

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter
No 31 September 2009

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Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001



Photograph Lynne Edgar

Looks like there may be some fish in that neat little pond --- 'Darn-it' there's something not quite right here --- at least I can see my reflection in the water.

Mistakes

Every now and then a mistake is made; it's all a learning curve. The birds can fly in very tight formations and wheel this way and that, seemingly in harmony and never collide. They must have an unwritten law of how to behave and have an inbuilt rule of the sky. Even different species have the ability to navigate the sky in harmony with all the other species. However mistakes are made- look at the top photo these whitefaced herons didn't land on the roof of the car for nothing. They may have raided someone's fish pond before and now have been fooled by the glass reflections.

News

On the Waimanu lagoons lives a white goose called George. He has been around for quite a number of years, living mostly on a grassy section by himself, in Eruini Street. He relocated to the lagoon about three years ago. Thomas the resident goose ignored him as did most of the birds on the lagoon. It is easy to differentiate between the two white geese on the lagoon, as Thomas had a purpose. He had the young



swans to look after and is forever on the lookout for danger with his head up clucking loudly. The other goose George only has himself to look after and has been a rather lonely solitary bird. He is quite old and has a large undercarriage, see photograph. In the last few months a Canada goose has become his mate and they have become inseparable. We haven't had a Canada goose resident on the lagoon before. This bird has taken a liking to George and has moved in. The pied shags have kicked out four youngsters from their nests in the shag tree. They congregate on the edge of the lagoon below their tree or sit on the piles that stick out from the water. The white-eyes are back in our garden. I have hung a banana from a wire, off a pole as I usually do when they are about. These birds love bananas and will pierce the skin and eat the fruit, leaving a blackened empty case.

Spring is in the air

The ducks are pairing up as are most of the inhabitants of the lagoons. We have a white Peking duck that has a mallard mate. Have you ever seen a white duck nesting? The nest is usually hidden in the rushes and the duck sits very still and if you come close it will lower itself slowly down, as inconspicuously as possible. How does a white duck blend into the background? It sticks out like a sore toe. The reason this mallard has a Peking for a mate, is that our ducks have very loose morals. This can be observed on the lagoons, as it's very hard to tell the make and model of these birds, as they are a mixed up lot. The mallards themselves are not as plentiful as they have been in the past on our river and lagoons. This has been observed also by my farmer friend at his Otaki farm a few kilometres north of here.

Swans

The swans that raised their family on the northern lagoon and whose first family of five have grown up have started a new nest. Thomas the goose has been taking a keen interest and we are sure that the mature swans are his step family from a previous nest. However the male swan has been beating Thomas up. I was at the lagoon the other day and Thomas was in his usual spot right next to nest. He has taken to spending most of the day there.



Photograph by Eileen Thomas

Thomas thinks that, if he stays around until the eggs hatch, he may be allowed to become part of the family. The large swan moved off the nest, reached over with his long neck and grabbed Thomas. He then started to hit him with his wings. Thomas retaliated and grabbed the swan by its neck, hung on and started to whack it back with his wings. They started on the land and spilled over to the water. It appeared quite frightening. After they parted, Thomas made it to the shore, where he shook out his feathers and again settled down near the nest. He is very persistent waiting for the eggs to hatch, hoping to become a step dad again.



Waikanae river and the Waimanu lagoon Photograph Laurie Petherick

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae

More wild birds visit Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve than any other area in the Wellington province

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