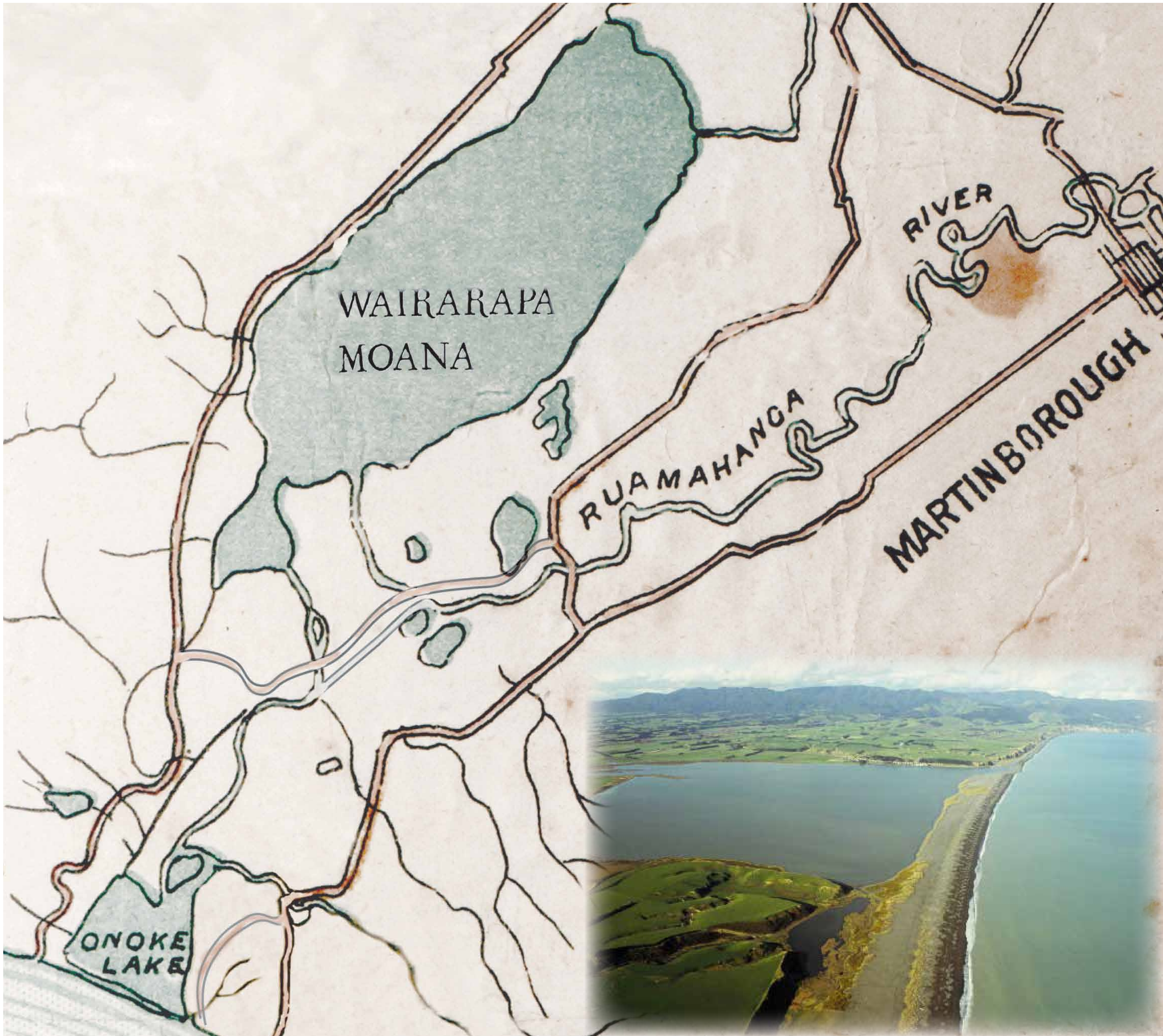


# A TOUGH BREED

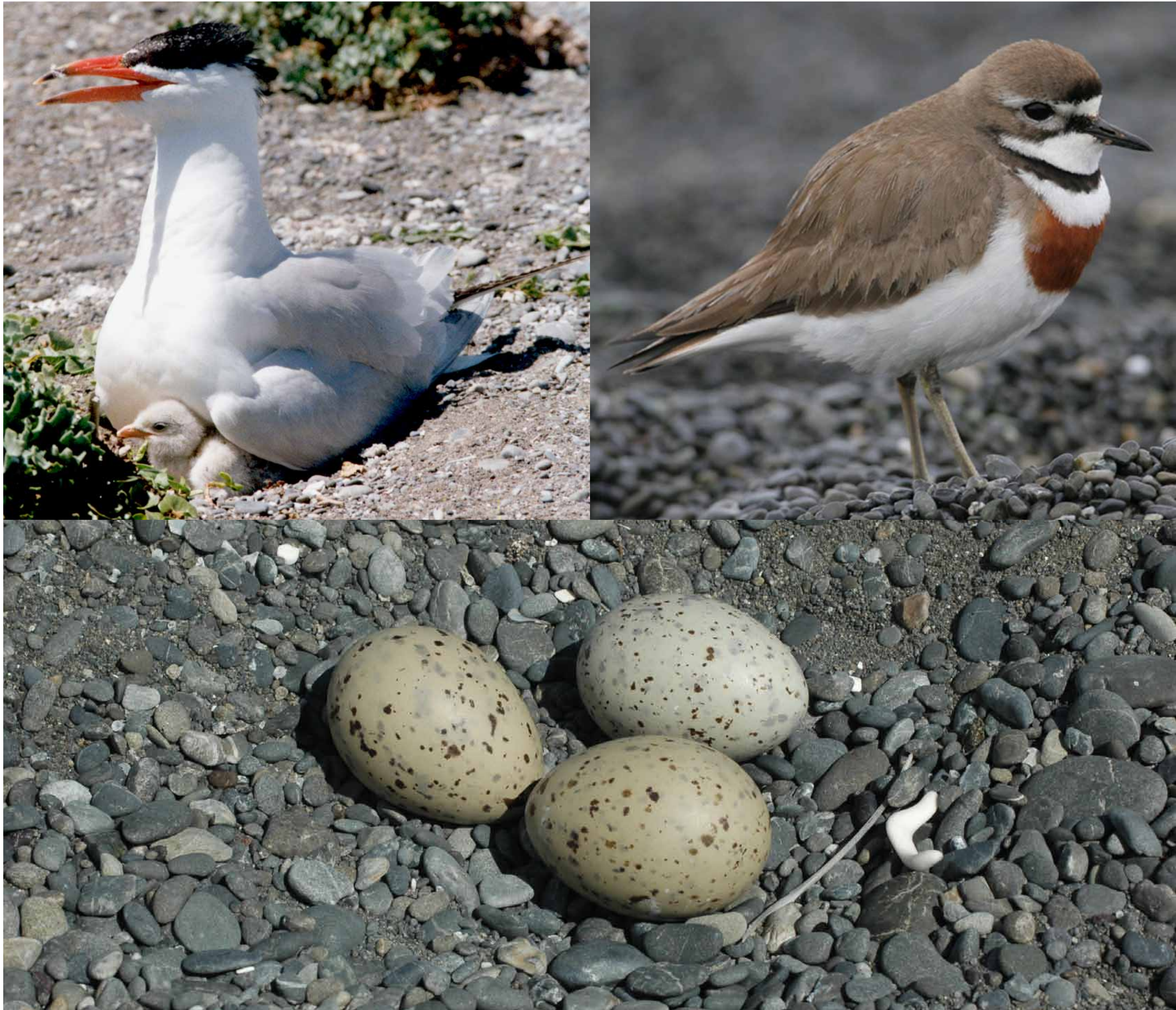
## The birds of Onoke Spit

*Wairarapa Moana is an internationally important wetland. The large diversity of habitat in the wetland complex attracts a wide range of wetland bird species.*  
2000 Lake Wairarapa wetlands action plan, 2000-2010, Department of Conservation



At the mouth of Palliser Bay is an exposed and rugged spit of sand and gravel barely 10 metres above sea level. Forceful Southerly gales dump quantities of driftwood and other flotsam along the shore. To survive the sand-blast conditions, vegetation on the Spit is often low growing and tough. A variety of wildlife thrives in these harsh conditions.

Taranui and chick. Photograph Colin Scadden. Taranui eggs. Photograph DOC



The threatened taranui (caspiian tern) nest within a rudimentary scrape in the sand. Northwesternly gales can drive sand over their nests and force them to move – in some seasons the terns may attempt to nest three or four times. Motor vehicles driving through colonies, and annoying dogs can also destroy the eggs and cause the birds to abandon their nests. Tuturiwhatu (banded dotterel) also nest on the sand. These small birds are usually seen running ahead of walkers only to fly short distances when the walker gets near.

Karoro



Karoro (black backed gull) build nests among the Homed poppy, which provide protection for their young while they are still dependants. Red billed gulls nest close together among driftwood.

## The birds of Onoke Spit

On the lake shore, kawau (black shag) may be seen with wings spread before flying off low over the water. Sometimes a kotuku (white heron) puts in an appearance at Lake Onoke edge, while the kotuku-ngutupapa (royal spoonbill) may rest on the spit before flying off toward the Lake Wairarapa wetlands.



