

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter
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Waikanae Estuary Bird Tours 9051001



Ready to leave home

Photograph Eileen Thomas

If you look closely at the cygnets in the above photograph you can see how they are maturing. Notice how black their necks have become. The one on the right is obviously the least mature one, with the black feathers slowly creeping from the top of its head down. Even though the pen [the female swan] lays her eggs, one every second day, she hatches them all on the same day. I am not sure why they don't all mature at the same time. The parent birds have chased these youngsters off the lagoon onto the river, to look after themselves, as they are old enough to find their own way in the world. The cygnets have their white flight feathers on their wings [see insert] and regularly do test flights around the estuary, it won't be long before they take off and never come back as they explore further afield. They are wonderful flyers and can fly to the South Island the Wairarapa and north to Taupo and beyond. But they won't be allowed to come back to the lagoons to nest as the mature swans [their parents] would again chase them away as they are very territorial and can't bear to have their previous broods anywhere near their new babies. They will have to find their own home somewhere, to raise their young, when they eventually pair up and start mating.

Welcome swallows



The swallows are back on the lagoons and river after being away for a little while. They regularly nest at the lagoons, using the same nesting spot every year. Sometimes using the same nest, but at times build a new one, however once they find a suitable nesting posse, will return to it again and again. Their nest is made of mud bricks which they spit out from their beaks. Swallows are very good bricklayers, laying their little bricks one on top of the other in a semicircle, against a wall or hung from an overhang, usually under a structure like a bridge or porch. The inside is like an eiderdown lined with feathers. They are wonderful flyers, very swift, ducking and diving after insects, skimming over the water then soaring high

in the sky. These birds were self introduced from Australia in the nineteen fifties and are now widespread throughout New Zealand.

Birdlife



It's the time of the year when the thrush, blackbird and most of the smaller birds of the estuary are staking out their territory, pairing up and looking to nest. If you look at the very top of the Norfolk pine tree beside the river, [see the photograph, also the pine in the bottom photograph] you may see a thrush, early most mornings, singing his heart out, proclaiming to all and sundry that this is his area. The blackbirds are also making their presence felt, especially in our garden, scratching amongst our plants and looking for food. At times up to eight can be seen together, all very busy feeding on worms and insects in the grass on the lawns around the lagoons. It's quite noticeable how the tui have increased in numbers over the last few years. With the maturing of the trees around the houses of the subdivisions and in the reserve, there is now an abundance of food for these wonderful native birds.

The idea of a corridor from Kapiti Island, through the Scientific Reserve, up the river to the mountains has come into effect. The Friends of the River and the Waikanae Estuary Care Group should be starting to feel very proud of themselves. The plantings they have been doing are starting to increase the numbers and species of birds within the estuary, the river corridor and its surrounds.

The Waikanae Estuary Care Group

The above care group is doing a wonderful job of improving our estuary. Most of the trees and shrubs used are propagated in two shade houses, with a container shed for their tools and equipment. Every Thursday a bunch of dedicated people spend their morning at the shade houses attending to the plants and getting them ready to be planted out on the designated planting days. To help with the planting a team from Greater Wellington Regional Council come in the day before and drill holes with a post hole borer where the plants are to go. There is no physical digging only placing and setting the plants into the holes. To date around 22,500, native trees and shrubs have been planted.

Thomas

Thomas the goose is on his own, mostly on the top lagoon getting a hard time from the mature swans. It looks like Henrietta has departed to pastures new, with her young partner. Perhaps they may come back with a family and hook up again with Thomas, time will tell.



Waikanae Estuary

Liz's garden

Hope you enjoyed our twenty-ninth newsletter.

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae.

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More wild birds visit Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve than any other area in the Wellington province