

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter

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Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001



Kapiti Island

Photograph by Mik

Lachlan's story



Barbara had taken her seven-year-old grandson Lachlan to the estuary to see the birds. They came across a black-backed gull swimming slowly in circles in the backwater by the weir where the Waimanu lagoon empties into the river. It looked as though it was caught on a fishing line. The little red-billed gulls realised this bird was in distress, were dive-bombing it and it looked as though they were trying to kill it. The black-backed gull would lift its beak to the sky to defend itself but didn't have much energy. Lachlan ran back to his grandparents' home and because

his granddad wasn't available, rang me. A very small voice asked if Michael was about. He asked me if I could catch the bird and free it and could he help if he put on his wet suit. I had just settled down to catch up on some rest. Down to the river I went, after grabbing some scissors, my waders, and a towel to throw over the bird. Arriving at the river, Lachlan pointed out the bird which was still swimming in circles as though attached to something. Grandma helped him into his wetsuit; we went down the bank with Lachlan holding my hand and slowly waded out to the bird which was in the middle of the backwater. As we proceeded, it got progressively deeper and was very slippery so the little man held on tightly. I was a little worried as if I slipped he would end up under the water. I let his hand go and left him so I could throw the towel over the bird, then took his hand again and brought the bird to the shore. We had a good look at it, stretched out its wings but couldn't find any injury. It wasn't caught up in a fishing line. We concluded that it may have just been sick, maybe old age, so we put it back into the water and came away. I told Lachlan that that's the way of things in the wild. The birds live and die in the estuary. I then hopped into my car to drive away. Lachlan held his grandmothers' hand and with tears in his eyes started to walk home. Realising that the little man was very upset to think the gull may die, I stopped my car, wound down the window called him over and told him that we had done everything we could to help this bird and for him not to feel sad, then I gave him a 'high five'. It was great to think this little lad was so emotional at his age and so caring it gave me a warm feeling. Later in the day they went back to see how the bird was and it had gone. It may have recovered enough to fly away.



Lachlan

Wrybill

A pair of wrybill turned up on the sand spit a few days ago. These birds don't visit very often and are very unusual as they are the only bird species to have a crooked bill, always crooked to the right. They are endemic to New Zealand. Rob Jackson took this photo and was very intrigued as he had never seen one before. The crooked bill made identification easy.



If you look in the background you will see tyre marks from a trail bike. This type of activity and endangered birds don't mix, but it's very difficult to keep trail bikes and four wheel drive vehicles off the sand spit.

I don't like the look of its left leg—looks like it's injured

Fairy Prion



Anne and Larry were walking the beach when they came across a fairy prion at the water's edge. Prions are birds of the ocean and being on the beach is not their usual habitat. It was obviously in distress. After taking it home, they fed it fish every few hours and it perked up. It survived the night, but on the way to the Raumati Veterinary clinic next morning it succumbed. Birds get washed up on our beaches now and then. I think they get exhausted and the high winds drive them to the shore.

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 12

A few days later our swans again came back downstream and swam onto the top lagoon with their six babies. The two swans on this lagoon attacked Henry and tried to drown him again by holding his head under the water; every time he poked it up they pushed it under again. Neighbours who live nearby rushed to help him; as it was happening in the middle of the lagoon they could do little but look on. Eventually, Henry managed to extract himself round up his brood and once again head to the safety of the creek. He didn't appear to be any the worse for his beating. A couple of days later, the family made it to the top lagoon. This time they established themselves without too much trouble, although Thomas the goose helped chase the resident swans and ducks away. So it appears that a truce has been established, let's hope so.

This saga is featured as a serial and concludes next month.

Hits last Month—Eleven thousand four hundred and seventy one

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