

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter

No 94 December 2014

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

The Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve is a Nationally Significant Reserve

Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001

Australasian Bittern

We are very lucky to have a bittern in our Estuary Reserve. This endangered retiring bird is very hard to capture on camera.

It is a bird of wetlands and swamp and when frightened will freeze with its beak vertical.

Pam Stapleton obtained two photographs, one with it having its breakfast, swallowing a small eel. This is hard to see through the reeds but can be made out if you look carefully enough.



In Flight photographs of bittern & heron by Roger Smith

White Heron

A white heron has been around the Estuary for a few weeks now. This is unusual, as previously this bird only stayed for a short while before moving on. My neighbour, Barrie,



awoke one morning to find the white heron sitting on his fish pond in the process of devouring his goldfish. The heron had eaten around five and was eyeing up the few that were left. It was given a short shift and launched itself up into the air with a hop and a flap of its large wings. A few days later it was resting on the little wharf by the weir on the Waimanu lagoon when around fifteen red-billed gulls, who have claimed this area as their own, dive-bombed it. The heron is a big bird and it fluffed up its feathers and extended its bill skywards, like a rapier, when the gulls dived. Realising the bird was going to stay, the gulls soon gave up and left it alone. It sat for a while then flew up the lagoon a little way to where Celine, the injured Canada goose, and its mate the white goose like to loaf on the bank, then went fishing for its dinner. It could be seen stalking silently along the edge of the lagoon then stabbing into the water for its tucker. Not only have we had the white heron visit we also have had a cattle egret. Cattle egrets don't visit very often as they usually prefer farmland and open paddocks.



Can anyone identify this beautiful Waikanae bird?

Photographed at the Charles Fleming Retirement Village, by Jean White.
I have had two experts, one from Te Papa and one from DOC, each with a possibility.

Oystercatchers

The oystercatchers were performing, doing the broken wing ploy and even dive-bombing us, squawking loudly, as I took my American tourists along the sand-spit. This gave away their secret and made us look closely to see if we could find the nests. We did find one, in a little hollow, camouflaged to blend into the sand, which had three eggs. A little way on we came across this little



Photograph Roger Smith



chick, stock still, not moving. It was very hard to spot and looked like all the other drift wood on the spit. Not wanting to upset the parents, we quickly moved on. It was wonderful to see how the mature birds defended their nest and young. The trouble is the dogs off the lead being exercised on the sand-spit. The small ones are ok as they tear around using their sight and the adult bird can lead them away with their broken wing ploy. It's the hunting dogs, spaniels and labradors, that are the trouble. They use their noses and sniff out the youngsters,

which are taught by their parents to freeze and not move. We do lose quite a few to inconsiderate people, who don't keep their dogs on the lead.

“Whatever Next --More Tales of Waikanae Estuary”

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

Hits last Month—Twenty-eight Thousand two hundred & eight.

Wishing you all a merry Xmas and a Happy New Year

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae
Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking