

Bird ideas take flight

19 September 2018 - Ashburton Art Gallery's young after-school art group, the Art Addicts, have been working with local Forest and Bird members on a campaign to raise awareness of the annual migration of endangered birds in the Ashburton River.

The youngsters have created The Flock, an artistic interpretation of some of the rare and threatened birds that gather at this time of the year .

The Flock took flight and landed on the lawn at Baring Square West, near the War Memorial, last week.

It will remain on site for a few weeks to illustrate awareness of the annual migration.

The Flock will also move to other locations around the district to seek safety from predators.

Mid Canterbury Forest & Bird member Edith Smith said in real life nesting birds like the wrybill, banded dotterel, stilt, black fronted tern and black billed gull were under threat from flooding and weeds in the river, as well as predators like cats, ferrets, stoats, rats and hedgehogs.

She said there were a couple of thousand black-billed gulls at the Hakatere River mouth at present and Environment Canterbury was monitoring them.

Mrs Smith said the birds would fill up on food and take proteins on board before setting up for breeding.

Breeding could take place at the river mouth or further up the river and close to the State Highway 1 bridge at Tinwald, which they often favoured.

She urged people to exercise vigilance in the river beds during the spring nesting season and not to wander too close to the birds, especially with dogs and motor vehicles.

The Ashburton River is regarded as a regionally significant habitat for endangered braided river birds.

Forest & Bird and others will conduct a survey of birds in the river at the end of November. More information to follow.