

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter
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Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001



Waikanae Primary School Children planting out most of the plants they propagated themselves, from their school shade house. This is the third year that these children have planted out the estuary reserve. If you look you can see how well the previous plantings are doing.

Harrier Hawk

It's the time of the year when the harrier hawk likes to show off for its mate. Hawks nest within the scrub of the estuary reserve, well away from prying eyes. You can tell when they are nesting, as the one not on the nest, will do aerobatics, flying high into the sky, tumbling and twisting, this way and that, powering down and then soaring up into the sky again. I presume this is to impress its mate as there is no other explanation for this behaviour and they only do it at certain times of the year. At last light, they like to do a swoop around the edges of the river reserve, before retiring for the evening. They are very hard to see in the fading light.

Babies

There are babies everywhere. The swans, mallard, and paradise ducks have them, along with the black and pied shags. The dainty dabchicks also have babies however you have to look hard, as they carry the youngsters on their back, sometimes under their feathers.



All are on display within the estuary reserve, with the other birds also nesting but being a little more secretive. Of all the



babies the paradise shelduck is the most unusual, they don't look at all like the parents, see photograph. The mallard hen hatched this brood, waddled with them to the lagoon and was chased by a drake. The drake wasn't interested in the ducklings, in fact, trampled over a couple in its quest to mate with the hen. The drake grabbed the hen by the back of its neck and tried to mount it, never mind the newly hatched brood; it had only one thing on its mind.



Young Fur Seal

A seal pup made its way up the Waikanae River to opposite El Rancho Holiday Park. It was around two kilometres from the mouth of the river and we wondered if it would find its way down to the sea again. It appeared to be enjoying itself wallowing in the strong current twisting onto its back and flopping its flippers about. A pair of Canada geese flew over making that harsh cry of theirs.

The seal immediately stood up in the water and looked to see



where the noise was coming from, saw the geese, then twisted around and continued to swim against the current holding station, seemingly without any effort.

What was that noise?

It appears that the seal made it back to the sea. Checking with the D.O.C. ranger I was told that a young seal was seen on the beach a couple of days later. Seals don't come up the river very often, usually it's the pups exploring.

Royal Spoonbills

The royal spoonbills are back in the estuary. Three wintered over, now there are eight, this will probably increase to around twenty over summer.

Latest update. About twenty were seen on top of the macrocarpa shag tree.

Henry's Memorial

Henry's memorial plaque will be unveiled on the 14th of this month at 1pm on the northern Waimanu lagoon. Councillor Sandra Patton will officiate.

Refreshments will be supplied i.e. tea and coffee, a plate would be appreciated for a shared afternoon tea. A tour of the lagoon to follow. Make a picnic of it.

All welcome.

Thomas in pensive mood looking at Henry's last resting place.



Photograph Eileen Thomas

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