

## Waikanae Estuary Newsletter

No 21 November 2008

[www.kapitibirdtours.co.nz](http://www.kapitibirdtours.co.nz) partners to Nature Coast Bird Trail [www.naturecoastbirdtrail.co.nz](http://www.naturecoastbirdtrail.co.nz)

Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001



Waikanae estuary scientific reserve

### Dabchicks

The dabchicks are the smallest bird on our lagoons. They have quite a long neck, a russet chest and a bright eye. If you look at the photograph see where their feet are situated, right at the rear of their body. Unlike most water birds that have webbed feet, these birds have loose webs on their feet, and as a consequence they can't walk on land. They live on the water although they do sit on the banks at times. They are fast flyers, flying mostly at night. When they have babies they carry them around on their back like little bumblebees. At times the chicks will burrow under their mother's feathers, and if you hadn't seen them do this, you would never know the babies were there. Mum spends a lot of time diving for their food. Look on both segments of the Waimanu lagoon you may find a pair on each.



### Pecking Order

Whilst out walking my dog I spotted four pied, one black and two little shags sitting on a small log at the waters-edge. Just out a little into the river was a smaller log just big enough for one. Sitting on this was a single pied shag. One of the four pied shags thought it would like to roost on the log in the river so it swam out and chased the other off and hopped onto the log itself. It then spread out its wings to dry. The one black shag in the group also liked the look of the little log in the river, so it also swam over, chased off that pied shag, hopped onto the log and let everyone know just which shag was the boss.

### Seals

It's the time of the year when the seal pups have left home and are exploring. We have had one within our river reserve. It was observed the other evening munching on a large flounder it had caught for its supper. The next morning it was giving the herrings in the river a real hurry up, it then was seen lazing on the beach. Seals don't visit very often. However now and again they come ashore to rest, or to explore up the river. They are best left alone as they have rather a nasty bite.

## Roosting

The royal spoonbills have taken a liking to the large macrocarpa tree the shags have claimed as their own nesting tree. They quite often roost right at the top of the tree above the shag nests. At times there may be twenty royal spoonbills, eighteen pied shags, a couple of little shags and one or two black shags plus a kingfisher in this tree which two years ago had no shags at all roosting or nesting. However now the pied shags have taken a liking to it, so have the other species. Every bird takes note of what the other birds are doing and if they like what they see will follow suit.



Royal spoonbills and pied shags

## Love birds Henrietta and Henry the Black swans and Thomas the Goose An Update

After hatching the latest brood of six up the creek well away from everyone, our love birds took them down stream, [ past Trish the eel lady's place ]— where they stopped for some refreshments—to the large paddock at the top end of the Northern Waimanu lagoon, being intent on reclaiming this lagoon for themselves. However the two swans with the two quite mature cygnets [ one of which is the cygnet which swallowed the fishing hook and line that we rescued and took to the vets ] didn't think that that was a good idea. They chased the three of them, Thomas the goose included and the six babies back into the creek and upstream. 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 by holding his head under the water; every time he poked it up they pushed it under again. The 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 and 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. Again, 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.



*Mik the Birdman of Waikanae*

*Mik & Maira Lanyon*

Kapiti Bird Tours  
Delivering  
**Nature Coast**  
experience



[www.wgtn.wotzon.com/waikanaebirdtours](http://www.wgtn.wotzon.com/waikanaebirdtours).