

THE GOOSE THAT TOOK A CHANCE

Story Denise Harrison---Paintings Samantha Long

I remember the day the geese arrived at the river. A green plastic rubbish bin was the unusual transportation. One by one the geese were delivered to the same spot. As the lid was lifted from the bin, an angry confused goose would appear. Each goose thrust itself forward into daylight flapping and honking loudly. Four geese blinking in the sunlight were left to wonder if this could be their new home, the Waikanae River. It didn't take any time at all for the geese to settle into their new life on the river.



They seemed to enjoy gliding up and down, up and down, completely at home in their new surroundings. This continued for a number of years. The geese discovering that the river was a great place to live. One bonus of their new home had to be the bags of bread and crusts brought by



children and families. The noisy hungry geese would rush at anybody who so much as carried a bag. This often scared children who would run and hide. Passing adults had been seen crossing the road to avoid the unfriendly hissing. One family even decided that feeding the geese through the open car window was a safer option. During all of these lazy hazy days for the geese other visitors to the river came and went. These visitors were Canada geese. At a certain time each year at dusk they arrived flying in their "Vee" formation. They would spend each night on the river where it was safe to rest, then, early morning off they fly.....

At times the white geese tried to mix with the aloof Canada geese by trying to swim with them. But the visitors were not interested, and they would swim gently away with their beaks in the air. Until one day something incredible happened.

On this particular morning there was a huge commotion. One of the white geese had decided to join the Canada geese as they took flight. With honks and madly flapping wings somehow the white goose managed to take off. Leaving behind three astonished friends, it joined the end of the "Vee" formation as it left the river. The chunky white goose's loud honk was out of place with the other calls from its new companions. Their sleek graceful flying no effort in the sky, unlike the new addition to the team! The formation of geese graced the early morning sunrise of pink and silvery gold.



This goose had no idea what lay ahead when it chose to join the Canada geese. It took a chance. A chance at something different, a challenge, a risk and certainly a change from what is expected from a clumsy semi-domesticated bird.



Now we watch to see the white goose as each evening it arrives. Then each morning early it leaves, accepted as a member of the Canada flying squad. The white goose has moved forward in its place in the “Vee” and at times is even the leader. It is now a sleek, more streamlined version of how it used to be. We do not know how far it travels or even where it goes. But it has chosen the Canada geese to spend time with. When it returns it stays with them even though its old friends call loudly “Don’t forget who you really are!”

This goose has a message for us all. Try something new, something not expected of you.

Give yourself a challenge, and just like the white goose, take a chance.

This white goose has been seen regularly leading the Canadas in front of their “Vee” formation and has been observed landing in the sea with them at Pukerua Bay, and feeding with them at Queen Elizabeth Park and the Pauatahanui inlet. It has become an integral addition to their group. The white geese generally speaking are the male or gander and the motley ones are the geese, they are Pilgrim geese and are on the decrease world wide. This is the same type of goose as our famous Thomas.---Mik

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 eleven



Photograph—Eileen Thomas

Our love birds are having a really hard time of it having been chased off the Waimanu lagoons by the other swans. They made a nest away from everyone up the creek behind the swings at Queens’s Road and raised six babies. Soon the parents took them down stream, past Trish the eel lady’s place, where they stopped for some refreshments. They arrived at the large paddock at the top end of the Northern Waimanu lagoon, intent on reclaiming this lagoon for themselves. However, the two swans with the two quite mature cygnets didn’t think that that was a good idea. They chased the three of them, Thomas the goose included and the six babies back into the creek and upstream.

The little cygnet fell out of the nest into the water. I had built a pathway back up to the nest and the baby is slowly making it back under the watchful eyes of Thomas and Henry.

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

Hits last Month—Eleven thousand seven hundred and eighty seven

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