

Summary of submission – Melanie Scott

1. New Zealand is a signatory to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade states on its website in the section on Biodiversity and species conservation:
2. “New Zealand’s geographic isolation means we have many unique plants, birds and animals and these are a priority for us to protect.”
3. The world is currently faced with imminent mass extinctions - 1 million species of flora and fauna according to Sir David Attenborough. Aotearoa should be doing everything possible to protect the small number of unique species we have, including Tara Iti – NZ Fairy Tern.
4. Once common all over NZ, the Fairy Tern now lives and breeds in only one geographical region, the coastal sand dunes north of Waipu, on the Mangawhai Spit and at Pakiri. It has nested and still winters over at Papakanui, on Kaipara’s South Head.
5. Human activity and predators have reduced bird numbers to a dangerously low level. This happened during the mid to late 20th century, not in the late 1890s when the wharf was used for shipping logs.
6. Fish studies have shown that the proposed wharf site has the highest concentration of fish suitable for the breeding Fairy Terns on the Mangawhai Spit.
7. Along with other volunteers at Waipu, Mangawhai and Pakiri, I have been monitoring Fairy Tern activity during the breeding season for the past three years. This involves detailed, minute note taking of each and every activity and event on the spit and at other breeding sites. We use high-powered telescopes at all times during the breeding season.
8. I have observed courting which involves sharing fish between mating birds, egg incubation, emergence of chicks, fishing, chick feeding and early flying attempts, and defending of territory and driving off predators.
9. Fairy Terns catch fish in shallow water. They do not fish in deep ski lanes. These lanes have been dredged and there is very little evidence of feeding material for fish there.
10. The male Fairy Tern (which mated at South Sea Valley on the Mangawhai Spit) was the father of the chick we tried to save over Christmas Eve and Christmas Day by netting gobies at low tide at the Tavern ramp in order to feed it,
11. The breeding pair of Fairy Terns which successfully hatched two chicks at Te Arai Stream were excellent parents. They exhibited the usual strong territorial, protective behaviour of all Terns during breeding and chick raising. A parent Tern will attack any perceived predator, be it avian or human and regardless of its size. During the 2019/2020 season I spent over two weeks watching this nest most days, together with other volunteers until mid January. On one occasion, when the two chicks were starting to fly, I left the hide in the early evening. I had seen a parent and two chicks fly south, low along the dunes towards Te Arai Point. I did not see them return to the nesting area. As I walked along the outside of

the perimeter fence, the parent bird rose up vertically from the pingao and threatened me. Seeing the chicks below him, I immediately dropped to the ground for some time and after he had returned to the chicks I crept away, crouching close to the ground.

12. I do not believe that Fairy Terns will ever adapt to human activity close by, especially at the most critical part of the breeding period, namely when they are teaching young to fly and fish. They will never adjust to breeding alongside human activity. Suggesting that they might lay eggs beside walking paths, like the much larger land bird, the Takahe is absurd. In any event the Tiritiri Matangi Takahe are virtually hand reared.
13. I know the Te Arai Beach area well. Together with other volunteers, I clear and set traps to catch rats, mustelids and possums at Te Arai Point. I have observed NZ Dotterel and NZ Fairy Tern behaviour along the coastline, around the Te Arai Stream and on Mangawhai Spit. The two species do not exhibit the same behaviour. Dotterels are fairly confident near humans, and will run around on the beach, nesting in the dunes. Fairy Terns are highly suspicious of all other species, including dotterels who sometimes chase them.
14. I have had considerable experience with human behaviour on the Te Arai/Mangawhai coastal strip. A significant number of people refuse to accept that dogs are a threat to shore birds and will insist that their dog would never chase a bird. When asked if they have seen the signs prohibiting dogs from a wild life refuge, they often deny having seen the signs, even when standing right next to them. I saw a young DOC ranger threatened with a beating by a group of drunken males when asked to remove a dog from the refuge.
15. The New Zealand coastlines provide many recreational opportunities for boating, fishing, diving, swimming and much more. The Mangawhai Spit and estuary is home to the only significant number of breeding NZ Fairy Terns. They deserve their place in the sun too.