

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter

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Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001

Here is our first newsletter for 2008. Let's hope the birdlife on the estuary has as good a year this year as in 2007—Mik



On the left is the Scotsman Harry, here on business –He flew in on Tuesday from the U/K and out the next Tuesday. He is seen here getting sun burnt with Chris his Mentor for his NZ business trip.

So what happens on his day off? Well he's off to Waikanae estuary bird tours, having been picked up in a vintage car from the railway station after having had a lovely relaxing scenic train ride from Wellington to Paraparumu with Chris.

Upon arrival at our place, Moira as usual, supplied a cuppa and her famous scones and before they could get too comfortable Mik gave them some old shoes and down to the river they all went, where Mik had a net set. Wading into the water no deeper than our knees we cleared the net of the six plump flounders that we had caught overnight, these along with the six we had caught the previous evening constituted our contribution to the street barbeque to be held that evening.

I dare to say that there would be very few places worldwide where you could wade into a river in an urban environment knee deep and catch your supper, like we here on the Nature coast can do.

Harry helped by Chris gutted and cleaned the fish with Mik looking on [*–no good having a dog and barking yourself.*]

After a scrumpus lunch again supplied by Moira, off we went, again, in the vintage car to the estuary, to start our tour.

After many photographs and plenty of Mik's true stories, seeing twenty four different species of birds and going on a mystery trip as an addition to the tour, we again ended up at Mik and Moira's home, on top of the highest sand hill, overlooking the river and the estuary, to take in the magnificent views, and more refreshments.

By this time our travellers, after having had an intense time of it at their conference, partook in some horizontal PT [snoozing].

After a spell we all went next door to our neighbours where we introduced our guests to all and sundry. The flounders, some of which were swimming in the river a couple of hours previously, were cooked on the barbecue by yours truly, who is a lousy cook at home but a wonderful one on the barbecue. I dare to say that they were the best flounder Harry our Scotsman had ever caught and eaten on the same day –him being fresh out from Scotland. Of course the fish were only the entree, with steak, sausages, spuds in their jackets, onions and all the goodies that constitute a good old Kiwi barbecue. This was followed by pavalova, strawberries and ice cream with trifle.

The two of them were put on the train at nine o'clock that evening, back to Wellington, and I bet they dozed all the way.

This estuary of ours is just a wonderful place –Full of surprises/

White heron

We have had a visit from a white heron. It's the first time in three years, funnily enough in the same month, that we previously had this iconic bird within the estuary.

He was resting in a pine tree on the side of the southern Waimanu lagoon when a harrier hawk, which had been ranging around the edges of the lagoon, spooked him out of the tree, along with a white faced heron. They both landed beside the pipe which conveys the water under the roadway between the lagoons. This is a



*Two herons over the Waimanu lagoon.
Compare the size of the white faced
heron with the white one
Photographer Mik Peryer*



*White heron on Cabbage tree Waimanu
lagoon
Photographer Mik Peryer*

favourite feeding place of the white-faced herons. He stayed on the pipe for a little while, and then flew into the large pine tree where the pied shags are nesting, rested, then flew into a nearby cabbage tree. He then flew up the lagoons to the northern end. He appears very restless. Shortly after, he came flying back at a good speed, chased by ten red-billed gulls, which are a fraction of the heron's size; they were dive bombing the poor heron. As he passed over a pair of paradise ducks with ducklings, the ducks took off after him as well, chasing him for a time. He was well and

truly harassed by our resident birds. This bird isn't like most of our estuary birds, who are used to dogs and people, he is very shy. It is apparent that the resident birds of our estuary tolerate each other, however when a different species drops in they don't like it. This also happened when we were visited by a little egret, the birds really hassled him as well.

Mothers

A mallard duck with seven ducklings had her brood separated when mother duck paddled off to the other side of the lagoon, two ducklings stayed under the overhanging foliage. Upon seeing their family taking off across the water the two separated duckling swam flat out across the open water to catch up. Down swooped a large black-backed gull and grabbed one of the ducklings and flew off with it. The mother duck exploded off the water straight at the gull, which dropped the duckling back into the water. He immediately paddled off to safety. One very lucky duckling.



Photographer Mik Peryer

It's pretty tough having to put up with these sunsets
Hope you have enjoyed your copy of our estuary newsletter

Mik Peryer

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