

Maungakiekie-Tāmaki?

Maungakiekie-Tāmaki is a special part of Auckland but it's not known for its wildlife. We have lost our majestic forests and don't have any native bats, lizards or frogs left. When we lost those forests we lost all special birds that DOC look after like kiwi, takahē, and kaka. And we are not likely to ever get them back.

What we do have left is a beautiful estuary. And although the bird numbers have dropped dramatically in the last few decades there are still some left.



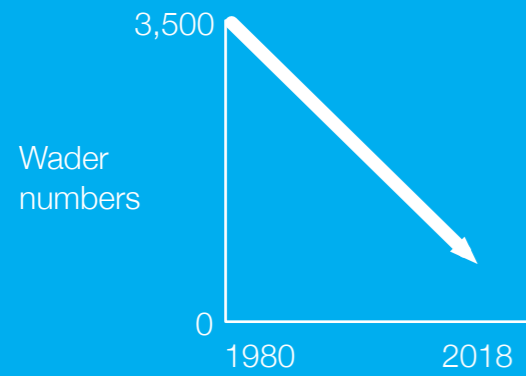
When the tide is out the Tāmaki Estuary, it has expansive mudflats which provide food for shorebirds who are an integral part of the ecosystem.



When the tide comes in the birds need to find a roost (place to sleep).

So what birds do we have in the Tāmaki Estuary, where do they sleep how many are there?



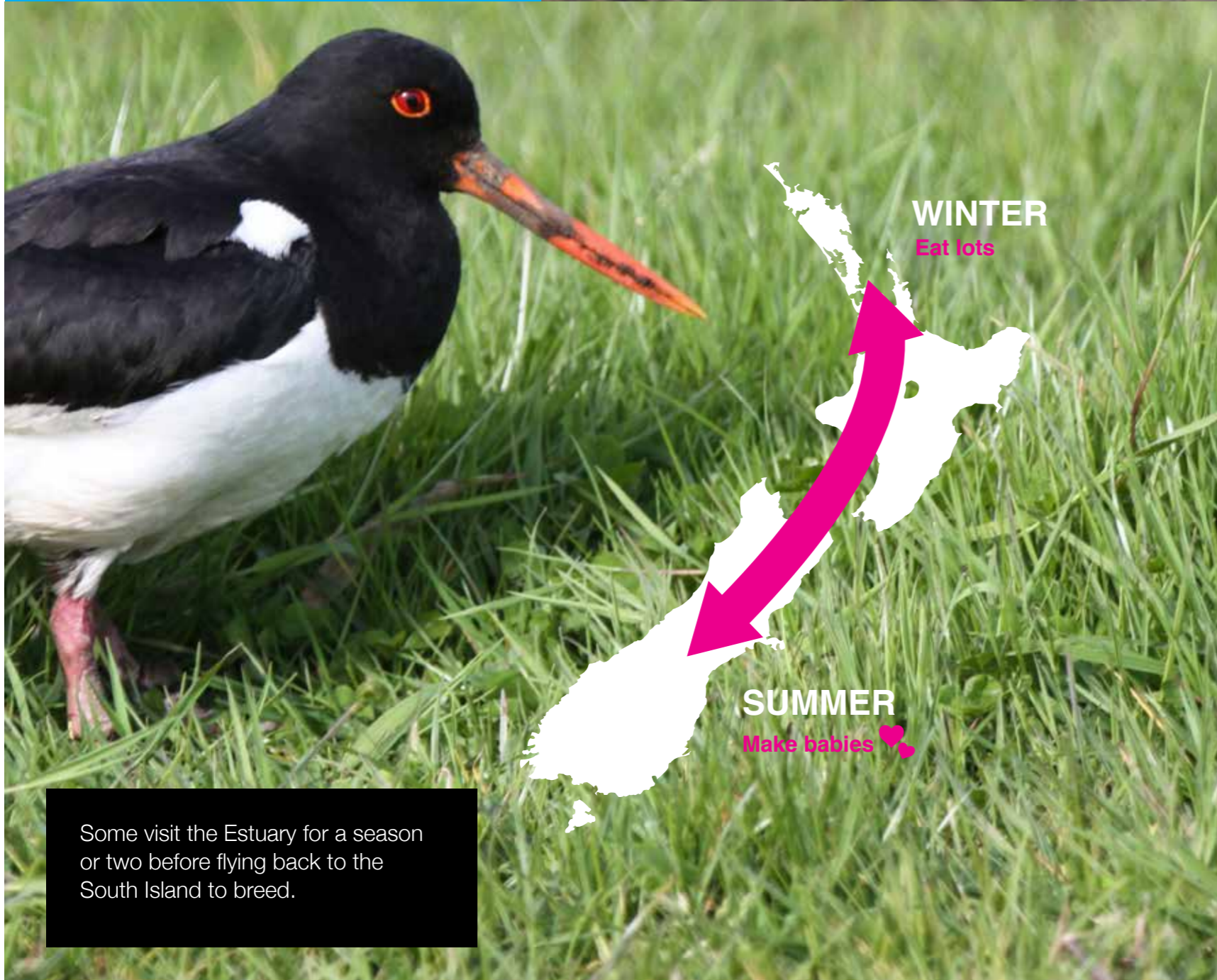
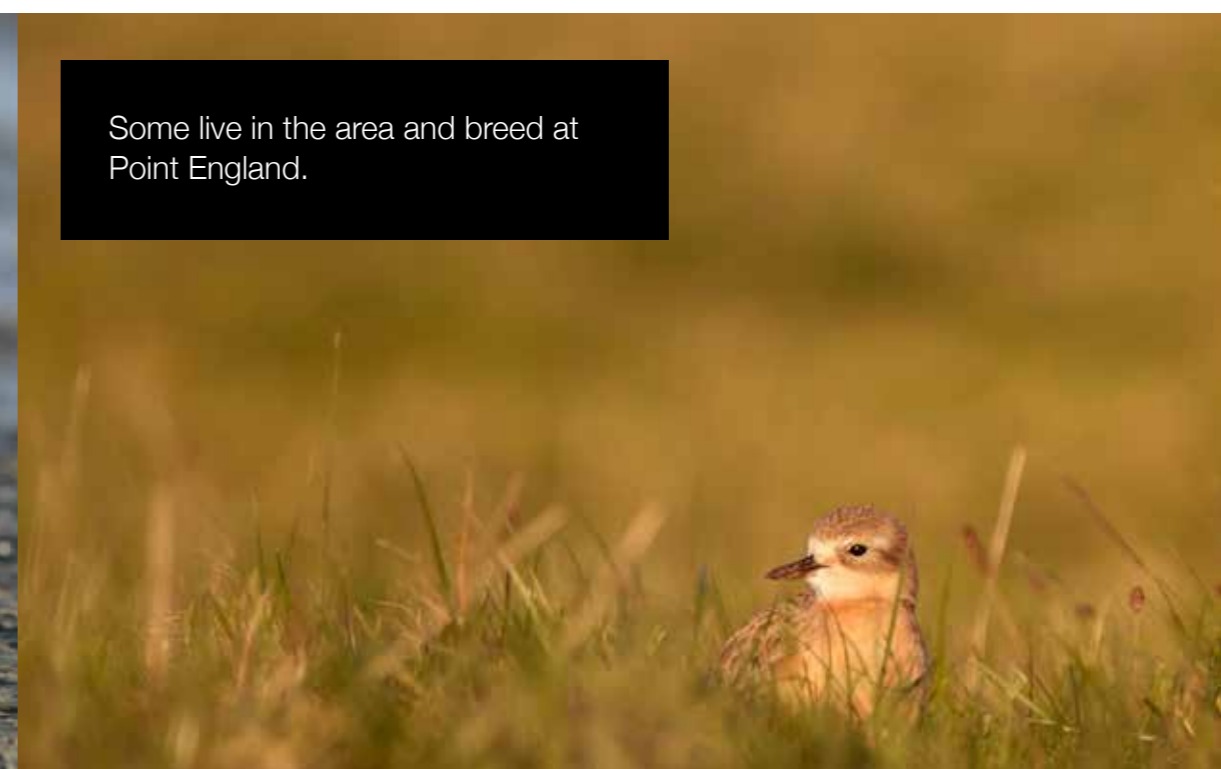


In the early 1980's we had thousands of shorebirds at just one roost in the Estuary, now we have only a few hundred spread over two main roosts.

