

#### 4. WILDLIFE REQUIREMENTS AND VALUES

Waterbirds require many specific conditions to meet their seasonal needs throughout the year and these should occur in the right proportions.

Some of the important conditions are:-

##### 1. Permanent Water

But this alone is not sufficient without some or all of the following.

##### 2. Shallow Water

Waterfowl and wading birds do most of their feeding in shallow water areas less than 0.4 metres deep. This is because plant and animal food is more abundant because of physical factors and is more accessible to wading and swimming birds alike.

Seasonally flooded shallows produce more food than ones permanently covered in water.

sloping Margin

Waterbirds prefer to walk out of the water to rest or enter the water to feed.

4. Loafing Spots

Open margins, low lying mudbanks and half submerged logs provide ideal places where waterfowl can rest and sun themselves.

5. Irregular Edge

As the edge of a wetland area providing most of the best places for feeding, loafing and shelter, the more irregular and therefore the longer, it is the better.

6. Islands

Islands provide additional edge as well as the least disturbed nesting and loafing places.

7. Ground Cover

Patches of tall grass or low bushy shrubs close to, or within a wetland, provide good nest sites. Ideally, the extent of this type of cover should be about 50/50 open water, vegetation.

8. Overhead Cover

Trees such as some willow species overhanging the water provide cover for young birds before they can fly. Such trees or groups of trees also provide essential cover for moulting adults at a time of the year when they are flightless and thus most vulnerable to attack from predators. Sedges; rushes or other emergent vegetation

growing in the water also provides essential escape cover as well as secluded breeding and resting areas.

Lake Poukawa presently contains only some of the above features. Its most limiting factor is a lack of swampland due to the extensive draining, development and grazing of the adjoining land. Nevertheless, the wetland retains values for wildlife which are of national, regional and local significance.

As many as 22 Mute swan have been recorded at Lake Poukawa in recent years. Small wild populations exist at Lake Ellesemere in the South Island and at Lake Poukawa. The New Zealand population of this species is now fewer than 200 birds nationally (Robertson et al 1985) and it is classified as an endangered species in New Zealand (Bell 1985 in prep.).

Lake Poukawa supports a healthy resident population of waterbirds, which live and breed there. It serves as a nesting, loafing and seasonal feeding area for transient species of waterbird and is also used by large numbers of waterfowl for moulting purposes.

Commonly overlooked is the essential requirement by waterfowl particularly females who require water areas like the lake to fulfill their moulting requirements during late summer.

Some of the notable species recorded are Australasian bittern (*Botaurus stellaris poiciloptilus*) which is identified as a threatened species (Bell 1985 in prep). Ogle and Cheyne (1981) stated that despite its widespread distribution in New Zealand

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