

Dairy Farm Black-billed Gulls: Braided River Birds Nesting in a Very Different Environment



The success of the Waikuku dairy farm black-billed gull colony clearly demonstrates that intensively managed irrigated farmland, particularly dairy, can serve as attractive feeding and breeding habitat for this species - with the proviso that nesting will only be initiated while paddocks are in a bare, nongrassed state.



Timeline

- Late October 2016 nest building starts
- Early November 2016 ARRG first alerted to gulls nesting in paddock
- 10 November first visited and counted 600 birds
- 28 November first chick seen
- 9 December most chicks hatched
- Early January creche of flying chicks forms away from colony
- 14 January (approx.) colony abandoned, second creche forms, first creche moves to estuary
- 24 January second creche moves to estuary, 2 chicks unable to fly and vanish
- 7 February (approx.) chicks left to fend for themselves

Numbers and Success Rate

Nests counted	340
Nesting pairs	300 - 400
Fledglings	440











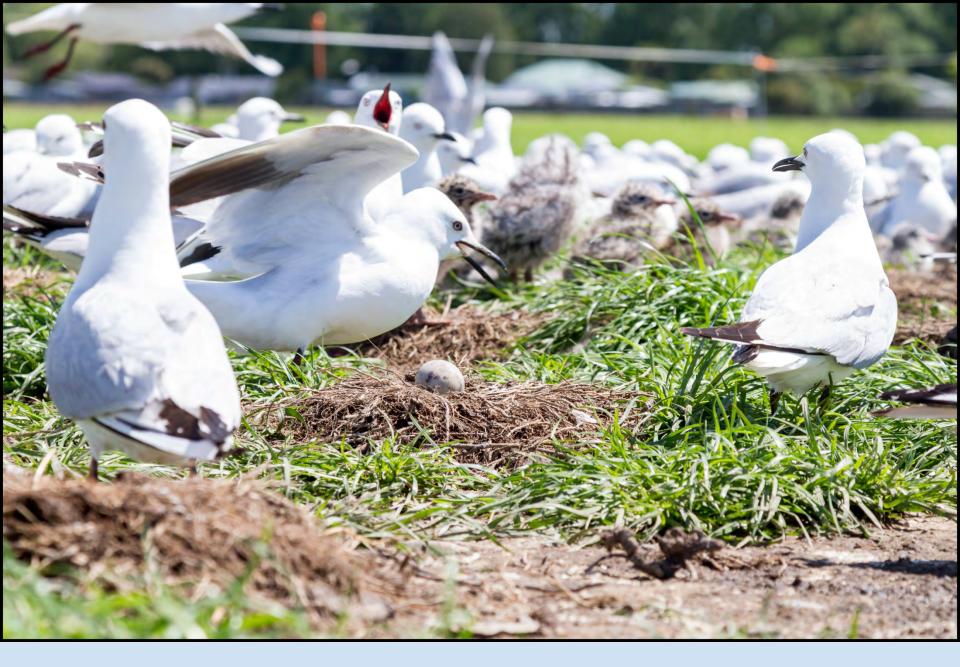














































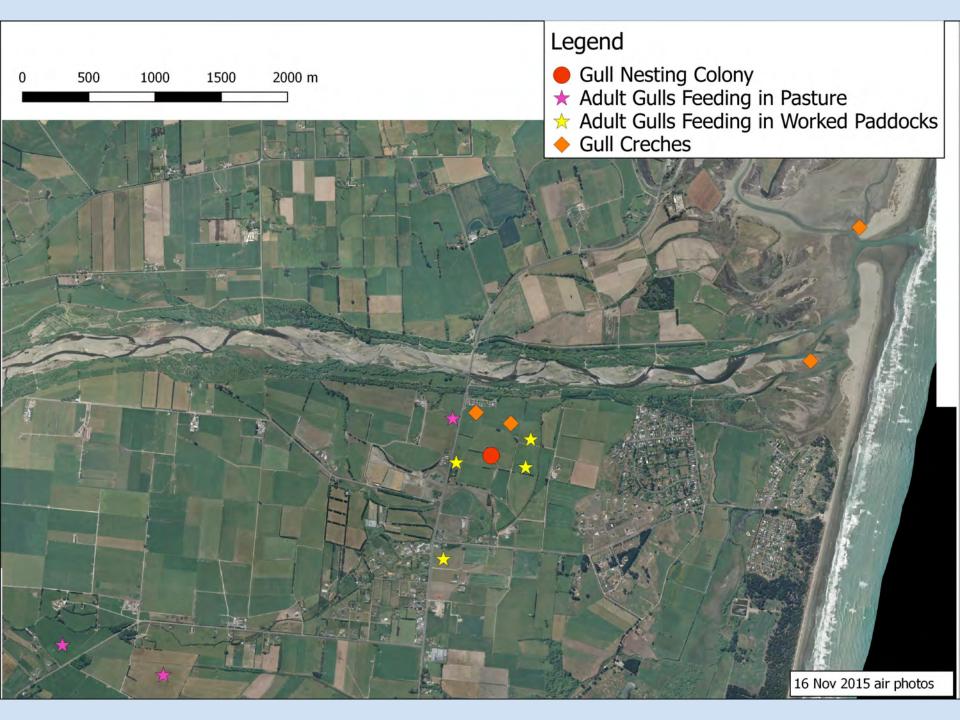


















































Intensively farmed irrigated dairy farms can provide desirable nesting and feeding habitat for black-billed gulls.

CAN THIS HAPPEN AGAIN?