

## Waikanae Estuary Newsletter No 41 July 2010

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*Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001*

### Swans' day out at the seaside

My friend Helen has a lovely B&B at the beach front, "Helen's Bed & breakfast". On the adjacent Waimeha lagoon a pair of black swans raised a family of four cygnets; the parents had over flown the area many times before nesting and knew it well. They decided to take the babies to the beach for a day out. They waddled out of the lagoon down Fernside Street which is a small side road, and then into Tutere Street, which is quite busy. All the cars came to a screaming halt upon seeing our family walking down the middle of the road, as if they owned it. They detoured up Helen's driveway, across her back yard, up the sand hill. I would imagine to be quite hard going through the soft sand and down the far side onto the beach. I really don't know why they wanted to go into the sea as there is no food that I know of for them to eat. The cygnets can't fly so eventually they will have to waddle all the way back to the lagoon, where there was plenty for them to feed on.

Black swans do go out to sea at times. They commute between the North and the South Islands and have been known to alight upon the water, maybe to rest or to get nourishment from some seaweed or whatever is floating on the surface. Some have been self introduced from Australia—quite a long flight. I don't know how they get their bearings because if they miss New Zealand the next stop is Antarctica. Note—as a point of interest the male swan is known as a cob, the female as a pen with the babies called cygnets.



Photographs by Helen Anderson



The Canada geese arrive sometimes in their hundreds to spend the night in the river.  
They are gone first thing in the morning



Waikanae estuary Scientific Reserve

Photograph by Mik

**The true story of Henry the wild black swan and Thomas the white goose  
documenting their thirty year sojourn on the Waimanu Lagoon at Waikanae  
New Zealand**

**Part five**

*There have been other dramatic rescues on the Waimanu Lagoons ...*

One day I picked up a phone message from a lady by the name of Sandra, who lives by the lagoons. She was most upset as a baby swan had become tangled in some very heavy nylon fishing line. Sandra had just finished reading my book on the estuary so rang my number and left a “help” message. She also rang my friend Eileen Thomas, as she was listed in the book and is the person who supplied most of the photographs for its publication. Eileen said she would come down immediately, and as soon as I picked up the message I jumped into my car and drove off to the Lagoons. In the meantime, Sandra had hailed a young fellow who was walking by with his family. They waded into the water and Sandra lifted the swan, holding it up, as by this time only its head was above the water and it was very nearly drowning. They had no means of cutting the nylon so the young chap parted the bird’s feathers, pushed his face into the swan’s body and cut the nylon with his teeth. The swan had nylon line wrapped around its neck and body very tightly and the other end of the line was tangled in the growth on the bottom of the lagoon. When the swan tried to swim away, the nylon line would tighten and the bird was using a large amount of energy to keep its head from going underwater. Eileen and I eventually arrived and also took to the water, pulling the nylon line up as far as we could off the bottom but it was tightly snagged. Eileen, being the resourceful woman she is, had



brought a pair of scissors so we were able to cut the line from around the bird’s body and finally release it. The swan hissed its thanks then dived under the water and up again half a dozen times before preening itself. Thomas the goose had been watching all this keenly—in fact, it was Thomas’s cries which alerted Sandra to the impending tragedy in the first place. Thomas made sure his young charge was OK and shepherded it back to the rest of the adolescent cygnets who had all been waiting and taking in the drama with great interest. We pulled the nylon up out of the water and deposited it in the nearest waste bin, very happy with the outcome of our rescue mission. Despite some bleeding on its neck and wing where the line had cut into it, by the next day the young swan was as good as gold and suffered no lasting ill effects.

***This saga is featured as a serial over the next few months  
Average Monthly Hits for Six months ---11327***

*Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae*

**More wild birds visit Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve than any other area in the Wellington province**

Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking