

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter

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Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001



Waikanae river looking to where it swings south to its outlet to the sea

It's a beautiful winter's day and looking down river, before it turns to muddy sand is a shingle bank. This is a lovely place for birds to rest on. A white-faced heron is quietly checking out the edge of the river for food. Ten paradise shelducks are loafing on the shingle enjoying the sunshine. A single large black shag sits aloof to one side; six pied shags are on a log closer to the river's edge. Half a dozen mallard ducks are sunning themselves on the shingle, with another pair feeding just off the current at the river's edge. A pair of pied stilts are daintily feeding in the shallows. The tide is almost as low as it gets as we continue looking down the river to the large bend where it swings south to its outlet to the sea. There is a little activity as the little black shags check out the river for herrings in their usual pack of around thirty birds and a couple of pied shags are also feeding. The red-billed gulls are off to one side looking at the houses on the river terrace, where the residents feed them scraps. The rest of the river is very quiet with the black-backed gulls and the white-fronted terns roosting on the sea's edge in large numbers. Caspian terns are also here to one side of the sand spit, along with the oystercatches. Although things look quiet the birds are there if you know where to look.

Our wonderful estuary bird

We have a beautiful little bird called a banded dotterel which commutes against the prevailing wind to Australia.

We have another beautiful 'bird' who frequents the lagoons and is going to Australia, much to the distress of the estuary inhabitants. And she may not commute back. Sandra, our wonderful Ward Councillor, is leaving us. She was the bird who saved the baby swan that was tangled in the nylon fishing line and nearly drowned; she was the bird who whenever there was a problem, solved it in no time. she was the bird who got the sign showing the baby ducks crossing the road. When we had the unveiling of the memorial for thirty-year old Henry the black swan Sandra, was there to officiate. She was the bird who plugged Waikanae for all she was worth. Sandra, please commute back to us and if that's not possible, remember us all at Waikanae and the Estuary—We will miss you.



Sandra Patton

Fur Seal pup in Distress

I had a ring from Eddie, who lives nearby, to say there was a seal pup in distress on the beach. It had thick nylon from a net around its body. The green mesh was wound around its neck very tightly. Rushing down to the beach I met Eddie and his wife Barbara. I had taken a blanket with me and some scissors so we threw the blanket over the seal and Barbara straddled it with the seal enfolded. I made sure the blanket was around the seal's face so it couldn't bite. After folding back the blanket to expose its neck and the nylon, Eddie cut the rope to release it from its entanglement. The poor little seal was in a bad way and looked like it would



Heading back to sea

have had some difficulty swallowing and could do with a good feed. It waddled towards the water as we moved away to let it recover.



Photographs by Rob Jackson and Mik Peryer

We have just removed the nylon, see it in Eddie's hand and Barbara is getting ready to beat a hasty retreat after looking at the seal's sharp front teeth.

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 seven

Our birds sitting on another nest hatched six out of seven eggs. The seventh egg didn't hatch. Henrietta sat for forty eight hours without shifting off the nest waiting for the last egg to hatch, but in the end gave up. She went to the water's edge had a drink and let the six babies test the water, leaving the last egg unattended in the nest. Henry was really upset about this, went to the nest looked down at the egg and promptly tried to keep it warm by pulling some dried grass over it. He continued to keep a vigil for about thirty minutes. Henrietta kept the little ones at the water's edge and wouldn't return to the nest. Henry eventually gave up and followed the new family into the water where he took his place at the front and honked his way across the lagoon telling all and sundry about his new brood.

Our love birds had an undisturbed run of both Waimanu Lagoons for several years, blissfully carrying on a seemingly never-ending cycle of producing babies, rearing them, then chasing them off the lagoons as they grew up to fend for themselves and find their own way in the world. About two years ago, some of their previous broods returned and claimed the lower lagoon for themselves. One pair hatched five babies elsewhere and brought them onto that lagoon. Shortly after, they found another set of swans had made a lovely new nest beside a flax bush where they had been sitting on four eggs for three weeks. The new parents chased these two swans with much flapping of wings, off the lagoon onto the river and wouldn't let them back, so the eggs couldn't be hatched. They wanted the lower lagoon for themselves and were unafraid to fight and keep it that way.

This saga is featured as a serial over the next few months

Hits last Month--Eleven thousand five hundred & fifty-two

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