

Kairanga school children contemplating whether to cross or not-if only those bloomin geese would get out of the road.



I was showing my power-point presentation to fifty school children from Kairanga School before they went to bed at El Rancho holiday camp. Freya, aged seven, sketched these drawings of the birds as the pictures went up on the large screen. She only had a few minutes to do it as they weren't up for long. I thought they were wonderful; there is a royal spoon-bill, a fantail and a black swan. Well done Freya!

Kingfishers

There are three kingfishers within the Estuary Reserve at the moment. We haven't a large population of these birds and they must move around as they only appear now and then. I wonder if they are parents with young. Sitting on the fallen tree in the river with the pied shags they are very hard to see. When they fly, they go with that swift flight of theirs.



Photograph Roger Smith

Shag Stories

It was in March 2007 that a pair of pied shags first started to nest on the Waikanae Estuary Waimanu lagoon. The pied shag was a rare visitor to the Estuary before finding the macrocarpa tree on the northern lagoon. They told their mates and before long the tree was full of nesting and roosting shags. As the birds bred the tree became a trifle crowded so some of the birds relocated across the water to a new tree on the other side. Now that this tree is also becoming crowded, a number of birds have shifted to another tree to the south, at the moment only roosting. However, I have no doubt they will shortly start to nest in this tree as well. When the shags nest maybe their dropping hold the nests together but over time they also kill the tree, as their dropping are so corrosive. I did a shag count the other evening as this is when the birds come back to the trees to roost. There were eighty birds sitting in the trees with a few more still flying in the twilight.

Shag No 2 Story

Trout live in our river. Now and then fishermen can be seen thrashing their lines into the water trying to catch these elusive fish. I for one have had no luck trying to catch one for lunch. My friend was observing a nice sized trout, facing upstream as they do, waiting for its food to arrive when along came a large black shag swimming under water from downstream. The trout was dinner before it even knew the shag was there. Then the usual fight was on as the shag swallowed the trout head first, made off to the river bank to digest its fish and dry out its wings. The trout wasn't as big as this one taken by the swing bridge by Roger Smith



The Sand-spit

We have had visits from two infrequent little waders recently. One was a red-necked stint which is rare within our estuary and the other was a wrybill, that little bird with the crooked bill, always crooked to the right, the only bird like it. A bittern was photographed by the new walkway bridge near where the fernbird lives on the Paraparaumu side of the river. It will if frightened on the ground, freeze, with its beak in the air. Going along the sand-spit you should be able to see the oystercatchers. Pied stilts, those lovely dainty waders, with their black and white colouring, should be on show. This is were the dotterels, which commute to Australia and back, the rybill and the stint will be found. caspian terns may be roosting on the sand-spit. These large birds range the oceans. There will be the black-backed and red-billed gulls in quite large numbers, and as well, there may be white-fronted terns. Those lovely birds, often called the swallow of the sea because of their forked tail and swift flight, will stay as long as there are shoals of little fish off-shore, to feed on. Aren't we privileged to have them reside here at Waikanae. The sand spit has changed, there is a distinct lack of the sand build up of a few years ago and the river has managed to cut its way through it to the sea. That is a good thing, as it no longer threatens the sand-hills at Paraparaumu.

Shag No 3 Story



Photograph Gavin Klee

This pied shag looks to be playing with its food. I really don't know what it has caught but it is throwing it up in the air, catching it then doing it all again. It hard to tell without seeing the shag's chest; if it was an immature bird it would be motley in colouring but which would be white if a mature one. It hasn't the lovely blue and yellow colour of the mature bird around its eye. So I would suggest that it is a young bird out in the wide world exploring.

I have a new icon on my web-site which takes you to stories I have recorded—includes the love story of Thomas and Henrys thirty year sojourn on the Estuary Lagoons—

Hits last Month—have doubled from Twenty thousand five hundred and eighty-seven to Forty-one thousand eight-hundred & seventy nine

**Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae
Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking**