

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter
No 75 May 2013

<http://kapitibirdtours.co.nz/>

The Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve is a Nationally Significant Reserve

Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001

Photograph Eileen Thomas

Thomas the Goose



Thomas the goose you may recall has been on our lagoons here at Waikanae for around thirty years. Having been in a gay relationship with Henry, the black swan, and for a time in an eternal triangle with Henry and Henrietta the female black swan.

Then, when Henry died and Henrietta took off with a new mate being left on the lagoons with only one other gander by the name of George, as company. Someone deposited two female geese onto the lagoons. Thomas mated with one and over two years for the first time ever has had ten babies of his own.

He has been bullied by the other gander and hasn't been able to be a dad to any of his offspring.

The local powers that be have decided twenty odd geese on the lagoons is a bit much and are talking about relocating them—No one wants Thomas to go, so Iris who lives around the lagoon has sprayed him with green food dye so when the “baddies” pounce they will know which goose is Tom and he can be saved. In doing so Iris enticed Tom to follow her home which he has done many times before.

Thomas was unsteady on his feet it was almost as if he was drunk he would walk then stumble and rock back onto his backside. It was obvious something was wrong with him. Iris rang me and I went to have a look. He was in her back yard which he was very familiar with, having been there many times. Thomas wasn't very well at all, although he was eating and pooing OK. We needed to get him to care, to Craig Shepherd, and his Wellington Bird Rehabilitation facility. If anyone could save him Craig could. <http://www.duckman.co.nz/>

As this was quite late in the afternoon we decided to leave him in the back yard for the night and see how he was in the morning, we put planks across the opening and I told Iris that if he plays up in the night let him out as we could catch him around the lagoons if we had to. We didn't want him stressed out. In the morning after he had had a quiet night we rang the SPCA as we needed a large crate to put him in. A bright yellow car arrived with Tracey the animal care giver and a large crate. Tracey talked to Tom for a minute or two to calm him, then reached down picked him up and into the crate he went. He was transported to Pukerua bay where the SPCA inspector from Wellington met Tracey and he was on his way to Johnsonville and Craig's care.

Craig has a duckcam which is a video camera on the wall over looking the pen Thomas was put in so he could be seen by anyone with a computer. He had a reasonable night but it was decided to send him to Christine Mander, Craig's favourite, Pet Vet in Silverstream who I am told is an expert on bird health. He went into care on Monday 15th April 13.



E/mails from Craig to Mik

Thomas is going to the vet this morning and hopefully I will be picking him up tonight on my way home. There are a number of possibilities for his condition including lead poisoning and stroke etc and whilst we can test for lead we can't test for everything so we may not be able to definitively say what is ailing Thomas or what we can do to treat but we will give him a very good go.

Tuesday Thomas is back at my place now. Blood tests proved negative for lead poisoning. X-rays reveal something in his intestine but we are not sure if it is a foreign body or not. X-rays have been sent to Massey University for a 2nd opinion I will let you know if any changes in Thomas's condition or any updates from the vet.

Wednesday Update: Massey have reviewed the x-rays and say that his gut is full of sand and possibly a small piece of metal. He is back out to the vet today to get the sand and metal flushed out. The treatment is not without its risks but have no option.

Hi Mik, Thomas survived the gut wash but will be under observation at the vets until at least Monday. He has been responding well and appears to be recovering.

*Our iconic bird Thomas has touched so many people over the years, it's so good to see all these people helping in his hour of need. The Waikanae SPCA, –Wellington SPCA, Craig Shepherd and his Wellington Bird Rehabilitation facility, Christine Mander from Pet Vet Silverstream,—Massey University Vets and the Estuary neighbours.
Contributions to the caregivers would be appreciated.*



It's important to keep all your ducks [geese] in a row—That's Thomas at the rear.

Drought

A friend of mine who lives overlooking the lagoons heard a thump early one morning. Rushing outside to investigate he came across a black swan that had hit the side of his house. It may have taken off from the lagoons and failed to gain enough height to clear the house or was coming in to land and miss judged things. He rang Peter from the SPCA who came around to help but nothing could be done as the swan was dead. Peter noticed it was very skinny with its bones almost protruding through the skin. It was apparent this bird was not getting sufficient food. This could be the result of the drought as there isn't much lush grass about although the water level is high at the moment. I wonder if draining the lagoons to kill the weed as has been happening in the last month is depriving the swans of food. At times when there has been a very dry summer in the Wairarapa the swans on the lake over there have been known to starve because of the lack of food. It also has been noticeable that the swans haven't been nesting on our lagoons as frequently as they have in the past. This may also be a result of the drought conditions as they will nest anytime if conditions are right.

[I have a new icon on my web-site which takes you to stories I have recorded—includes the love story of Thomas and Henry's thirty year sojourn on the Estuary Lagoons—
http://www.kapitibirdtours.co.nz/tales-of-the-waikanae-estuary/](http://www.kapitibirdtours.co.nz/tales-of-the-waikanae-estuary/)

Hits last Month—Twenty eight thousand nine hundred and sixty eight

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae
Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking