

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



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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, non-grassed state.



0 250 500 750 1000 m



## Legend

● Gull Nesting Colony



Google Earth Image, July 2016

Imagery Date: 7/23/2016 43°17'02.41" S 172°41'58.20" E elev 4 m eye alt 2.57 km

# 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





Nick Ledgard

10 Nov 2016





Nick Ledgard

14 Nov 2016





Nick Ledgard

10 Nov 2016





28 Nov 2016





28 Nov 2016





9 Dec 2016





9 Dec 2016





9 Dec 2016





9 Dec 2016





9 Dec 2016





9 Dec 2016





9 Dec 2016





13 Dec 2016





13 Dec 2016





20 Dec 2016





21 Dec 2016





21 Dec 2016





21 Dec 2016





21 Dec 2016





21 Dec 2016





5 Jan 2017





5 Jan 2017





5 Jan 2017





5 Jan 2017





8 Jan 2017





8 Jan 2017





16 Jan 2017





16 Jan 2017





16 Jan 2017





16 Jan 2017





17 Jan 2017





17 Jan 2017





17 Jan 2017



0 500 1000 1500 2000 m

## Legend

- Gull Nesting Colony
- ★ Adult Gulls Feeding in Pasture
- ★ Adult Gulls Feeding in Worked Paddocks
- ◆ Gull Creches







17 Jan 2017





18 Jan 2017





18 Jan 2017





18 Jan 2017





18 Jan 2017





18 Jan 2017





20 Jan 2017





20 Jan 2017





20 Jan 2017





23 Jan 2017





23 Jan 2017





23 Jan 2017





23 Jan 2017





27 Jan 2017





4 Feb 2017





12 Feb 2017





12 Feb 2017





12 Feb 2017





12 Feb 2017



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

**CAN THIS HAPPEN AGAIN?**