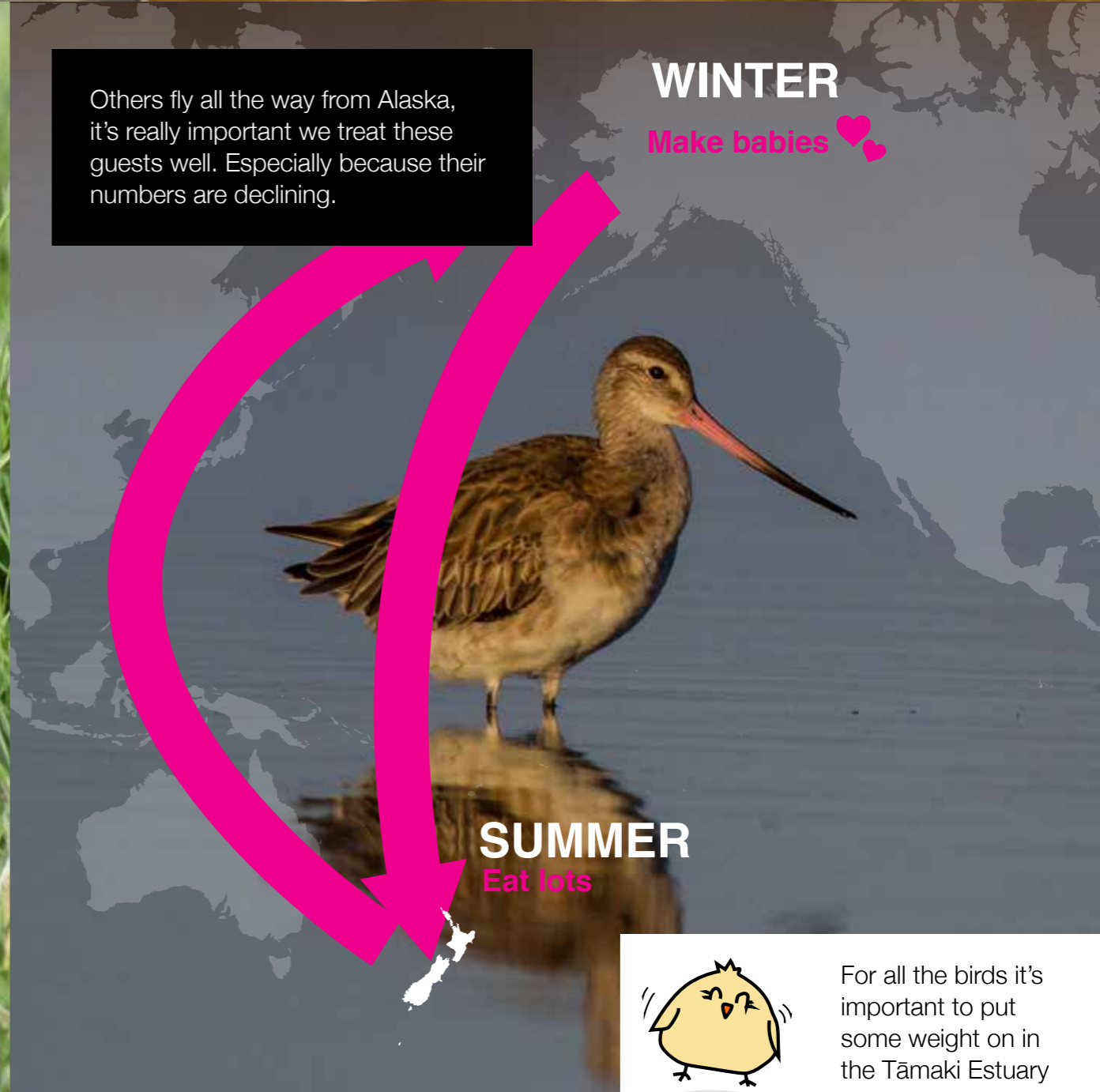
All the shorebirds are native and some are in danger of extinction.



Some live in the area and breed at Point England.



Some visit the Estuary for a season or two before flying back to the South Island to breed.



Others fly all the way from Alaska, it's really important we treat these guests well. Especially because their numbers are declining.

WINTER

Make babies 

SUMMER
Eat lots



For all the birds it's important to put some weight on in the Tāmaki Estuary

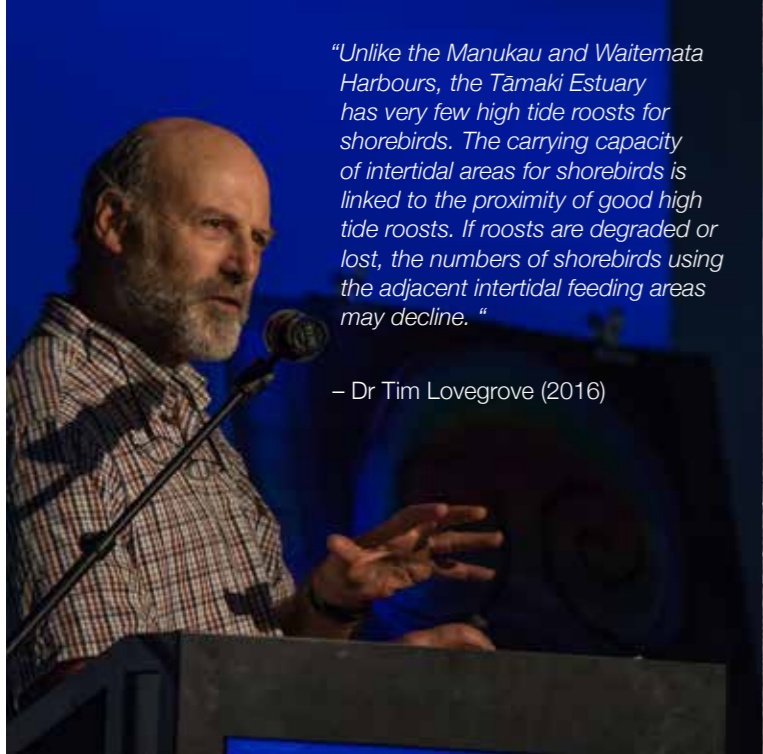
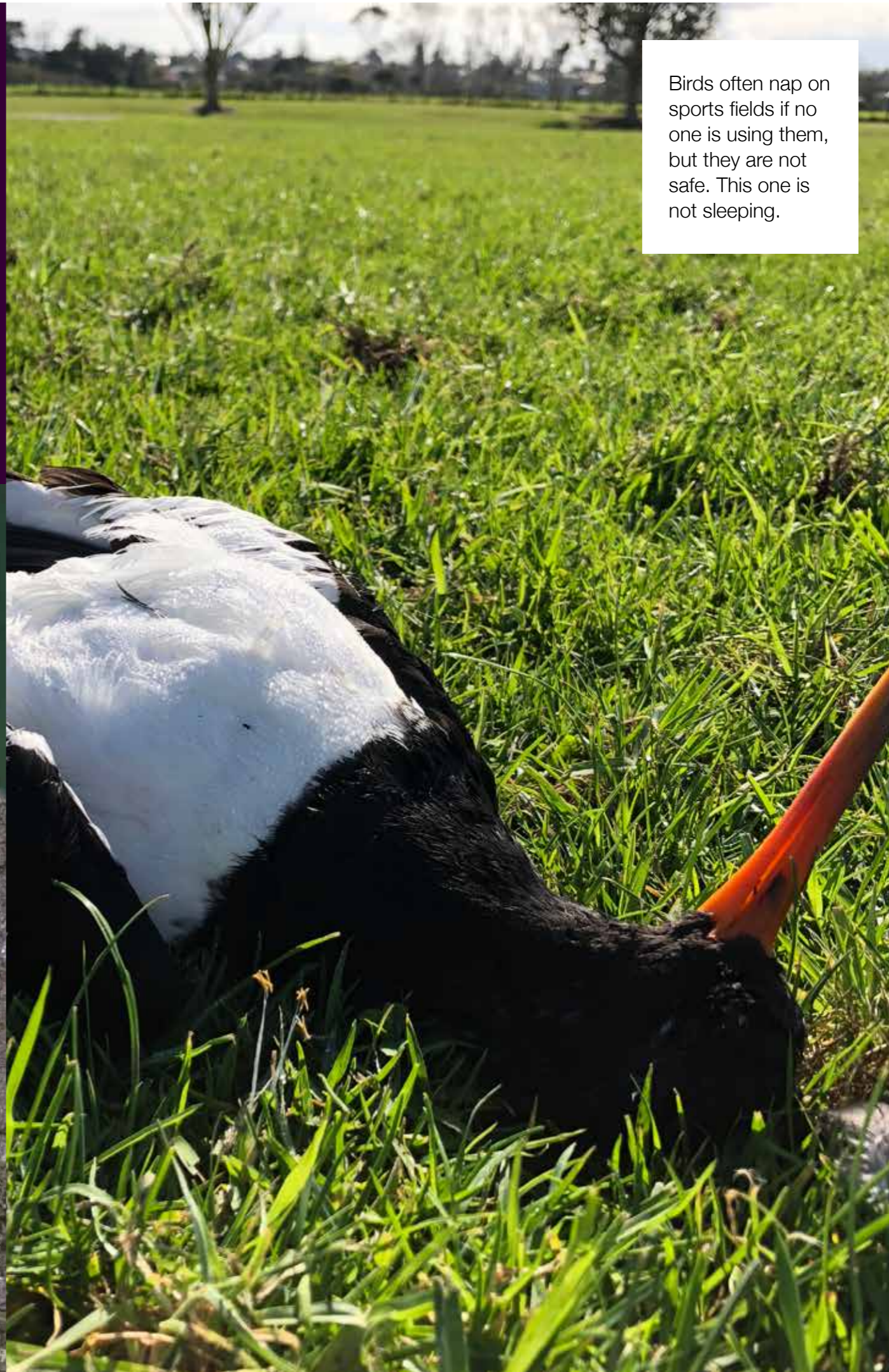
So the birds can get ready for big flights they need to save their energy.

I need this for my legs!



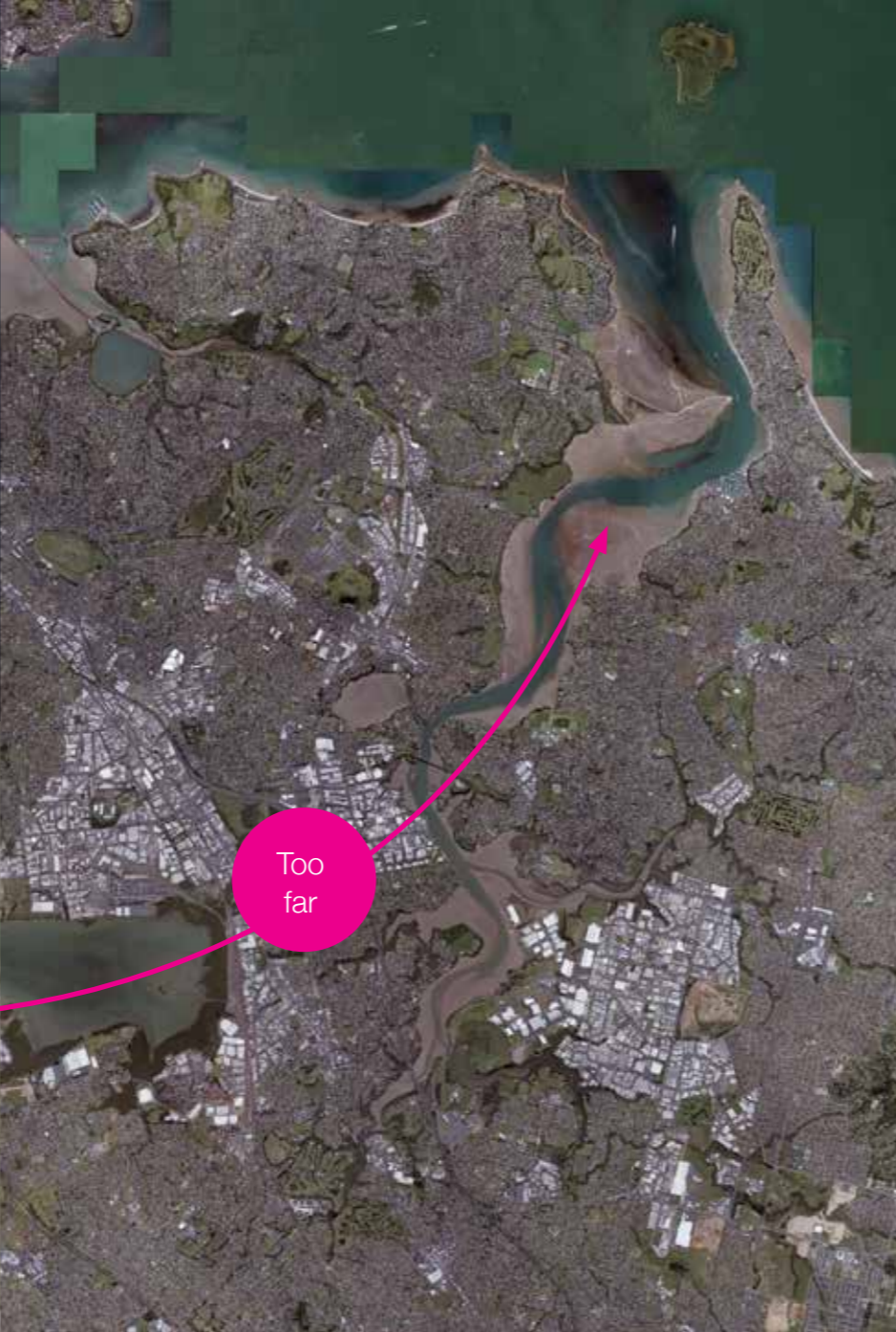
This means not flying too far from where they eat to where they can have a nap while the tide is in.

