

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter

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Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001



Photograph Paul Breen

Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve

A Cranky Paradise Drake [By Tim Nichol]

During a pleasant afternoon whilst walking around the verge of the lagoon between Takahe Drive and Kotuku Drive, my wife and I paused to watch a female Paradise duck escorting her 10 ducklings. A drake arrived from the south flying very fast. He made a direct attack on the duck. The duck took violent evasive action, flapping her wings on the water and trying desperately to avoid the drake. He chased her all over the lagoon, paddling and flying low whilst trying to peck at her. On occasions she took to the air, turning and diving whilst trying to avoid him. He pressed on relentlessly, making her take to the air. She departed the scene on several occasions, then circled round the lagoon obviously keen to protect the ducklings. During her very short flights he turned his anger to the ducklings who immediately dived underwater, fanning out in all directions. Once he managed to catch a duckling by the neck but it soon got away. He then returned to relentlessly attack the returned unfortunate duck, whenever she was back on the water. After another session of chasing, flapping, diving and flying around the lagoon, he suddenly lost interest and flew to the south at a very fast pace. This vicious attack only lasted about five minutes but it was somewhat distressing to the onlookers. There appeared to be no other ducks on the lagoon at the time. The swans and their cygnets kept well out of the way. A bit later on all ten ducklings and their mother scrambled ashore, apparently no worse for wear.

[It is the mating season—Mik]



Rogerbee Photographix--- Roger Smith photograph



Paradise ducklings

Nga Manu Images David Mudge



Godwits and a Pied-stilt

Photograph Roger Smith

A few of the bar-tailed godwits, that have flown across the widest part of the Pacific Ocean from Alaska, where they breed and spend the northern summer, have made the estuary their home. When the godwits are feeding on the river's edge their colouring blends them into the background and makes them hard to pick out, but like a lot of the birds, when they move is when you can spot them.

The pied-stilts, don't like different species muscling in on their feeding ground. Two godwits were feeding on the river's edge beside a couple of pied-stilts. One of the stilts, with wings outspread and a hopping run, chased a godwit away. The godwit, which has a heavier body mass than the stilt, shifted out of the way smartly, running to another spot on the river and continued to feed. This isn't an unusual trait with our estuary birds; previously, in other newsletters I have documented instances of the same behavior. Although I was quite surprised that the stilt, when feeding, was aggressive towards the godwit. I have seen a pied-stilt acting very aggressively or should I say very defensively before, when they were nesting. It was chasing a dog, which was on the loose and was tearing all over the place. The pied-stilt dive-bombed the dog and then, did the broken wing ploy to try to entice it away. Eventually the dog's owner took the dog under control.



Rosemary Hurst Photograph.

Oystercatchers



The oystercatchers are nesting with three eggs, see photograph by Roger Smith taken by the river mouth. Note how camouflaged the eggs are. Quite a number of years ago an oystercatcher had a nest on the sand-spit and a sign was erected stating '*Nesting birds don't disturb,*' and what happened? Some people read the sign, had a look at the nest,

frightened off the bird and a black-backed gull took the chick-just like that.

Mik's book "Tales of Waikanae Estuary" is for sale with very limited copies available for Xmas.

This is a free newsletter and I enjoy sending it out; I hope you enjoy reading the stories. However there are costs involved in producing it and any financial contributions are welcome. If you wish to make a contribution, please use this account number for your deposit -03-0774-0881067-00 MF or MB Peryer Westpac bank New Zealand
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Hits last Month Twelve Thousand and Eighty One.

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae
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