

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter No 96 February 2015

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The Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve is a Nationally Significant Reserve

Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001

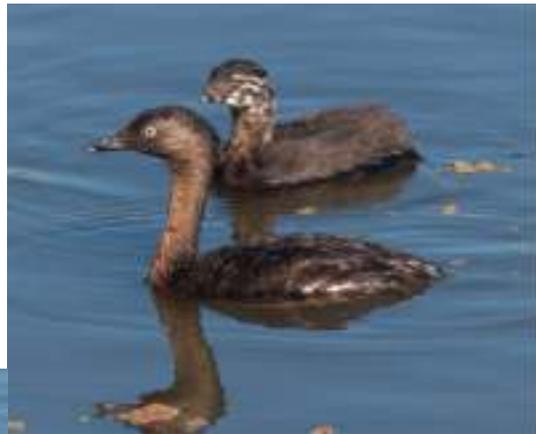


Waimanu Lagoon

Photograph Laurie Petherick

Dabchicks

On the Waimeha is a family of dabchicks. The parents were minding their business, diving down to the bottom of the lagoon getting substance to feed their baby. After popping up to the surface, with the youngster staying on the surface, they would paddle over and feed it. I am not sure what they were feeding it but whatever it was passed over very swiftly. Then the parent would dive down



to the bottom again to keep the food coming. On the lagoon were a number of mallard ducks, also feeding. One of the ducks took an active interest in the young dabchick, and swimming over chased it slowly across the water. The dabchick dived out of the way, not very deep, just under the surface and swam about two meters away, then resurfaced.

The duck relentlessly pursued the baby who again dived just under the water and swiftly swam away to again pop up a couple of meters away. This continued once more and then the two parent dabchicks swam over and positioned themselves between the duck and the youngster and slowly led it safely away. I have previously seen a dabchick become hemmed in by a group of mallard ducks, swim swiftly over to a drake and peck it on the backside. It may be small but it wasn't going to be bullied.

In the top photographs by Roger Smith the young bird is distinguished by its motley face, and in the bottom one, the dabchick's loose webs on its feet, which I have mentioned in previous newsletters, can be seen.

Shag



Look at the size of the eel in the photograph by Roger Smith. The black shag must have been very hungry to attempt to swallow an eel this size. The eel didn't think being the shag's dinner was a good idea and a real tussle ensued with the eel wrapping itself around the neck of the shag and even after being swallowed completely, ejecting itself out

of the shag's throat back into the water, again to be grabbed and swallowed, this time for good. The shag slowly made its way to the little wharf and clambered onto a pile. The eel could be seen squirming inside the shag's stomach even as it spread its wings to dry, to recover from the tussle and digest dinner.

The shag was very game to take on such a large eel. It has been known for shags to choke and die while trying to swallow one.

Frogs

The frogs are croaking on all the lagoons but in very small numbers. I can recall as a youngster in Upper Hutt going to our local frog pond and catching them. My dog would go into the pond and come out with a frog in its mouth. Unfortunately when the dog breathed, it blew the frog up --poor frog. In those days there were lots of frogs about but now it appears that this is not so. I wonder if the shags eating the tadpoles in our lagoons could explain the lack of them here.



Waikanae Estuary garden frog?

Whistling tree frog

We have Australian whistling tree frogs within the estuary. A year or two ago, when planting out the estuary by the weir one was caught. They are also in the escarpment just up river. They whistle as their name implies. I caught one when building my house twenty years ago. It was climbing up my beer fridge in the garage—must have been thirsty.

Hits last Month One Hundred & Seventy two Thousand six hundred & forty seven.

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae
Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking