

*Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001*



*Royal spoon-bills over flying the estuary reserve*

*Photograph by Mik*

The royal spoonbills in the above photographs have flown in from somewhere, maybe from Kapiti Island, where some nest. They like to go for a long flight now and then. Their whole life is dedicated to finding enough food to eat and to this end they check out all the local estuaries, lakes and wet lands. Take note of how they fly, in a bunch, but without the disciplined flight of the Canada geese, or the lazy head pulled in flight of the heron. Perhaps these birds are juveniles exploring.

### Youngsters

These two young pied shags have left their nest in the shag tree on Waimanu lagoon. Having swum to the other side, they have made that side their playground. It's a little hard to see, but these shags have a feather in their beak with which they have been playing first, one bird will have it next the other. The one on the right, although slightly smaller is the older bird. This can be established by the colouring, the bird on the left is still motley with its baby feathers. They have no fear of humans and can be approached really close up. This is because of where they have been living. Their nest tree is surrounded by houses with people children and dogs frequenting the area. The lagoons are a sanctuary so they should have no reason to be afraid.



*photograph by Mik*



### Chaffinch

This little fellow followed my tourist party around the lagoon, hopping around and flying to keep up with us. What a lovely friendly bird he is. The chaffinch is a British import, having been bought into New Zealand by our early settlers, to remind them of the old country.

## Magpies



These three magpies upset Moira's red-billed gulls, who have claimed our front lawn as their own. The gulls were screeching and posturing and generally making a terrible noise. We couldn't make out what the trouble was about, until first one then three magpies hopped into view. The magpies don't visit very often but I suspect that the parents were out with their youngster exploring. The red-billed gulls flew into the air and dive-bombed the magpies who just stayed still as the birds

dived and flicked their large rapier-like bills into the air, hardly moving. It was a turnaround for the magpies as they are usually the ones to do the diving and chasing, especially if a hawk is about. The magpies ignored the gulls and continued to forage as they made their way down the bank.



## Scaup

There was a disturbance in the water and upon checking it out; I saw a large black shag and a scaup were swimming around from one side of the lagoon to the other. It appeared they were chasing each other. Just a little way away were a couple of mature scaup and four babies. The lagoon isn't very wide at this point and the scaup was obviously protecting its brood. It was being very brave, as the black shag is a very large bird and the scaup very little. The shag after a while gave up and hopped onto the bank and the scaup swam to be united with its young again. It has been reported that shags take ducklings. I wonder if the huge influx of pied shags within the last two and a half years, with up to forty roosting and nesting in their tree on the Waimanu lagoon, has anything to do with the lack of ducklings reaching maturity.

## White-fronted terns



The white-fronted terns have returned to the estuary, having been away for a time. There are around three hundred of these lovely birds bunched together on the sand-spit where they congregate waiting for the next feed. If a school of fish is spotted just off shore, away they all go wheeling this way and that, diving into the water to recover their food. Some take the little fish back to their roosting place on the sand and devour it from there.

*Photograph David Greaves*



*The upper reaches of Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve*

*Photograph Eileen Thomas*

*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**