



12. RESTRICTING DOGS IN ECOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

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The purpose of this report is to recommend an extension of dog prohibited and dog restrained areas in ecologically sensitive areas within Christchurch city. The report has been done using Andrew Crossland's extensive knowledge of the city's wildlife and the basis of it will be put out to all dog owners for consultation on agreement from the Environment Committee.

While in most open spaces and park land in Christchurch the presence of dogs is acceptable (their impact on wildlife being low), in some more ecologically sensitive areas the presence of dogs has the potential to cause devastating harm to wildlife.

Dogs are both predators and sources of significance disturbance. Ground nesting and ground dwelling birds are particularly vulnerable to harassment. The sites listed below are important habitats for a number of bird species whose survival and continued presence in Christchurch is dependent on minimal levels of disturbance and predation.

AFFECTED SPECIES

Waders – when nesting and roosting; pied stilts, south island pied oyster catchers, variable oyster catcher and banded dotteril, wrybill, Bar tailed godwit and other northern hemisphere migrant waders.

Waterfowl - when nesting, roosting and moulting; native shoveler, gray teal, grey duck, paradise shelduck, as well as large numbers of Canada geese, black swan and mallards.

Hérons - when roosting and feeding; cattle egret, royal spoonbill; white faced heron and white heron.

Swamp birds - when nesting, feeding and roosting; pukeko, marsh crake, bittern, and potentially reintroductions of spotless crane, banded rail, fernbird and brown teal.

Coastal birds - when nesting roosting and moulting; penguins, cormorants, shags, terns, gulls, herons and waders.

RECOMMENDED "PROHIBITED" AREAS

(See attached maps).

BROOKLANDS LAGOON

- Lagoon side of dune crest along the length of the spit.
- Salt marshes along western margin, within ecological heritage site, EHS 5.01.
- Saltmarshes and mudflats of Brooklands lagoon.
- Styx River mouth saltmarsh (as shown in EHS 5.01) excluding track on main stopbanks (southern side).

Site Significance: - Large, relatively unmodified natural coastal area with a mosaic of habitat types including sandspit, mudflats, saltmarshes, saltmeadows, brackish pools and freshwater swampland. Wilderness area qualities. Up to 3000 wetland birds occur annually with 75+ bird species recorded, including 40 resident and 16 seasonal visitors. Brooklands Lagoon is regionally and nationally important as a wintering and feeding site for migratory birds such as the Godwit, and for swampbirds such as the globally endangered Australasian Bittern. The lagoon also supports a healthy breeding population of wetland birds and provides feeding and roosting habitat for numerous herons, waders, waterfowl and swampbirds. Seventeen species of ground-nesting bird and 35 species of ground-roosting bird occur annually at Brooklands Lagoon.

AVON HEATHCOTE ESTUARY MARGINS

- Bexley Wetland Reserve - all areas other than the walkway.
- Naughty Boys Island.
- Blighs Garden saltmarsh on river side of Jubilee track
- Raupo Bay - saltmarsh and raupo between Bridge St bridge and Pleasant Pt jetty, between walkway and estuary.
- Jellicoe swamp excluding track.
- Bromley oxidation ponds and western shore of the estuary between oxidation pond northern drain to the windsurf area car park.
- Linwood paddocks, CCC land between Dyers Rd, Linwood Ave, oxidation ponds and the estuary.
- Lower Heathcote River - on true right - Tunnel Rd saltmarsh, Devils Elbow saltmarsh, F & B Calder-Green Reserve, Stilt Island saltmarsh, Ferrymead saltmarsh. On true left - Ferry Rd saltmarsh, Heathcote Loop saltmarsh and Ferrymead Esplanade.
- Humphries/Charlesworth St Wetland Reserve.
- McCormacks Bay roosting islands.

Site significance: These areas in the Avon Heathcote Estuary support nationally and internationally significant bird species, with some 30,000 birds present at peak times.

OTHER AREAS

Godley Head - Foreshore area, Taylors Mistake to Boulder Bay including Harris Bay.

Site significance: These areas are of high value for coastal birds. White-flippered penguins nest and moult along these coastlines. Other ground-nesting coastal birds (gulls & terns) breed along part of this coast. Shags and cormorants roost throughout. All are vulnerable to disturbance and mauling by dogs.

Wigram East Retention Basin excluding tracks.

Site significance:

Disturbance and predation by dogs within the perimeter fence has posed a problem since this site was created. Birds nest, roost and moult on the islands and around the shorelines. Dog disturbance occurs many times daily and is limiting use of the area by sensitive bird species as well as having a predation impact on species such as Pied Stilt (eggs and young are taken by dogs), and Paradise Shelduck (flightless young are chased and mauled).

Styx Mill Wetland Conservation Reserve

The Parks Unit again wishes to seek to change of the status of some of the park to 'dogs prohibited'. The fundamental goal of the park is wetland conservation, developments have included ponds, planting and wheelchair tracks. The area has high values for wetland birds such as pukeko, grey duck and scaup. These birds are particularly vulnerable when roosting, moulting and nesting.

Since the last report on dog prohibition in Styx Mill, an area is being developed for people to exercise dogs in. There are 2 large paddocks (one for small dogs, one for large) that have ponds, plantings, picnic facilities, information and exercise equipment. The inclusion of this 3.5ha dog park will off-set the prohibited areas of the conservation sites.

RECOMMENDED 'RESTRAINED' AREAS

- Bexley Wetland Reserve walkway.
- South Shore Spit tip.
- Tracks Estuary, Heathcote, Styx River mouth stopbank.
- Godley Head track.
- Brookland Spit tip.
- Wigram East Retention Basin walking track.
- Bottle Lake wetland.

These areas are highly used as recreational tracks for people and dogs. The tracks pass through areas which have high ecological values for birds and it is essential that dogs are restrained on a leash to prevent dogs disturbing nesting, feeding or roosting birds.

Recommendation: That it be recommended to the Environmental Committee that the Christchurch City Dog Control Act 1997 be amended to include the above prohibited and restrained areas.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: That this Board consult with Brooklands and Styx Mill residents, the Fish and Game Council and Forest and Bird Society prior to reporting to the Environmental Committee.