

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter

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The Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve is a Nationally Significant Reserve

Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001



Photograph by Mik

Susanne in residence Waikanae Estuary

[Watch out or the eels will get you]

Exotic Waikanae

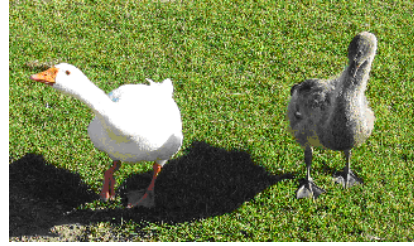
There is a little private garden here at Waikanae Beach, where the stream joining the Waimanu and Waimeha lagoons meanders through the rear of the property, featured with water lilies and exotic planting. Where the black swans visit with their babies along with tuis, silvereys, herons, shags, ducks and finches, there lives a family of longfin eels. They congregate in large numbers waiting to be fed. Numbering at times in their forties, they know that their food arrives with Trish the owner, every four thirty in the afternoon. Anytime during the day they will also put on a display if you knock on the nearby post and thump up and down on the steps leading to the water, to wake them up. Eels like to have a snooze in the daytime and come out to feed in the evenings. I really don't know where else you could find eels as pets on display for anyone to see, as these ones are, in an urban environment within a landscaped garden. The breeding eels will stay in New Zealand until they are thirty-five to one hundred years old and then they will make their way to the sea to start their journey to the tropical Pacific, somewhere near Tonga, to spawn and die. The young elvers start their long journey back to New Zealand and the rivers and streams where it all began, using the ocean currents. So it's not only the birds that migrate, if you really think about it, what the eels do is truly amazing.

Falcon

Falcons don't visit the estuary very often but I just spotted one flying at speed down over the river to the Scientific Reserve. The area it was heading for was the area where the fernbird was discovered recently. These birds don't give a darn if the bird they are going to have for their dinner is endangered or not. Having birds of prey visit at times keeps all the other birds vigilant and on their toes as, if they are slow or injured, they will get eaten.

Thomas the Goose and the remaining cygnets

The two cygnets left, out of the five from the last hatching were being looked after by Thomas the goose and the female swan after the male swan died. They were doing very well and growing by the day. [see photograph] Into the lagoon rushed a large golden retriever dog, swam up the lagoon chasing all the swans, ducks and other birds causing a terrible ruckus, until it came upon the two cygnets. Well the cygnets can't fly and can't run or swim very fast so what happened? The dog killed one and the other was lucky to survive as the owner by this time, after securing the other dogs she was walking managed to run down the side of the lagoon to control the dog. When will "they learn dogs should be on a leash?"



Waimeha Lagoon

What a lovely breeding lagoon the Waimeha is, with the shallow water allowing the dabbling birds to feed safely in the middle of the lagoon, to breed in the surrounding vegetation knowing they are hidden from view and safe from dogs, people and predators. The red carpet that covers the lagoon at times, [see photograph], is a natural occurrence. It is a fern, the smallest fern we have in New Zealand, called Azolla. It floats on the water and has a long trailing root. At times, it can cover almost the whole lagoon but is dependent on the weather conditions and gets blown around. The ducks sometimes take food by dabbling the surface. I don't know if they eat the fern or just find food amongst the foliage.

There is also another native plant 'Wolffia arrhiza' [the rootless duckweed]. It is the smallest flowering plant known. The whole plant is the size of half a pinhead, bright green on top and clear below. It floats in the stream at the Waimeha Lagoon. The regenerating vegetation around the lagoon has been planted and tended by the Waimeha Restoration group for the last twelve years, another community-minded group of which the Kapiti coast is fortunate to have in abundance. What foresight Sir Charles Fleming had all those years ago when he saved the lagoon from developers and created the reserve for all to enjoy. After a fifty year absence a bittern has recently been sighted there along with over twenty other species. From the Forest and Bird hide visitors can observe and feed the birds. Taking my niece to the hide when she was around six years old, she stood upon the seat, fed the birds and I told her this was our secret place, no one else knows about it, [She thinks I'm wonderful].



Wolffia arrhiza [Wikipedia]



Waimeha lagoon Waikanae Beach

Photograph by Mik

Hits last Month Eighteen Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty Seven.

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae

Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking