



Photograph Roger Smith

Harrier Hawk

The hawk was ranging around the estuary not far from where it has its nest. Two black-backed gulls seeing this bird flying into their space started to dive bomb it. They chased it all over the place diving, then swooping up into the sky to get some height then down they went at speed to attack the hawk. The hawk would, at the last minute wheel away with its talons exposed. The birds didn't seem to actually touch, but the hawk must have been worried. When black-backed gulls, in large groups on the sand-spit or river, all take off together, if it's not dogs or people who have disturbed them, then you can bet your boots it will be a hawk. The little red-billed gulls will, as a group also attack a hawk, but they are also very wary as a hawk will take a red-billed gull out of the sky, so they have to be very careful.

Dabchicks

In my last newsletter I showed a little baby dabchick riding on mum's back. A few weeks on and look at its size, it can no longer hitch a ride, but it still tries. Mother will paddle flat-out to keep ahead as baby comes up from behind trying its best to scramble onto mum's back. Look at its tiny wings out of all proportion to the rest of its body.



Photograph Roger Smith

My new book is progressing well and should see the light of day in the next month. See pre-order form for those interested on page three.

White-faced Heron

The white-faced heron has been checking out the large pipe that passes under the road joining the two segments of the Waimanu lagoons. Normally this pipe is just submerged under the water and is a favourite spot for it to fish. The water level of the lagoons has been lowered to get rid of the weeds and reduce the midges that breed in the water, so the pipe is exposed. The bird in the photograph by Roger Smith must have thought it may still be able to fish off it.



One heron was fishing from the pipe and when it had its fill, flew into the adjacent tree to rest.

Along came another heron, saw the pipe was free so flew down the middle of the lagoon intent on fishing from the pipe. The one in the tree didn't think this was a good idea, and swooped down, out of the tree and chased it away. It wasn't going to have another heron using its pipe.

Shining Cuckoo

This headless bird was found on the edge of the Waimanu lagoon, the other day. It is the remains of a young cuckoo. A little nest was found on the ground nearby. It might have been the host nest for the cuckoo, as it was very small and cuckoos usually use a fantail's or warbler's nest. Whatever it was that ate this bird must have pulled the nest out of the shrub and taken the cuckoo. This is rather a shame as although cuckoos have been reported up the river, they are very rarely within the estuary. The photograph doesn't show the bright glossy green of the cuckoo's feathers. This is another bird to add to our list of 66 species already reported in the estuary.



Photographs Mik Peryer

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