

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter
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Waikanae Estuary bird tours 04/9051001



The White swan being hassled by the resident black one

White swan

We had a white swan fly in the other day. The white swan is an introduced bird and can be found wild on Lake Ellesmere in the South Island, and in parks. Perhaps this wild bird has flown in from there, maybe doing its OE. He was seen on the beach at Raumati and in the sea at Waikanae but both these places are devoid of food and the bird was undernourished. So it was fortunate it found the estuary lagoons which have plenty of the food swans love. However, in finding the lagoons, it also found the resident black swans, who at the moment have a nest and are sitting on eggs.

Now swans are very territorial and our black swans don't like any other swans, black or white, muzzling in on their area. So our new swan was given a real hard time. It was chased up onto the bank and with much flapping of wings and vigorous pecking given a really good hiding. It eventually managed to get away from its tormentor and started to feed on the grass at the edge of the lagoon. If it ventured into the water it was chased back onto the bank and also on the grass as shown on the photograph.

Realising it was not going to find any other white swans in our area, I rang Bruce at Nga Manu Nature Reserve, where there are two male white swans. He sent a couple of his men down and they managed to capture the bird with help from the black swan, who chased it out of the water into their hands. It has settled in well on the reserve and is believed to be a young female so it should be in its glory with the two males.

Spur-winged Plover

Many years ago, taking my dog for a walk along the river bed at Kaitoke in the Hutt Valley I disturbed a squawking bird. I had no idea what kind of bird it was as I had never seen one quite like it before. It obviously had a nest as it was doing the broken wing ploy and trying to entice both of us away. I ignored the bird and managed to find the eggs, camouflaged amongst the stones in a small indentation in the shingle.



Upon returning home I rang my friend Ralph Adams who happened to be the Deputy Director of Wild Life for New Zealand at the time. Ralph informed me that the bird was a spur-winged plover, had been blown over from Australia and had first bred in the South Island at Invercargill. They have slowly worked their way up the island and were in the Hutt Valley in the early seventies, since then, they have established themselves throughout New Zealand. There a quite a number within our estuary reserve, here at Waikanae.

Bird-feeder

I have a bird-feeder, just a wooden tray on top of a pole on our lawn overlooking the river. A red-billed gull has claimed it and sits on it most of the day waiting to be fed. If another gull comes to check out the feeder, the resident who has claimed it as his own will go really crook. It sticks out its neck, screeches and with its beak wide open, vents its disapproval with a raucous noise, until the other bird flies away. When there is food on the tray, of course the other red-billed gulls arrive and have to wait their turn until our bird has had his fill.

Our tray is very popular. We have all sorts of birds visit it, including a falcon that landed on it for a rest while sussing out the estuary, trying to work out which bird would end up being his dinner. Falcons don't visit often, however they do like to check out the estuary every now and then.

We had a morepork visit one evening after dark. It landed on the feeder and checked out our security light for moths, hitting our window as it took them, then off it flew. Again, not an estuary bird, it, like the falcon, likes to leave all its options open where food is concerned.

A big cock pheasant strolls along our bank now and then, when it comes to the bird feeder it cranes its neck up, then launches itself onto the tray. Sometimes it is lucky and sometimes there is nothing there. Black-back gulls visit regularly. These birds can see for miles. There will be none in sight until food is put on the feeder and then they arrive, seemingly from nowhere. The other birds are pushed out of the way while these gulls feed. Later, all the little birds arrive for the left overs and the crumbs.



Waikanae Beach

photograph Eileen Thomas

Hope you enjoyed our Twenty-fifth newsletter.

Mik Peryer

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae

www.wgtn.wotzon.com/waikanaebirdtours.

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