

## White Fronted Terns of Hairini Bridge

When the first Hairini Bridge, a single lane hump wooden structure was replaced in 1952, the piles and some of the superstructure remained. Eventually this became a nesting site for a small group of white fronted terns who ignore the nearby traffic, cyclists and pedestrians.

The adults begin arriving back in mid September. After resting for a few days, the mating rituals begin including posturing, heated discussions and squabbling. When a male has chosen a mate he will offer a small fish. If the gift is accepted, the pair will choose a nesting site and usually one but sometimes two eggs are laid. For about 24 days the parents take turns to incubate the eggs. Once the tiny chick hatches, one parent keeps it well protected while its mate goes fishing. As the chick grows, it is left on its own more and more while both parents frantically catch fish to feed it.

After about 35 days the fledglings are ready to take their first flight. They flap their wings, look at the water and then suddenly they are gone. One parent may accompany them on their first flights and feed them where ever they happen to land.

The last of the terns leave the Bridge in mid summer. It is assumed that they gather on the beaches around Tauranga before dispersing for the winter months. While most adults remain in NZ, a large number of juveniles and some adults migrate across the Tasman Sea to the south-east coast of Australia.

- 1 Pairing
- 2-4 Mating
- 5-6 The Squabble
- 7 A Gift
- 8 Egg in Nest
- 9 Changing Incubation Duties
- 10 Protecting the Nestling
- 11 Feeding the Chick
- 12 One Parent Remains
- 13 Fledgling Stretches its Wings
- 14 Fledgling Attracting a Parent
- 15 Feeding the Fledgling Near Nest
- 16 Feeding Fledgling Wherever it Is
- 17 Returning from a Flight.
- 18 Leaving Hairini Bridge

