

## Waikanae Estuary Newsletter

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**Gulls and terns feeding just off shore-- Kapiti Island in the background**

### Dave's story

The farmer had cut the hay paddock. Along the fence line was a drain with rank grass. This was a good place for the pukeko to have a nest, also a good place for a hare to hide. The pukeko was spotted with its tail up showing his white feathers, flapping its wings and squawking loudly, chasing the hare across the field. The hare ran in a large circle then turned tail and chased the puke. The pukeko jumped up into the air, then down again and took off running back towards the drain. A pukeko can run fast if it has to. Then again they changed and the pukeko did the chasing. This display went on for around ten minutes until both gave up and things came back to normal. I didn't realize the hare and the pukeko could be so aggressive towards each other.



### Skinks



My dog Meg knew there was something

living in our garden under the succulents. She was forever sniffing amongst the plants and getting told off for treading on the flowers. Our friend Gwen came to visit and coming up the path spotted a skink. Skinks, a type of lizard, are very wary and I had never seen one in our garden before. These reptiles live within the estuary and if frightened when caught, sometimes lose their tail in their effort to get away. It does grow back, however not as large as before, rather stumpy. They are a favorite food for cats. The herons will hunt them, when they come out from hiding and sun themselves on the

hot stones. They, the herons, do this when there is a high tide and they can't feed in the shallows of the lagoons or the river. Herons, will eat most things, even been known to take a duckling whilst in full flight, just swooping down and grabbing the duckling and up, up, and away.



Little black shags—the vandals of the estuary—see them flying and fishing in large groups

In the four months I have had the newsletter featured on the web I have had an average of **10.662** hits per month—this I really can't believe—its wonderful so many people out there are enjoying the nature stories of the wonderful Waikanae Estuary.

**Once upon a time**  
**The true saga of Henry the swan and Thomas the goose**  
**Part three**

As they grew up, lost their baby feathers, changed colour and grew their flight feathers (black swans have white flight feathers), it was wondered who would teach these cygnets how to fly as Henry certainly couldn't. So Thomas took it upon himself to teach them. With much squawking he would chase them across the lagoon, they would paddle flat out and flap their wings until they lifted off. When they could do this by themselves I have seen Thomas stand up in the water, stretch out his neck, flap his wings and squawk his loudest – as if to encourage them. The Waimanu Lagoons are dissected by a roadway with the northern and a southern segments, both about the same size. The family drama took place on the northern lagoon but shortly after the cygnets fledged, Henry and Henrietta changed from being loving to quite aggressive parents. They chased the cygnets off the upper lagoon over the roadway to the lower lagoon. The poor babies couldn't work it out but the parents' motive was that they wanted to start another nest. This time, Thomas knew what the swans were up and didn't pick any fights at all with them as they set about making their new nest and laying another clutch of eggs. People and dogs were then Thomas's main concern – they had to be kept away from this lovely second nest which



eventually was home to seven eggs. Thomas settled down beside the nest and waited out the hatching, maintaining his vigilance. When these seven eggs hatched Thomas took over, as before, and looked after these babies as his own. How unusual is this, to have two different species combining so intimately in raising babies? Yet even before this second set of seven cygnets had their flight feathers – well before they could fly – Mum and Dad swan again became aggressive parents and chased them off the top lagoon, across the road and down to the bottom lagoon. It was as if as they wanted to make up for lost time and be free to start another nest.

***This saga will continue as a serial over the next few months***

***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**