BEACHES

NEW ZEALAND DOTTEREL AND VARIABLE OYSTERCATCHERS WILL SOON BE ESTABLISHING THEIR NESTING SITES ON THE EASTERN GREAT BARRIER BEACHES. THE NEW ZEALAND DOTTEREL IS CLASSIFIED AS NATIONALLY VULNERABLE TO EXTINCTION. GREAT BARRIER IS ONE OF ITS PRIME LOCATIONS BUT AS THE GRAPH SHOWS THERE ARE ONLY ABOUT 50 HERE AND NUMBERS ARE TRENDING DOWNWARDS.

![Graph showing population trend](image)

Data from DoC 1998 excluded from trend line.

New Zealand Dotterel

AS A RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNER YOU CAN HELP PREVENT THE LOSS OF THIS BIRD BY NOT ALLOWING YOUR DOG TO RUN FREE ON ANY EASTERN BEACH (MEDLANDS, KAITOKE, AWANA, HARATAONGA OR WHANGAPOUA). EXERCISE AREAS ARE DESIGNATED, BUT ELSEWHERE, IF YOU MUST TAKE YOUR DOG ONTO THE BEACH, PLEASE OBEY THE BY-LAWS AND KEEP IT ON A LEAD. BIRDS DO NOT KNOW THAT YOUR DOG WILL NOT HARM THEM, AND THEY INEVARIABLY LEAVE THEIR NEST - A MERE SCRAPE IN THE SAND - SO THAT EGGS ARE EXPOSED TO THE HOT SUN AND PREDATORY GULLS. THE GRAPH ABOVE SHOWS THE CONSEQUENCES.

PLEASE KEEP DOGS OF THE BEACHES AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE BETWEEN SEPTEMBER AND FEBRUARY – THE MAIN NESTING SEASON.

THE GREAT BARRIER ISLAND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST.

An Item for Bush Telegraph 2017