

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter
No 57 November 2011

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Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001.



Photograph by Mik

Mik's little, Tourists contemplating Thomas's new brood while Thomas contemplates them.

White-faced Heron

If you observe the herons when they are feeding, sometimes you will see them slowly rake one foot through the muddy bottom of the lagoon. This disturbs the insects that they feed on and allows them to get food where there appears to be none. These birds, like all the birds on the reserve, are very much aware of what the other species are doing. Food is the defining thing on the lagoons, it consumes most of the bird's day. They are forever looking to see where the next feed will come from. Sometimes other birds will find a food source and the rest of the birds will rush over to see if they can also feed.



Heron raking the muddy bottom of the lagoon.

Where have all the ducks gone?

Feeding the ducks is a favorite pastime for many people. Older folks love to take their grandchildren to the reserve and see the joy they get from feeding the ducks. At present there is a distinct lack of the common mallard on the lagoons. This is because of some Asians backing their van onto the reserve, putting bread down in a heap, enticing the many ducks to partake, then throwing a net over them and bundling them into the back of the van and away. Could be our ducks you are eating the next time you have duck at your favorite restaurant.



Tuis are about now the kowhai is flowering

Tui

That funny noise you hear coming from a kowhai or nearby tree is probably a tui. They make some really weird sounds at times. They also have a distinctive flight pattern. They don't flap their wings all the time and have a swooping flight. When you recognize it you will always know it's a tui.

Canada Geese



In newsletter No 47 January 11, I told the story of the white goose that took a chance. It took off with the wild Canada geese that swoop down into the river late at night and take off first thing in the morning. Well, it's still flying with them all these months later. It has integrated into the group and is now accepted as one of the flock. If you look at the photograph taken one evening from my front lawn, you can just make out the white goose among the Canadas.

Swans & Ducks

On the Waimeha lagoon lived a pair of swans with seven young and as they grew up, the parents decided to take them exploring. With the two parents in front and the seven cygnets bringing up the rear, off they all went, across Eruini Street, along Victor grove, onto the front lawn of No 20, much to the surprise of the owners. Last thing they were expecting was a family of swans marching down their driveway, and through their back fence to access the Waimanu lagoon. After spending a little time on the top lagoon they continued down it and crossed Barrett Drive onto the bottom lagoon which they decided was a good place to stay a while. The ducks also have ducklings one, with ten babies. They are like little bumblebees skimming along in the water. It's a dangerous place this estuary of ours. The parent ducks swimming on the lagoon had one of the babies between them on the water. Down swooped a black-backed gull, plucked it up and the duckling was dinner.



Photo Eileen Thomas

Tourists

When taking tourists out in the last week we sighted twenty-nine different species of wild birds, including the godwits from Siberia, without getting our feet wet. All this mainly on formed paths that are wheelchair friendly, in an urban area, on a bus and train route, one hour from our Capital city. I dare to say you would be hard pushed to replicate this anywhere in New Zealand.

This monthly newsletter, which is in its 57th edition is still averaging over twelve thousand hits on the web per month. I find this a bit daunting as it means that as it's so popular I will have to continue with it. Where do all the stories come from? Every month I tell my wife Moira that I haven't any stories this month and then they just pop out of my head and locals also contribute with wild-life snippets, now and then.



Photograph by Mik

I wonder how long this log has been in the water to accumulate this many shellfish

Hits last month eleven thousand seven hundred & forty-four

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae

Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking