

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter

No 51 May 2011

www.kapitibirdtours.co.nz partners to Nature Coast Bird Trail www.naturecoastbirdtrail.co.nz

Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001



Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve

Royal Spoonbills

The royal spoonbills invaded our river early March with twenty-two birds visiting. The council have been draining the lagoons to reduce the weed and these birds have found that this is to their liking. They can get at food where the water isn't so deep. Other species have also taken advantage of the lower water so there were more birds than we have seen in a long time. There are some kahawai in the lagoons and although they are a salt water fish they must have sneaked in on a very high tide. Our local teenagers, also taking advantage of the very low water, went fishing. The lagoons have a flow of water in the middle about a meter deep and a couple of meters wide. Into this went around half a dozen kahawai and looked as though they would be easy picking. Four lads started off with a small trout net on a pole without much success, so a flounder net was produced. The lagoon is extremely muddy and when walked in produces clouds of muddy water which clings to whoever is wading in it. Well our boys soon looked like mud larks covered from head to toe in clinging stinking mud.



Kahawai -- Painting by Eric Heath

NB-We think the fish were kahawai they certainly look like them and sped through the water.

The fish were just too smart and the flounder net was getting snagged on the many logs at the bottom of the lagoon. So, the kahawai have lived to see another day – but what fun the lads had. Mind you, I did hear that their parents weren't too chuffed when they arrived back home.

White Heron

This white heron has just paid us a visit. It's around three years since I have seen one within our estuary. This one was on the river but like others was very wary and when approached waded farther into the water then flew up stream and landed amongst a group of paradise duck who immediately flew off. I have noted before how the resident birds don't like different species visiting. Obviously the parries didn't like this bird, perhaps it was its size as it was rather a large bird.





Photograph by John Cook

Pied Shag

This young shag sitting in the nest is exercising his vocal cords trying to entice his parents to return with some tucker. When they do return the baby will insert its beak and head down the throat of the parent to get to the food carried there. It's quite apparent how this can happen, when you look at the aperture of the young bird, the parent's neck would be even larger. It can't fly yet and still has the motley coloring that the young birds have, the parents are a lovely black and white, hence the name 'pied shags'. They have no teeth just a large beak with a hook at the top to propel any fish caught down into the depth of their gullet. They like their fish live and whatever they swallow can at times be seen fighting all the way down.

The bird-bath and the Sparrow

We have a lovely bird-bath on our front lawn; it's a trifle deep for the sparrows to bathe in although they love to drink from it. The starlings, on the other hand have found it's to their liking and regularly bathe in it. They spray the water everywhere as they spread their wings and dip their heads under the water. The sparrows are not silly and hop onto the side of the bird-bath and have a shower bath from the over-spray. This is a regular occurrence.



Henry

Henry's memorial and poem are on newsletters No 27 May 09 and on No 34 December 09

Tom's Story

Part one

With the passing of Henry, Thomas the goose was at a loose end, his family was no more. Henrietta and Thomas remained together for many weeks and would greet each other by raising and lowering their necks talking to each other. Eventually the urge to mate again was



Poor Thomas

too strong for Henrietta, as she was still a relatively young bird. She befriended a young male swan with an injured foot, rather a shy timid bird. Thomas would not accept this replacement for his Henry, so eventually both swans took off for pastures new and Thomas was left on the lagoons by himself. He was such a sad sight –pining away and losing condition and a lot of feather especially around his neck. He wasn't interested in chasing anyone or anything almost as if he had lost interest in everything.

On the northern lagoon two swans made a nest and laid six eggs. We suspect that the female was a prodigy of the eternal triangle from a year or two back, as she was very friendly towards Tom. The cob was a different story. Tom sat himself beside the nest hoping to be able to look after the babies as before. The sitting cob reached over and grabbed Tom with its beak and whacked him with its wings. Tom retaliated and pecked back and also used his wings to defend himself. They spilt over onto the water and eventually parted, the swan going back to the nest and Tom back to where he was before, next to the nest, but a little further away.

Tom's story will be featured as a serial over the next few months

Hits last Month-- Sixteen Thousand and thirteen.

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae

Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking