

“HOW TO” CREATE A WILDLIFE & FISHERIES HAVEN

You may have a wonderful wetland area that you have enhanced, restored or created. But the wildlife are not visiting and fish are not present. The following guide has some ideas and suggestions for how you can attract bird species and establish fish species as part of your wetland habitat, so they too can share in your wetland wonderland.

Ways to attract wetland birds

To encourage birds to your wetland you have to start thinking like them! What ground cover do they like? Where do they normally nest and feed?

Here are a few helpful habitat hints:

- New Zealand scaup like deep, open, clear water. Mallards, grey duck, shoveler, and grey teal favour shallow water around the edges of a pond or lake.
- Paradise shelduck feed on pasture next to wetlands.
- Rails, crakes and pukeko feed and nest around damp areas of vegetation.
- The marsh crake is a secretive bird that feeds in permanently shallow water under cover of dense raupo or flax. They build nests under sheltering sedges among stands of manuka. You would need less than half a hectare of this habitat to support a breeding pair of marsh crake.



- Pied stilts feed on worms and insects in temporary winter pools in paddocks and nest in scattered clumps of rushes.
- All waterfowl need open water to moult in safety, away from predators.
- Tui, waxeyes and bellbirds will feed on flax and kowhai. Kereru will visit fruiting kahikatea (see “How To” Plant Out a Wetland, for more information).

So, the bigger and more diverse your wetland, the more diverse your bird life will be.

Shelter is also important. Shelter plantings need to protect the area from the prevailing wind. Overhead canopy cover is favoured by some species. Ensure that the pond is not shaded from the sun, so try not to plant the taller tree species to the north.

All the comforts of home

As well as providing the basics (water and shelter) there are a number of “extras” you can provide that will make your wetland a highly desirable home for birds.

Create gently sloping, irregular shorelines. This allows birds, particularly waders, chicks and ducklings easy access to and from the water and will extend the belt of reeds and rushes growing around the edge.

Logs and trees provide perching sites and shelter; however, it is important to leave some gaps around the wetland for birds to fly through.

During the breeding season (September to December for most species) birds are

particularly sensitive to disturbance. Grazing or other activities should stop or be significantly reduced at this time – See “How To” Graze near a Wetland.

Islands or a floating raft with plants growing on it, make safe nesting sites in lakes and ponds. Alternatively Fish and Game can offer advice on nest box designs.

Areas of vegetation around or overhanging the water margin will provide cover for nesting and hiding. Adjacent pasture will provide feeding areas. Open margins will provide loafing areas.



If your wetland is near a block of native bush, or another wetland, consider linking them by planting a “green corridor” of native plants between them.

The key to its success will be planting for diversity, because if you want to keep birds there all year round you need to plant trees and shrubs that will give them food for every season

Ways to ensure fisheries are enhanced

For fish species to occur in your wetland wonderland the right habitat has to be created.

Fish habitat requirements

- open water habitats
- variable water depths
- permanent water
- in pond macrophyte cover
- shoreline cover

- uninhibited access into and out of wetlands (gradients of less than 2%) for migratory and non-migratory species is essential
- permanent water downstream of any impoundment

Species likely to inhabit created or restored open water habitats

- long-finned eel
- short-finned eel (lowland locations)
- Non-migratory Galaxiid species.
- migratory galaxiid species (inanga/whitebait species in coastal wetlands)
- brown trout (in small numbers)



Inanga



Giant Kokopu



Banded Kokopu