

## Waikanae Estuary Newsletter

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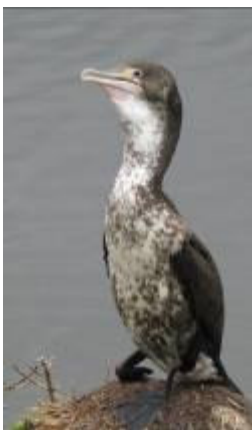
Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001



Early morning stroll--- Waikanae beach

photograph Mik Peryer

### Birding



Young pied shag

I had a very keen birder from the U/K out around the estuary the other day. He had a telescope on a tripod hooked up to his digital camera and in the course of our tour we managed to see thirty different species of birds. He photographed most of them. There are sixty four species documented as visiting our estuary, and we saw nearly half that number in less than two hours, without getting our feet wet.

At present in our estuary are around fifty grey teal on the lower reaches of the river, a lot of teal in one bunch. A little shore plover from the group liberated on Mana Island has been around for the last month or two. An endangered species, some were taken to Mana Island from Mt Bruce where they had been reared. A young spotted shag is here on its own with the pied shags, who are very busy nesting for the first time. They can be seen flying back and forth to their tree on the Waimanu lagoon with either food for their young or another twig in their beak for their nest. We have had a visit from a falcon checking out the birdlife in the estuary as they do now and again. There are also plenty of paradise along with shoveler and mallard ducks. The swans have young which are a few months old and doing well, also there are a lot of scaup and a number of dabchicks, a very small diving bird. Dabchicks are quite different from most water birds and don't have webbed feet, just loose webs and so can't walk on land like most birds. They live on the water. The little black shags are again in the estuary. There are four kingfishers which is most unusual as they tend to be solitary birds, perhaps parents with young. Pukeko are on the fringes of the river, and the banded dotterels are still here, another small bird, some commute to Australia against the prevailing wind, which is quite a feat. This Waikanae estuary of ours is truly an amazing under-utilized birder's paradise.



Shore plover at Waikanae  
Photograph Phil Palmer

My popular hard covered coffee table book "Tales of Waikanae Estuary" is still available.  
Order through my web page [www.kapitibirdtours.co.nz](http://www.kapitibirdtours.co.nz) \$ 30.00 plus postage

### Little black shags

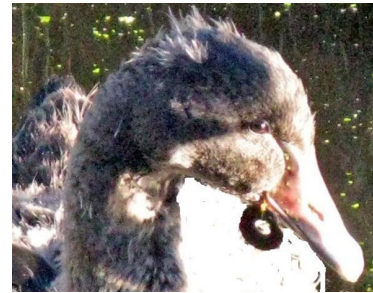
As I mentioned earlier the little black shags have been hunting the river in packs of around thirty birds. They have been herding the little fish and having a feast. A pair of red billed gulls saw what they were up to, and flying against the strong southerly wind coming down the river hovered, with the wind assisting them, over the shags. When the shags popped up to the surface with a fish in their bill the gulls tried to pinch it. I never actually saw them get a fish but now and again they must have



as they were very persistent. They flew from one side of the river to the other following the shags as they swam under the water until they surfaced. The shags never stayed on the surface for long, just time to swallow their catch before being harassed by the gulls.

### Cygnets

This is the baby black swan with the hook down its throat that I caught and took to the vets. Look at the large steel washer hanging from its beak. Andréa from Raumati Veterinary Clinic removed the hook by threading it back out through the side of the neck, also removing the large nylon ball of twine that had lodged further down its gullet which was full of feed and decaying material. After the operation the cygnet suffered a cardiac arrest and was given heart massage and mouth to beak resuscitation. It



recovered and then went to sleep and had everyone worried as it didn't look like it was going to wake up. However wake up it did. I picked it up next morning and returned it to its other sibling and its parents. It waddled into the creek and was greeted by the mature swans, happy to have their family back intact again. Andréa the Raumati Vet has nursed many of our wild birds back to health: owls, pukeko, mature swans, and even taken a boat ride to Kapiti Island to attend to one of our rare takake that needed attention. She is also involved in relocating some of our endangered birds to Mana Island.



Royal spoonbills on Waikanae estuary scientific reserve

'Hope you have enjoyed your copy of our estuary newsletter

*Mik the Birdman of Waikanae*

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