Kawau

Kotuku (top) and Kotuku-ngutupap

In season waders, such as poaka (pied stilts), matuku (white faced heron) and ngutuparore (wrybill), may be seen on the mudflats of Lake Onoke. At low tide they may be joined by arctic waders, kuaka (godwit) and knot.

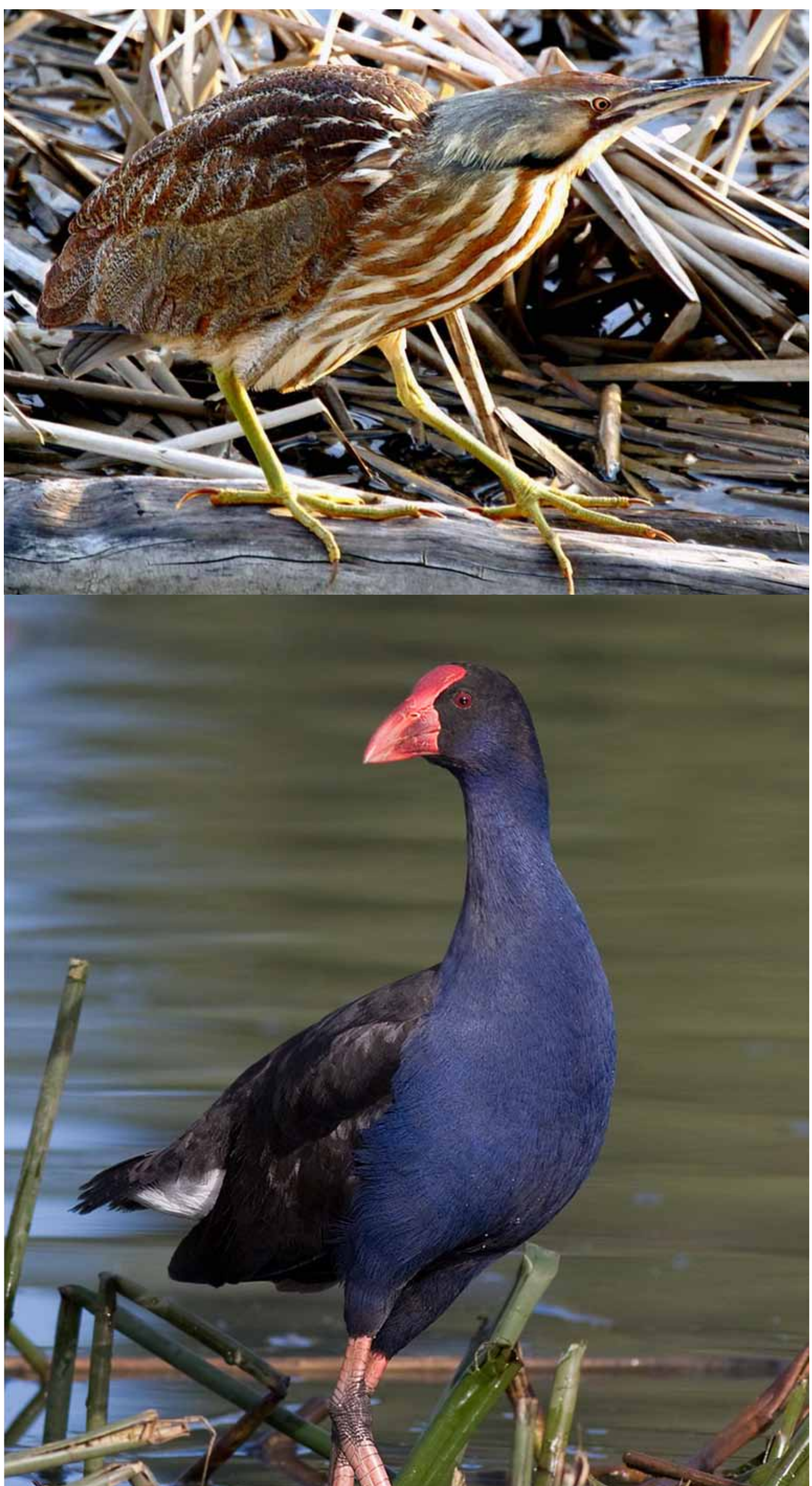


Poaka (top), Matuku (left) and Ngutuparore (right)



Toreia

Toreia (variable oystercatcher) are often seen along Onoke Spit and draw attention with their piping call, while any walker is welcomed by the skylark filling the air with its bright song.



Bittern and Pukeko (bottom right)

The Pounui wetlands adjoining Lake Onoke provide habitat for bittern, pukeko (swamp hen) and various species of duck.