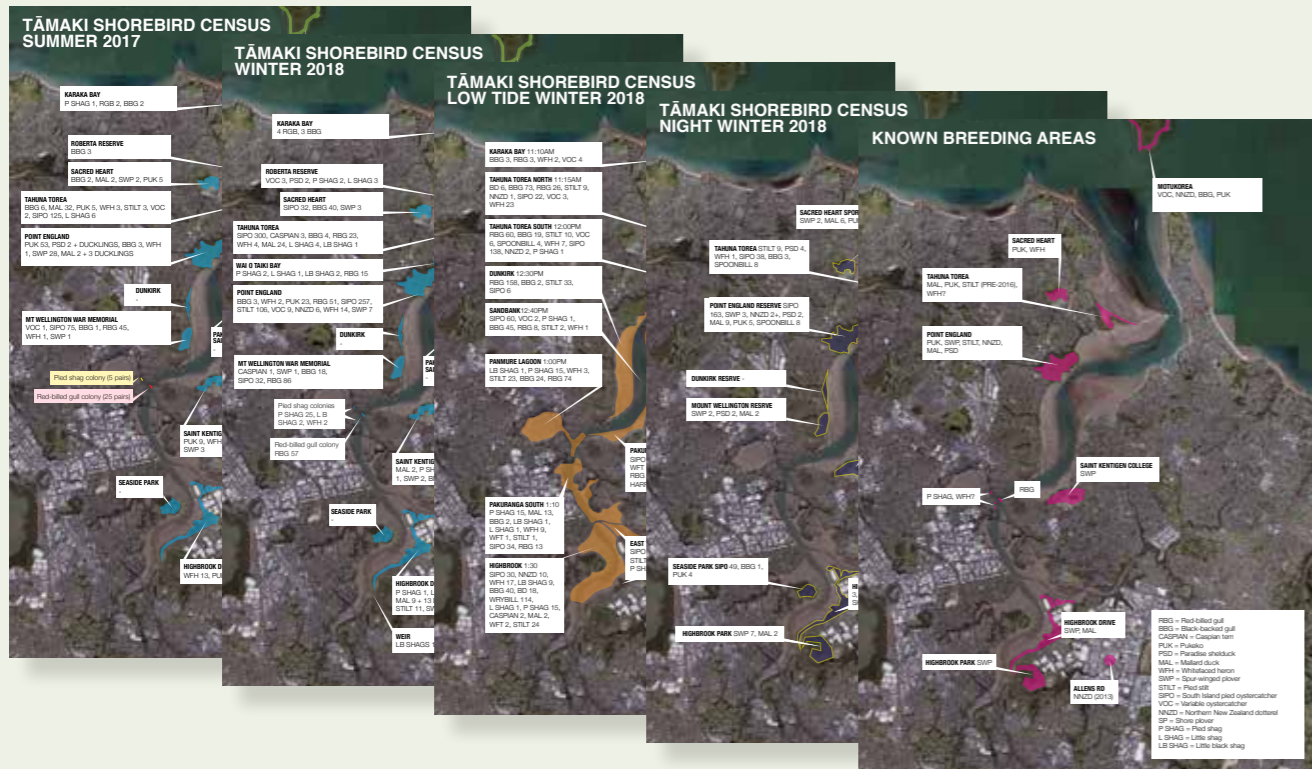
Birds often nap on sports fields if no one is using them, but they are not safe. This one is not sleeping.



"Unlike the Manukau and Waitemata Harbours, the Tāmaki Estuary has very few high tide roosts for shorebirds. The carrying capacity of intertidal areas for shorebirds is linked to the proximity of good high tide roosts. If roosts are degraded or lost, the numbers of shorebirds using the adjacent intertidal feeding areas may decline."

- Dr Tim Lovegrove (2016)





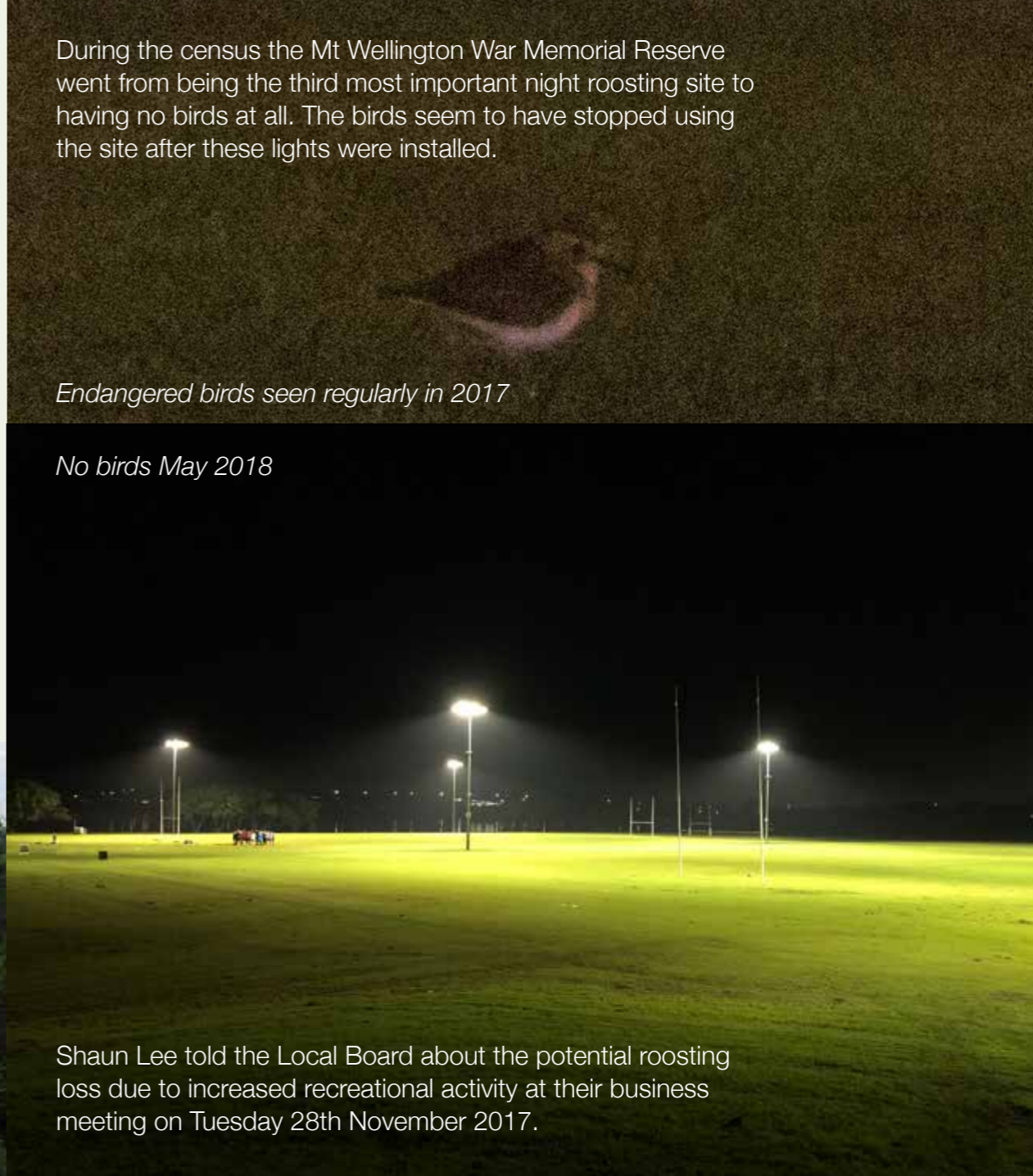
Shaun Lee and his friends have done the largest ever census of the Tāmaki. They have counted birds in winter and summer, at low tide and high tide, at night and day. We have tons of data, we know how the birds currently use the estuary.

Fee free to contact shaun@stet.co.nz
 021 555 425 if you would like detail.

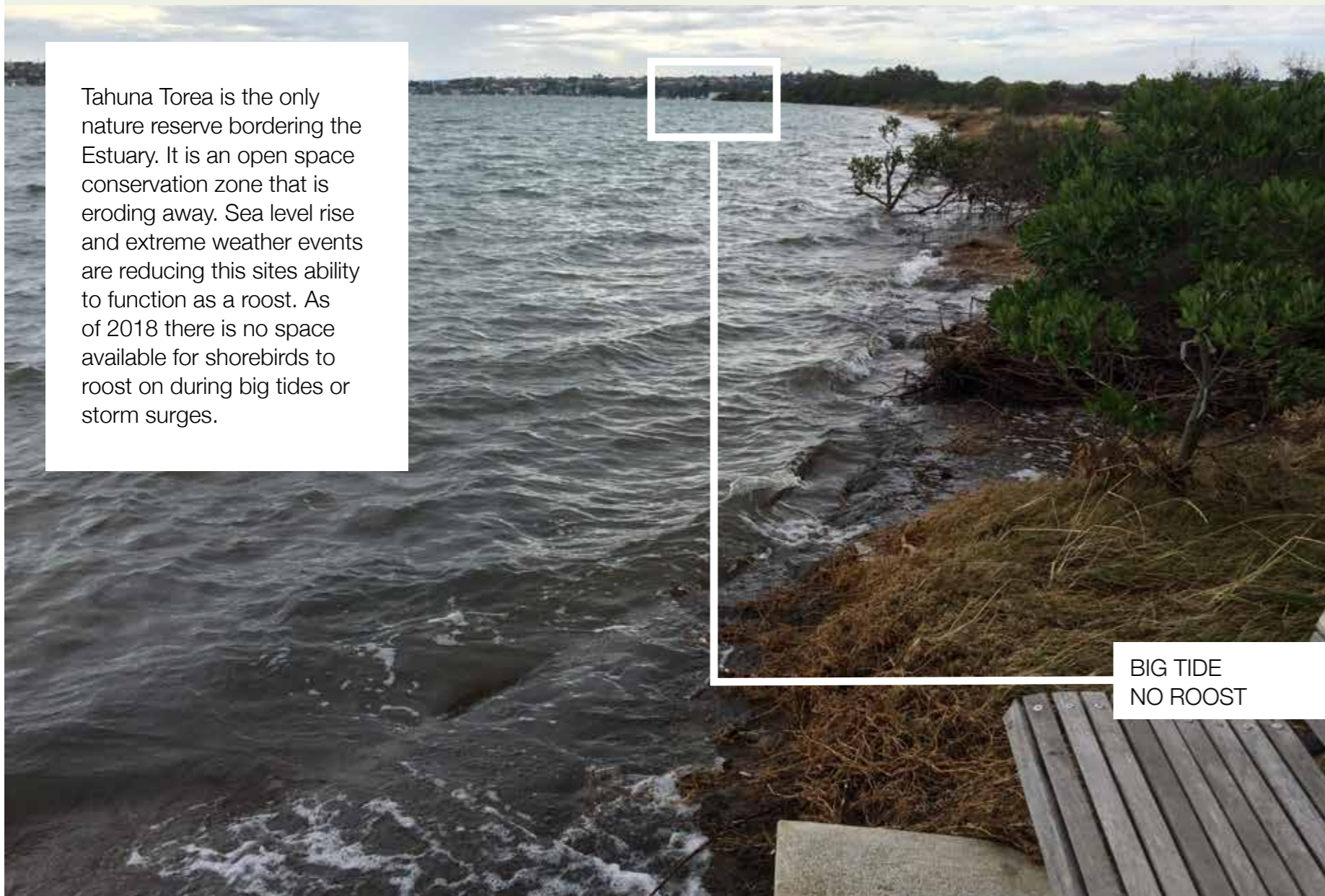
During the census the Mt Wellington War Memorial Reserve went from being the third most important night roosting site to having no birds at all. The birds seem to have stopped using the site after these lights were installed.

Endangered birds seen regularly in 2017

No birds May 2018

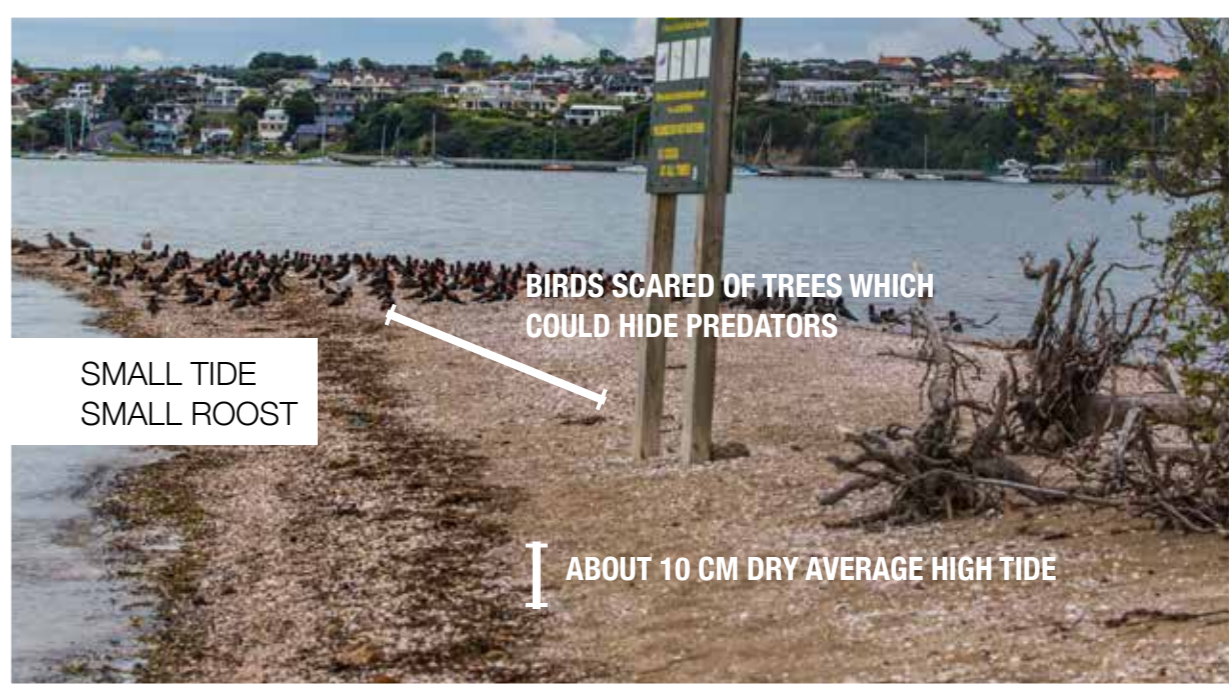


Shaun Lee told the Local Board about the potential roosting loss due to increased recreational activity at their business meeting on Tuesday 28th November 2017.



Tahuna Torea is the only nature reserve bordering the Estuary. It is an open space conservation zone that is eroding away. Sea level rise and extreme weather events are reducing this sites ability to function as a roost. As of 2018 there is no space available for shorebirds to roost on during big tides or storm surges.

**BIG TIDE
NO ROOST**



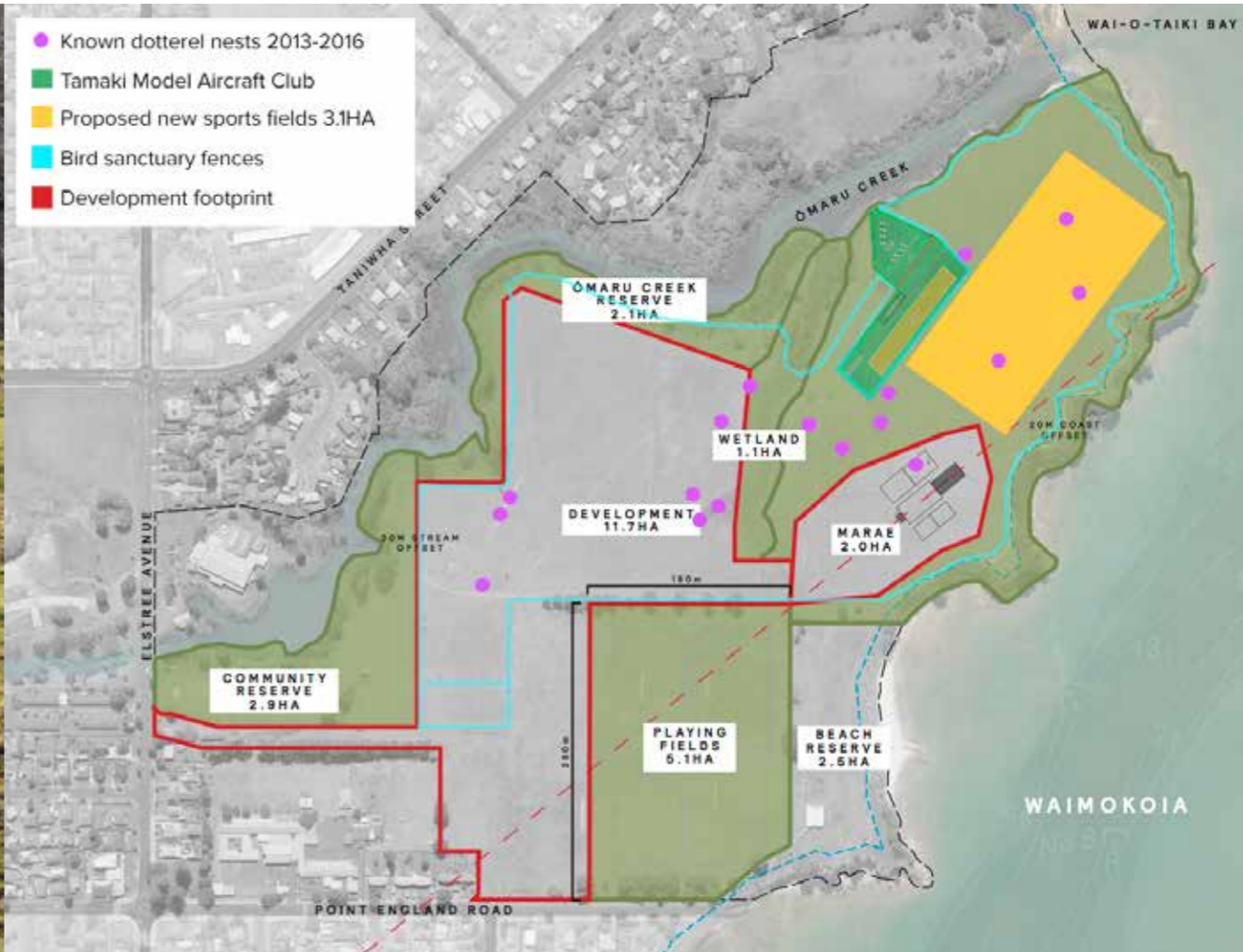
BIRDS SCARED OF TREES WHICH COULD HIDE PREDATORS

**SMALL TIDE
SMALL ROOST**

ABOUT 10 CM DRY AVERAGE HIGH TIDE



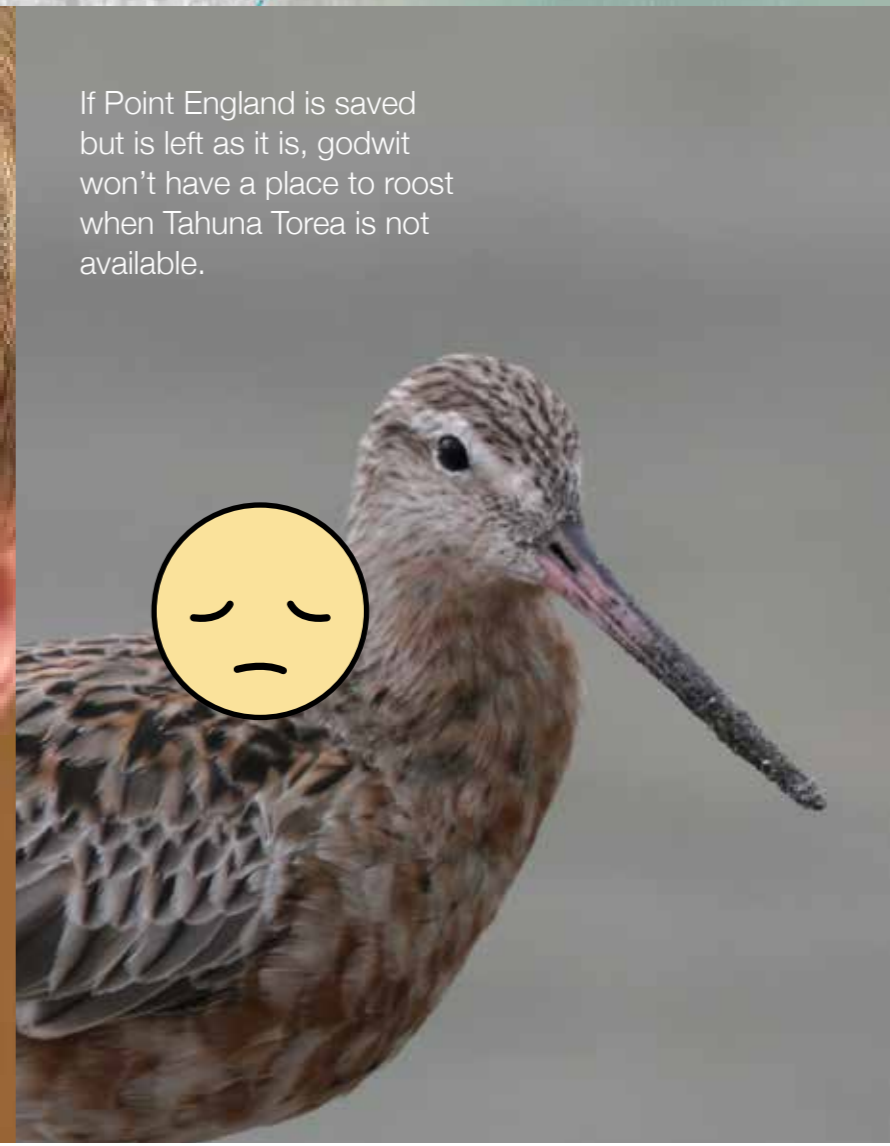
Many of the shorebirds roost at Point England but not the godwit which have only been observed here once. This site is legislated for development if it proceeds it will no longer function as a roost site. The local dotterel will also lose their ability to breed.



If the small number of birds that remain in the Estuary no longer have roost sites, some birds might still try and feed in the Estuary then fly 15km four times a day to sleep at the nearest safe spot, but are unlikely to do it for very long.



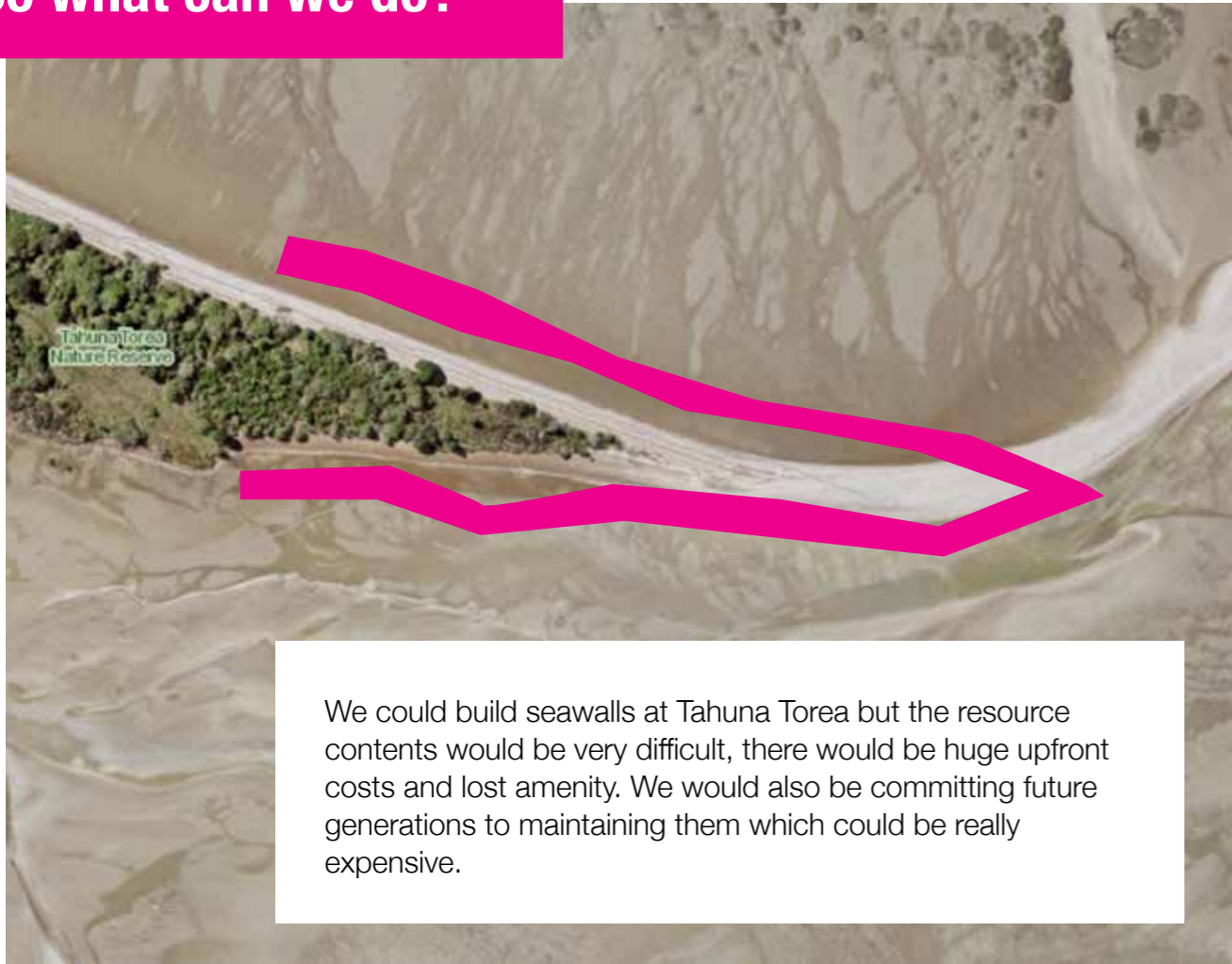
Even if Point England is saved it will be vulnerable to a change in Government and is currently just classed as an informal recreational zone.



If Point England is saved but is left as it is, godwit won't have a place to roost when Tahuna Torea is not available.

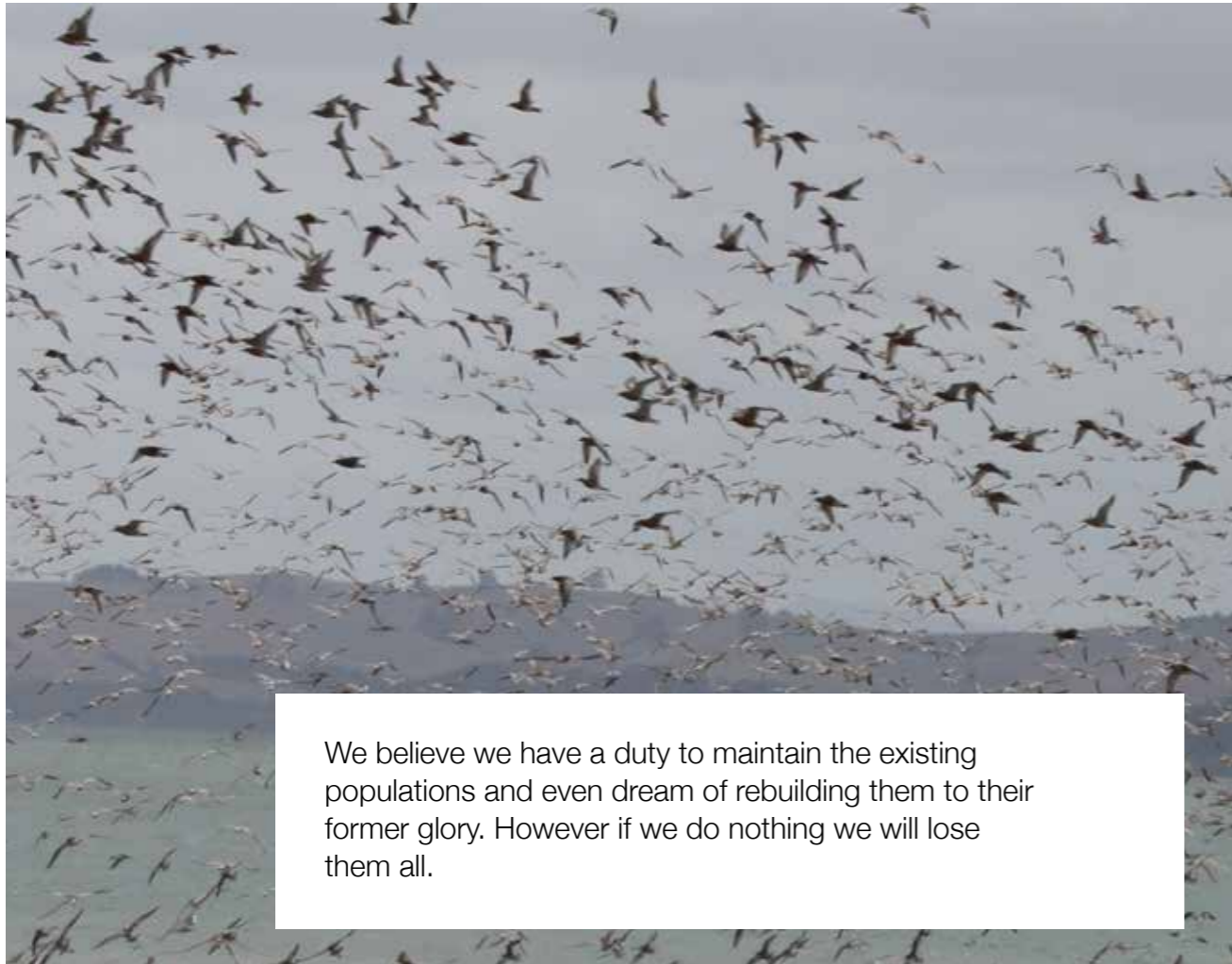
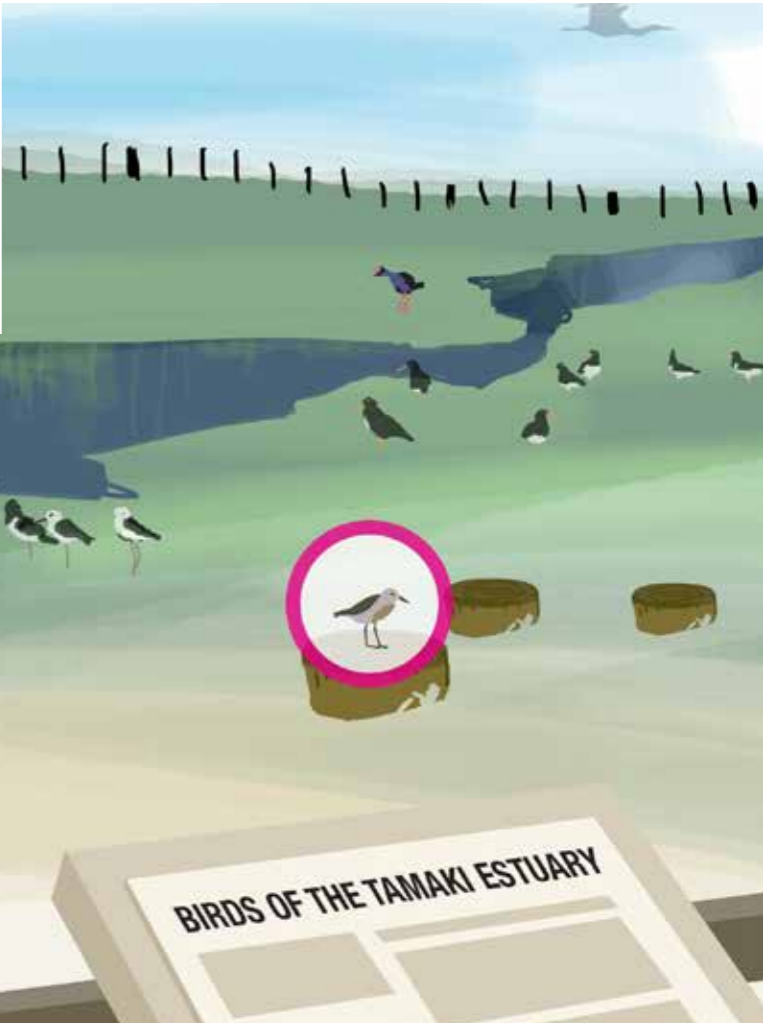
PHOTO BY: Joseph Johnson

So what can we do?

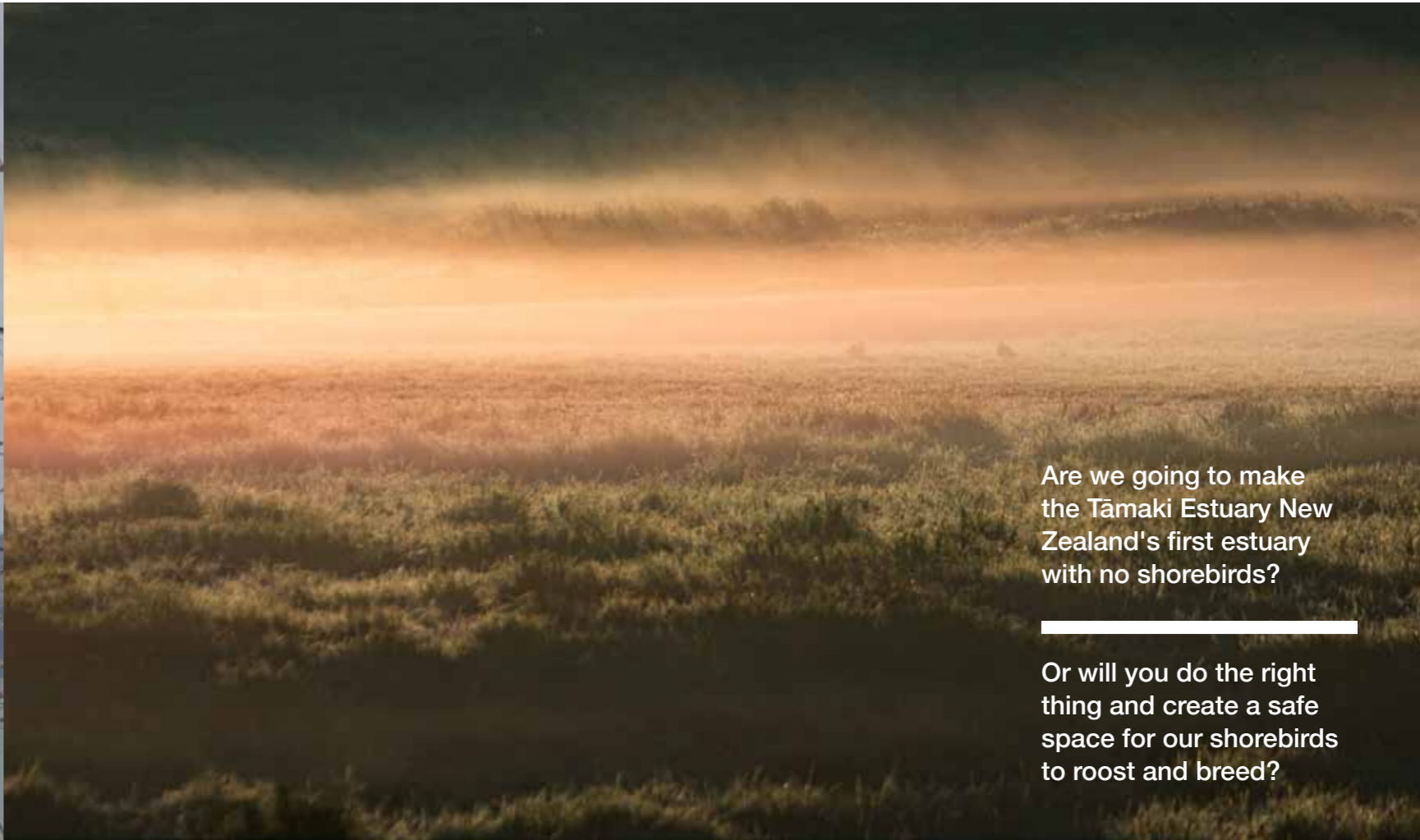


We could build seawalls at Tahuna Torea but the resource contents would be very difficult, there would be huge upfront costs and lost amenity. We would also be committing future generations to maintaining them which could be really expensive.

If we are optimistic and imagine Point England is saved from development we should give it higher status so that it's more protected from future developments. The dotterel breeding areas alone should qualify it as a Significant Ecological Zone. If we modified the habitat to make it more suitable for godwit, Point England could tick all the boxes as safe roosting place for all the wading birds in the Tāmaki Estuary.



We believe we have a duty to maintain the existing populations and even dream of rebuilding them to their former glory. However if we do nothing we will lose them all.



Are we going to make the Tāmaki Estuary New Zealand's first estuary with no shorebirds?

Or will you do the right thing and create a safe space for our shorebirds to roost and breed?