

**Waikanae Estuary Newsletter
No 82 December 2013**

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

The Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve is a Nationally Significant Reserve

Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001



Ring-necked pheasant

This is the pheasant that can be heard crowing in our Estuary Reserve, photographed by Roger Smith, who sneaked up on the bird and took this snap as it took off.

It was a beautiful morning for strolling on the beach. To one side, high up in the sky a skylark was singing its heart out and to the other side the ring-necked cock pheasant was letting every one know, this is its territory. Its partner is very secretive, hiding with her brood in the sand hills, while the cock loves to flap its wings and crow to let it be known he is around.

Just out to sea at the mouth of the river the terns have returned after a short absence. They are here in their hundreds, showing off their snowy white colouring and black top knot. It bodes well for the whitebaiters to have these birds fishing as the bait may be getting ready to run up the river as the tide changes. The tide was low and the water was boiling with little fish. The little shags and a few of the pied shags were fishing and every time they surfaced they had a silver fish in their beak. It's no wonder there are so many birds in the estuary. The pied shags like to zoom over the sandspit and out to sea for their food, sometimes fishing the river but mostly the ocean.

Pukeko

Pukeko, over the last few years, have slowly made their way across the river from the southern side to the Waikanae side. They can be seen at the river's edge or at the backwater by the weir. They have also been sneaking around the Waimanu lagoons. On the Waimeha they have raised a family. The young pukés with their out of proportion long, ungainly legs, high stepping around the perimeter of the lagoon, are very comical.





Photograph by Moira Peryer

This is the fog that closed Wellington airport.

Bird news

When you stroll around the lagoons, the drakes are lounging around on the banks at the water's edge, where there is a distinct lack of female ducks. They are either on the nest hidden in the growth around the ponds, or have just hatched a brood and are fussing around trying to protect their young. There are ducklings everywhere at the moment.

In one corner of the lagoon were two mature swans with three cygnets, eight scaup and a mother duck with ten ducklings. A cygnet was quite aggressive towards one of the ducklings so mother duck launched herself into the air and straight at the cygnet, who quickly paddled away. This doesn't always have such a happy ending with the ducks losing a lot of their ducklings over a short period. However, there are many contented hawks, seagulls, pukeko and eels about-- they just love the springtime.

The male swan didn't think much of the scaup invading his patch so chased them right across the lagoon to the other side where there were half a dozen immature swans. He then spent quite a long time chasing these birds. He paddled flat out at these swans and when he got too close the one being chased took off and splashed back into the water again, to paddle onto the bank. With one swan on the bank the cob then swam back to his cygnets and everything settled down again. The father swan spends much of his day chasing the immature swans away from his youngsters. On the same lagoon a few weeks ago, two swans hatched three cygnets and over a fairly short period the aggressive swan killed them all; he would chase the parents away and grab a cygnet, swing it in the air and kill it. There are no prisoners.

Fishing the fish bypass

The local Iwi have been authorising the fishing of the new fish passage into the Waimanu Lagoon which allows the fish to spawn for the first time into this lagoon. Costing ratepayers and others around one million dollars to install it has been put in place for the fish not the fishermen.

The Iwi have stated that they have been fishing the area for generations--this cannot be the case as the Waimanu lagoons have only been here for around forty years and the bypass for one. If the Iwi takes its responsibility for conservation seriously, as they state they do, then it is time to stop this blatant practice.



Hits last Month —Twenty-six thousand, eight hundred & seventy.

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae
Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking