

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter

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Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001



Photographer Rachel Salive

A Family group of young scaup on Waimanu Lagoon

Thirty years ago there were no scaup on our estuary lagoons. They are little diving ducks and as can be seen by the photograph are beautifully coloured in browns, but on the water at a distance they appear black. The males have yellow eyes. There are quite a number of family groups breeding on the lagoons and at times there may be up to a hundred birds. They come and they go, are quite fast flyers and have white feathers under their wings.

Waikanae Estuary Bird Wall Hanger compiled by Waikanae Primary School



In 2008 Jane Lumsden's Waikanae primary school students, room twelve, with the help of Helen Taitoko, compiled this hanging over a period. Using Hessian and natural colours they depicted the wonderful bird life that abounds within our estuary reserve.

The class went to the estuary to get their inspiration, found the memorial sign on the Waimanu lagoon and along with the resident birds, used these to help choose which bird each would individually craft. The birds were padded to make them stand out and hand stitched, taking around six weeks, at two hours a week, to complete.

The hanger was on display at Mahara Gallery Waikanae, in February 2009 for all to view and will end up in the school hall along with the flags other classes have made.

Royal spoonbills

There have been three royal spoonbills on the estuary these last few months. However just lately this has increased to around twelve including a couple of young birds. They are easy to distinguish, although the same size as their parents, they flap their wings and worry the older birds for food. The parents will fly to the other side of the river to get away from this constant hassling, but to no avail as the younger birds follow.

Our love story

With the passing of Henry the patriarch, the new resident male swan, who has claimed the top lagoon as his own and who has hatched a family of five cygnets, has been actively chasing both Henrietta and Thomas the goose off the lagoon. Henrietta relocated to the river for a time by herself, until Thomas found and joined her. However he didn't stay long.

By himself, Thomas has been so despondent; he just has no get up and go, as he used to have. When I approached him the other day he just walked away ahead of me, whereas, when he had the family to look after he was alert with his head up always looking out for trouble, and would run towards you.

The good news is that I spotted both Henrietta and Thomas together recently, on the bottom lagoon. They were talking to each other just like the old days. She would raise and lower her neck at Thomas and he was talking back to her flat out, beak to beak on the water. It was lovely to see. Then another aggressive male swan flew the length of the lagoon and confronted our birds. Well then, Thomas did something I have never seen him do before. He stretched out his neck and paddled as fast as he could straight at this swan and chased it away. In all the years I have known them, I have never seen Thomas chase a swan. He hates ducks and was always hassling them but left it to Henry and Henrietta to chase the other swans away. It was almost as if he had to protect Henrietta. It was amazing to see.

The saga of our love birds has taken another twist and it will be interesting to see how it plans out in the next few months—it certainly isn't over yet.



Waikanae river walkway

photo by Mik

Hope you enjoyed our Twenty-sixth newsletter.

Mik & Mik Peryer

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae

www.wgtn.wotzon.com/waikanaebirdtours

Contributions towards a memorial plaque on a large boulder are still being received from world-wide nature lovers.

[More wild birds visit Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve than any other area in the Wellington province](#)