

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter

No 93 November 2014

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

The Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve is a Nationally Significant Reserve

Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001

Survival of the fittest

On the Waimeha lagoon a pair of mature swans hatched five cygnets. When about five weeks old, they were taken down the little creek and onto the Waimanu Lagoon where there was another pair of swans with three babies. These swans were a lot younger and I suspect this may have been their first nest. They were very protective of their brood and upon seeing these older birds heading their way,



Photograph Roger Smith



Photograph Mik

At this stage I arrived and checked out the eggs which appeared to be cold so I figured that that was that and these eggs wouldn't hatch. This wasn't so. The swan, after the aggressive birds left again hopped back onto the nest and continued sitting. A few days later she hatched five cygnets. It was pleasing she was able to do this as she was very persistent in the face of adversity.

keep to the southern end of the lagoon and spent a lot of the time up on the bank. A third pair of swans, nesting on the northern segment of the Waimanu Lagoon, was sitting on five eggs. When the Waimeha family spotted this nest, the cob aggressively chased the sitting bird off the nest and onto the bank where it continued the chase, pecking and whacking the swan with its wings. So the sitting swan abandoned the five eggs in the nest.



Photograph Roger Smith



Photograph Trevor Campbell

Back came the aggressive family and the cob chased mother swan and her five cygnets off the nest, up the bank, through the walkway to Barrett Drive and onto my lawn, killing all the babies as they progressed. This upset the locals around the lagoon. One lady rang Peter at the SPCA who told her to go inside and not to look at what was going on, as this is what happens in the wild.

About a week later this aggressive family, again on the Waimanu Lagoon came swimming in line with the cob in front and the five cygnets behind with the pen at the rear, as fast as they could straight towards the other family with the three cygnets.



Photograph Trevor Campbell

The cob went straight for the other male and a real donnybrook took place and didn't stop. The other bird fought back defending its young. On the bank looking on were eight young ladies very perturbed as to what was taking place. When these aggressive birds moved onto the bank where the girls were, still fighting, the girls scattered, screaming, quite sure they were also going to be attacked.

On Mik's front lawn, sheltering--to no avail.

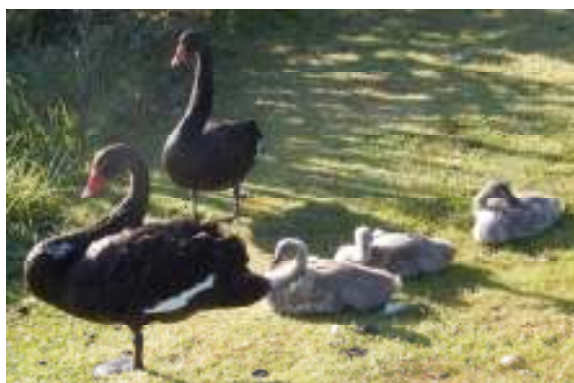


Photograph Mik

This is the aggressive swan and its cygnets, they are growing by the day and have lost their baby down. They can be distinguished by their greyish coloring --not yet the shiny black of their parents. The cob is forever on guard and wouldn't hesitate to chase any of the other swans that threaten his brood.

If you look closely at this photograph, the area that the aggressive swan in the top photograph grabbed when attacking this swan can be seen at the base of its neck.

The three youngsters in this case survived all right. I think this is because the aggressive swan was intent on dealing with the parents and ignored the cygnets, it also maybe, because of the parent swan retaliating and holding its own in the fight.



Photograph Mik

So this is what happens on the lagoons at times! It's the survival of the fittest and only the strongest survive.

Hits this month Thirty five thousand seven hundred & one

With Christmas approaching my new book would be an ideal present. It is available from local bookshops or from the author--Mik

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae
Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking